

Schools Forum

Thursday 13 July 2023

14:00

Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford

The meeting will be webcast live and archived for 12 months. It can be viewed at the following link: <https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Tradewell
Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services
5 July 2023

Agenda

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023** (Pages 1 - 8)
4. **Matters arising**
 - Nursery funding and wraparound childcare update
 - Minute 30 – 23 March 23
5. **Decisions taken by the Chairman under delegated powers**
6. **Membership Update and Meeting Attendance Review**
7. **Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements** (Pages 9 - 10)
8. **Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations** (Pages 11 - 14)
9. **Growth Fund - Allocation Funding 2023/24** (Pages 15 - 18)

10. **Schools Budget 2022/23 Final Outturn** (Pages 19 - 22)
11. **High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan** (Pages 23 - 30)
12. **Education Banding Tool** (Pages 31 - 36)
13. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**
14. **Work Programme and date of next meeting** (Pages 37 - 40)
 - Thursday 9 November 2023, 2:00pm - face to face meeting to be held at the County Buildings, Stafford.

Membership	
Stephen Drew	Abigail Rourke
William Wilson	Mark Boughey
Richard Sutton	Carolyn Trowbridge
Steve Swatton	Sarah Clark
Kim Prince Anson	Helen Baron
Philip Siddell	Jessica Roden
Richard Redgate (Chair)	Sadie Jones
Kirsty Rogers	Emily Verow
Chris Wright	Alun Harding
Steve Barr (Vice-Chair)	Craig Hodgson
Kevin Allbutt	Lindi Nejrup
Judy Wyman	Dawn Freeman
Vicki Lewis	Nicola Mason
Anne Tapp	

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

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Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting held on 23 March 2023

Present: Richard Redgate (Chair)

Attendance	
Stephen Drew	Mark Boughey
William Wilson	Carolyn Trowbridge
Steve Swatton	Helen Baron
Kim Prince Anson	Sadie Jones
Chris Wright	Emily Verow
Steve Barr (Vice-Chair)	Alun Harding
Judy Wyman	Lindi Nejrup
Vicki Lewis	Nicola Mason
Anne Tapp	

Observers: Jonathan Price

Also in attendance: Alison Barnes, Will Wilkes, Tim Moss, Melanie Scott, Anthony Humphreys and Carolyn Knight

Apologies: Richard Sutton, Claire Shaw, Kirsty Rogers, Alison Parr, Sarah Clark and Jessica Roden

Apologies given, sent substitute: Philip Siddell – Tim Hopkins attended

20. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

21. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 12 January 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22. Matters arising

Minute 7 – 10 November 22 - Primary Behaviour Support Services update

As requested at the Schools Forum held in January 23, additional information was provided in relation to the Primary Behaviour Support Services update given at the Schools Forum held in November 22.

The Forum was informed that of the eight pupils from maintained schools who were permanently excluded during 2021-22, five had been referred into the Behaviour Support service, equating to 3.7% of the total number of referrals received to the service that year.

One pupil out of the eight had been seen previously in 2020, the pupil's school were offered further support but did not take up the offer.

One pupil out of the eight had been referred into the Behaviour Support service, but then moved out of County before the support was delivered.

One pupil was not known to the service.

Minute 8 – 10 November 22 - Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) update

As requested at the Schools Forum held in January 23, additional information was provided in relation to the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) update given at the Schools Forum held in November 22.

The Forum was informed that none of the families housed in bridging accommodation in Newcastle settled permanently in the Newcastle district. All accommodated families were offered a permanent home in Staffordshire. 25 permanent homes were made available by District and Borough Councils and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Two permanent homes offered by Newcastle Borough Council were taken by families who lived elsewhere. Circa 50% of the available homes were accepted by the families as many wanted to wait for accommodation in larger urban areas. The remaining homes offered in Staffordshire and Stoke were taken by Afghan families in accommodation elsewhere in the country.

When the Home Office advised families that the hotel in Newcastle was to close, those that had not accepted the offer of a permanent home were relocated. None of the families that were relocated had moved back to the Newcastle area.

Minute 18 - High Needs Block (including Education Banding Tool update and Deficit Management Plan)

It was noted at the meeting held on the 12 January 23 that a consultation of the Strategy for Special Provision would be taking place “towards the middle of the Spring term in 2023”. The Schools Forum queried if the consultation had taken place and were informed that, as Staffordshire County Council (SCC) had now entered the pre-election period of Purdah the consultation had been delayed. As such the consultation would now commence on the 17 May 23 and run until the 5 July 23.

23. Decisions taken by the Chairman under delegated powers

It was confirmed that no decisions had been taken by the Chair, under delegated powers, since the last meeting.

24. Advanced Notice of the Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Forum was reminded that an election for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair would be taking place at the Schools Forum in July 23, with the roles appointed from amongst the Forum’s membership. The positions would be held for a period of two-years.

Forum members were informed that if they wished to stand for either position they would need another member to propose them for the position on the day, with a vote taking place should there be more than one candidate for each position.

As per the constitution, both the incumbent Chair and Vice-Chair were asked whether they wished to stand for re-election. Both confirmed their intentions to stand for re-election of the current positions.

Resolved: That the future Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Schools Forum be noted.

25. May Election

Forum members were informed that several representative positions on the Schools Forum were due for re-election in May 23. These specifically related to:

- All maintained primary
- All primary academies (x 2 posts)
- All secondary academies
- All academy special schools
- All Alternative provision academies

The affected members were informed that the election process would start on Monday 27 March 23 with a view to having the positions filled in May 23.

The Forum was also informed that two positions representing the Middle Schools Forum and Schools' Consultative Group were also due to be renewed. These positions were filled by a representative nominated by the relevant Forum and Group. The incumbent members were asked to confirm with the appropriate body whether they would be re-nominated for a further term of office, or if a new representative would be nominated.

The Forum was also informed that Dr Sarah Clark had tendered her resignation from the Schools Forum as a representative of "All secondary academies". The Chair thanked Sarah for her contribution to the Schools Forum and wished her well in the future.

Resolved: That the future election process of representatives on the Schools Forum be noted.

26. Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements

It was confirmed that no new Notice of Concerns had been issued or withdrawn.

The Entrust Schools Finance team continued to work with all schools who had an existing Notice of Concern or Licensed Deficit agreement.

Resolved: That the Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements to schools be noted.

27. Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations

The Schools Forum received a report relating to proposed updates to the Financial Regulations for Schools which had recently been reviewed and updated.

Section I – Insurance, was being replaced in full. The Regulations would now state *“insurance cover for schools is now being provided through the Department for Education’s (DfE) Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) scheme”*. A link to the DfE’s RPA scheme would be provided in the Finance Regulations and an updated version of the Regulations would be uploaded to the Schools Learning Net.

The full details of the proposed changes were included in Appendix A to the report.

Resolved: That the proposed changes to the insurance section of the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools Financial Regulations for Schools and Procurement Regulations, be approved.

28. Schools Budget Update

The Schools Forum received an update report relating to the Schools Budget 2023-24.

In summary the report provided the following information:

Schools

- The request to transfer 0.5% of Schools Block Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to High Needs had been rejected by the Secretary of State
- The growth fund budget had been set at £2.7m. Any underspend would be transferred into the DSG reserve as per the deficit recovery plan.
- The final education functions levy had been set at £54 per pupil
- School budgets had been set using the National Funding Formula (NFF)
- The minimum funding guarantee (MFG) had been set at 0.5%
- To ensure the NFF was affordable within the schools block DSG allocation, gains had been capped at 2.64%

Early Years

- Early Years funding base rates had been set at £4.52 per hour for 3 & 4 year olds and £5.67 per hour for 2 year olds
- An Early Years contingency had been set at 0.7% of the Early Years Block funding
- Any underspend on Early Years contingency would be returned to providers as a one-off payment in the following financial year (subject to affordability).

High needs

- Staffordshire’s High Needs Block (HNB) funding for 23/24 had increased by £12m compared to 2022-23
- Special School budgets had been set to provide for a Minimum Funding Guarantee of 0.5% (and no capping of gains)
- A further significant overspend was anticipated on the HNB in 2023-4

Central Provisions

The Forum were reminded that the Growth Funding was allocated to the local authority on a formula basis. The allocation for 2023-24 was £4.1m, and the funding had been used to fund growth above the census in the NFF. The remaining funding would be held centrally to meet commitments under the infant class size and exceptional growth fund policies. The amount retained centrally was £2.7m. Any underspend would be transferred to the DSG reserve as per the deficit recovery plan.

At the November Schools Forum meeting, maintained schools approved a levy per pupil for Education Functions of £56.47. Due to a change in the number on roll at maintained schools, the Forum was informed that the final levy for 2023-24 had been set at £54 per pupil.

Individual School Budgets

The Forum was informed that within the NFF, the deprivation factors had increased by 4.3% and all other factors had been increased by 2.4%. The supplementary grant paid separately in 2023-24 to help towards the costs of the Health and Social Care Levy and other costs had been rolled into the NFF by adding the grant funding rates to the relevant factor in the NFF. The minimum funding guarantee (MFG) had been set at 0.5%. To ensure the NFF remained affordable within the Schools Block DSG allocation, gains had been capped at 2.64%.

Mainstream schools would receive a separate Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) as announced in the Autumn Statement. These payments would be made by the government in two instalments. Academies would receive the funding directly from the ESFA. Funding for maintained schools would be paid to the local authority and payments were expected to be made in April 23.

Early Years Funding

For 2023-24 SCC had been awarded the minimum national funding rate of £4.87 per hour for 3&4 year olds and a rate of £5.77 per hour for 2 year olds, this was a 26p and 20p rise respectively from 2022-23. The increase for both rates has been passed through to the base rate in full; making the 3&4 year old base rate £4.52 per child per hour and the 2 year old rate £5.67 per child per hour.

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) had increased by £28, from £800 to £828 per eligible child per hour to support access to the free entitlements.

The Early Years Pupil Premium had increased by 2p, from 60p to 62p per eligible child per hour.

The early years funding central expenditure approved by Schools Forum on 10 November 2022 allowed 96% of 3&4 year old funding to be provided directly to providers. This was 1% above the minimum limit of 95%.

A workshop took place with the Early Years Reference Group in January 23, as requested at the November Schools Forum meeting. This enabled officers to gain views of the Early Years sector on rate changes for 2023-24 and to inform decision making.

A concern was raised around school budgets as a whole. A question was asked as to whether any action was taking place centrally in relation to the major issues such as free school meals, universal free schools meals, energy costs, NJC pay awards and SEND costs. It was highlighted that the MSAG had been introduced in recognition of pressures caused by the increased costs and the cost of living crisis. It was also noted SCC supported the lobbying exercises that had taken place, most notably the F40 – fairer funding campaign. The Forum also heard that local Elected Members continued to lobby Government on behalf of Staffordshire education. Particularly in relation to the needs of education providers and also the local authorities needs with regards the High Needs Block.

It was highlighted that the Manor Hall Academy Trust had worked closely with the local MP and had written to the Secretary of State expressing concerns over funding; it was confirmed that a thorough answer had been received. It was agreed that a letter would be drafted on behalf of Schools Forum noting the specific issues being experienced across Staffordshire which would be sent on to the Secretary of State.

The WorthMore Group was highlighted as an organisation that had lobbied on behalf of schools in the past, and it was queried as to whether they would be able to support in this situation. The Vice-Chair offered to contact a colleague that was heavily involved in the Group and would provide an update to the Schools Forum after the meeting.

It was noted that the NFF cap on gains for 2023-24 Schools Budget was reported as 2.64%. It was asked what the cap on gains was for 2022-23 and it was confirmed that the gains had not been capped in that time-period.

Resolved: a. That the School Budgets update, be noted.

b. That a letter be drafted and sent to the Secretary of State on behalf of Schools Forum.

c. That the Vice-Chair contact the WorthMore Group and report back to the Schools Forum.

N.B. Following the meeting the Vice-Chair provided the response received from the WorthMore Group. The information provided included:

- Drafted a possible manifesto platform for campaigning leading into the next election.
- Trying to create a unified voice and a clear consistent message with a strong research base.
- Proposal to roll out a campaign with support across all the main representative bodies and to utilise school leaders.
- Action / plans to be implemented during the Summer Term.

29. High Needs Block (including Education Banding Tool update and Deficit Management Plan)

The Schools Forum received a report from the Director of Children and Families relating to the High Needs Block (HNB).

The Forum heard that the Government had initially indicated a HNB allocation 2023-24 for c £122.2m; however, in the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor confirmed additional funding for schools of c £2bn nationally including £400m that would be directed to the HNB. Staffordshire would receive a further £4.8m in 2023-24 which had to be used to provide additional support to Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) equivalent to 3.4% of the estimated total grant funding for each school.

For Staffordshire the HNB 2023-24 was £127.0m, a net increase of c£12m compared with 2022-23. It was insufficient to close the existing funding gap, and Staffordshire would continue to lobby for both additional funding and a fair and equitable mechanism for addressing cumulative deficits. It was SCC's intention to pass on the full budget increase next year for the provision of SEND support; none of the funding rise would be used to repay historical deficits.

SCC recognised the financial pressures schools across Staffordshire were facing and given the increase in Government funding, would increase funding to providers by as much as was affordable, acknowledging the current pressures on the HNB and the depleted DSG balances which – at the end of the current financial year – would likely be in deficit by circa £14m.

2023-24 Special School budgets would be set based on a Minimum Funding Guarantee of 0.5%; ensuring that funding for all Special Schools, on a like for like basis, would increase next year by a minimum of 0.5%. This was in line with Government guidance for an MFG of 3% over 2 years. There would be no capping of school gains

In April 2022 SCC introduced a new Education Banding Tool (EBT) to help calculate top up funding in a fair and consistent way. The Forum heard that current monitoring of the 'average' top up cost of EBT placement costs compared with the matrix levels indicated an increase. Whilst the number of children assessed on EBT remained relatively low, the average 'top up' cost for those placements was significantly higher (c£11,800) compared with the matrix model (c£7,300). This represented an unaffordable increase in costs and appeared to reflect a significant 'shift' in the profile of assessments towards higher levels (i.e. EBT levels 7-10) compared with the desktop sample / exercise that had been undertaken as part of the implementation, and on which the proposed EBT rates were set. The EBT had been in place for a year and a review of the implementation would be undertaken during the forthcoming year to ensure it continued to deliver the intended objectives.

In response to a request for more information as to what form the EBT review would take, it was explained that negotiations had been undertaken to secure the services of the Commissioning Manager, who had supported the implementation of the EBT in 2022, to start the review process. A meeting had been arranged to take place in April 23 to develop the scope of the review. It had already been agreed that this would follow the same principles with which the EBT had been implemented, including the creation of a

working group to support the process. It was agreed that an update would be brought to the Schools Forum in July 23.

The Forum raised concerns that the Supplementary Grant would be low as numbers used to calculate the allocation were based on figures of 2021-22, which were lower than normal because of the impact of Covid. It was explained that the calculation to determine allocations was prescribed by Government, and they had already calculated and published the amount that Local Authorities were expected to pass on to PRUs. This information was available on the ESFA website.

In response to a question regarding when it might be possible to see tangible results from the implementation of the Special Provision Strategy, it was confirmed that following the consultation process in the Summer Term, the Strategy would begin to be implemented from January 24 onwards. It was expected that on the ground enhanced provision would be visible from that point onwards.

Resolved: a. That the High Needs Block budget update 2022-23 and latest forecast outturn, be noted.

b. that the proposed High Needs Block budget for 2023-24, be noted.

c. That an update of the EBT review be added to the Work programme and be brought to the Schools Forum in July 23.

30. Work Programme and date of next meeting

The future work programme, date of next meeting and future meetings were shared with forum members.

Work Programme

It was agreed that an update on the budget announcement on Nursery funding and wraparound childcare be included on the Work Programme for the July meeting.

Date of next meetings

- Thursday, 13 July 2023, 2:00pm - face to face meeting to be held at the County Buildings, Stafford.
- Thursday, 9 November 2023, 2:00pm - face to face meeting to be held at the County Buildings, Stafford.

Resolved: a. That an update on the budget announcement on Nursery funding and wraparound childcare be included on the Work Programme for the July meeting.

b. That the dates of the next meetings be noted.

Chairman

Schools Forum – 13th July 2023

Notices of Concern

Recommendation

1. Members note the issue and withdrawal of Notice of Concerns to schools.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for People:

PART A

Why is it coming here – what decision is required?

2. No decision required.

Reasons for recommendation

3. The agreed protocol for issuing a Notice of Concern includes the provision that information on the issue and withdrawal of a Notice of Concern will be provided to the Schools Forum on a termly basis.

PART B

Background:

4. Since last Forum, new Notices of Concern have been issued to St Peter's CE (VA) Primary School, Caverswall and All Saints CE (VC) Primary School, Ranton. Both Notices are a result of DfE Academy Orders.

Report author:

Author's Name: Melanie Scott, Senior Education Accountant, Entrust Support Services Ltd
Ext. No.: 07921 277815

List of background papers:

Schools Forum 7 December 2016 – Item 6 Notices of Concern: revised protocol
School Forum

School Forum 28th March 2019 – Item 39 Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for
Financing of Schools

Schools Forum – 13th July 2023

Update to the Staffordshire Financial Regulations for Schools

Recommendation

1. The Schools Forum approves the revised Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools (SSFS) and Schools Scheme of Delegation.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for People:

PART A

Why is it coming here – what decision is required?

2. Any amendments to the SSFS, Financial Regulations for Schools and Procurement Regulations require approval from Schools Forum.

Reasons for recommendation

3. The SSFS has been reviewed and updated.

PART B

Background:

4. Paragraph 1.1, The Current Funding Framework, has been updated to refer to issue 15 of statutory guidance given by the Secretary of State as opposed to issue 14.
5. Paragraph 2.15, Notice of Concern, has been amended so that the list which includes reasons for a Notice and possible requirements of a Notice, has been split into two lists for ease of reading.
6. Paragraph 5.4, Income from the Sale of Assets has been amended. “Where the disposal of authority owned property generates a capital receipt, a proportion of the receipt may be made available to the school in accordance with the authority’s capital receipts policy” has been removed and replaced with “Any retention of funds from the sale of land assets is subject to the consent of the Secretary of State, and any conditions the Secretary of State may attach to that consent relating to use of proceeds.”
7. The Scheme of Delegation for Schools, shown as Appendix A, has been updated. The new version will be uploaded to the Schools Leaning Net.

Report author:

Author’s Name: Melanie Scott, Senior Education Accountant, Entrust Support Services Ltd

Ext. No.: 07921 277815

Appendix A
Scheme of Delegation - Financial Regulations for Schools (July 2023)

Blacked out cells are a guide only and will need to be amended to reflect individual School delegations. Please refer to the Financial Regulations for Schools for further information.

Financial regulation reference	Who is responsible for?	Responsible Body or Role				
		Governing Body	Chair of Governors	Head Teacher		
A3/C2	Approving the Schools Financial Value Standard					
B2	Approval of the annual School budget					
B11	Providing regular financial monitoring reports to the governing body					
B12	Authorising a virement (adjustment of budget) subject to stated limits					
C6	Keeping all accounting records in accordance with the retention guidelines for schools					
D3	Setting up and maintaining effective systems of internal control and reporting all instances of irregularity					
D7	Responding to recommendations in audit report					
E10 & E17	Authorising an order, non-order invoice or other liability to expenditure subject to stated limits					
E9	Authorising an order that has been raised by oneself subject to stated limits					
E23j / E24	Using the school procurement card subject to stated limits					
E29	Setting the salary scales of the head teacher and other members of the leadership team					
E30	Appointing or varying contracts of the head teacher of deputy head teacher					
E30 / E31	Authorising appointments, variations of contract, dismissals, secondments and transfers of members of staff					
E32	Authorising appointments, variations of contract, dismissals, secondments and transfers relating to Headteacher					
E36	Authorising travel & subsistence claims and additional hours payments					
N/A	Approval of the monthly payroll					
F1	Approving the charging and remissions policy annually					
F21	Raising invoices within 30 days of the goods being supplied or the service carried out					
F25	Authorising the issue of a credit memo (automatically workflowed on MyFinance)					
F29	Approving a debt recovery policy					
F32	Approving the writing off of any debt that has proved to be irrecoverable					
H6	Maintaining an inventory					
H8	Checking the inventory on an annual basis (by an officer independent of its maintenance)					
H12	Writing off items from the inventory following a written report of the head teacher					
H14	Approving an ICT security policy					
H16	Holding keys to safes, cash boxes, etc					
H17	Deciding how to deal with the sale of any spare equipment the school holds					
I3	Notifying the Local Authority of any new insurance risks or any loss or any event likely to lead to a claim					
J1	Operating any voluntary or trust funds held by the school (eg: school fund)					
J2	Receiving audited accounts for any voluntary or trust funds within 6 months of the financial year end					
J5	Ask for consent from LA before setting up a school company					

Schools Forum 13th July 2023

Growth Fund - Allocation of Funding 2023/24

Recommendations

- 1) That Schools Forum note the allocations of Growth Fund:
 - a. funding for infant class size legislation:
6 primary schools
 - b. funding for exceptional basic need growth:
1 primary school; 2 high schools and 2 secondary schools
 - c. funding for new schools:
pre-opening costs for 3 new free schools opening in 2024/25 and
post-opening costs for 6 free schools opened between 2019/20-2022/23

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities:

Why is it coming here – what decision is required?

- 1) In accordance with the DfE's Schools Operational Guide, "the growth fund can only be used to:
 - "support growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet **basic need**
 - "support additional classes needed to meet the **infant class size regulation**
 - "meet the costs of **new schools**"
- 2) On 11 February 2013, Schools Forum agreed to establish Growth Fund criteria and members asked to be advised of funding allocations.
- 3) On 16 January 2018, Forum revised the policy for new free schools opened by Staffordshire County Council through its free school presumption process (separate from with the "wave" process followed by DfE to open free schools).
- 4) On 25 March 2021, Forum approved an increased Growth Fund budget of £2,000,000, in accordance with the national funding formula for schools. Any underspend in the growth fund would be contributed to DSG balances.
- 5) On 13 January 2022, Forum agreed to end the requirement for schools that are eligible for growth funding to submit a financial self-declaration from 2022/23.

Reasons for recommendations:

Funding for infant class size legislation

- 6) In accordance with the infant class size criteria, **£143,611 will be allocated to 5 schools** based on an agreed number of additional infant class teachers.
- a) St Stephen's Primary School, Fradley (Lichfield) £28,722 towards the cost of an infant class teacher
 - b) St. Leonard's CE (A) First School, Ipstones (Staffordshire Moorlands) £6,155 towards the cost of an infant class teacher
 - c) Castle Primary School, Mow Cop (Newcastle) £38,980 towards the cost of an infant teacher
 - d) The Meadows Primary School, Madeley Heath (Newcastle) £16,413 towards the cost of an infant class teacher
 - e) St Chad's CE (VC) Primary School (Newcastle) £28,722 towards the cost of an infant class teacher
 - f) Doxey Primary School (Stafford Borough) £24,619 towards the cost of an infant teacher

Funding for basic need growth

- 7) In accordance with the basic need growth criteria, **£322,210 will be allocated to 5 schools** that worked with the LA to meet exceptional population growth locally by creating an additional class (in primary schools) or exceeding PAN by at least 5% (by middle and secondary schools).
- a) Henhurst Ridge Primary Academy (East Staffordshire) £46,030 for 1 additional infant class teacher (YR)
 - b) The Staffordshire University Academy (Cannock Chase) £138,090 allocation
 - c) Biddulph High School (Staffordshire Moorlands) £46,030 allocation
 - d) Codsall Community High School (South Staffordshire) £46,030 allocation
 - e) Nether Stowe School (Lichfield) £46,030 allocation

Funding for the cost of new schools

8) In accordance with the new schools criteria, a total of **£405,750 will be allocated** for post-opening costs for **6** new free schools with an opening date between 2019/20 and 2023/24 and pre-opening costs for **3** new free schools planned to open in 2024/25.

- a) Poppyfield Primary Academy (Cannock Chase)
£13,500 towards post-opening costs (opened in 2019)
- b) Streethay Primary School (Lichfield)
£13,500 towards post-opening costs (opened in 2019)
- c) Anker Valley Primary Academy (Tamworth)
£43,000 towards post-opening costs (opened in 2021)
- d) Bramshall Meadows First School (East Staffordshire)
£32,250 towards post-opening costs (opened in 2022)
- e) Fradley Park Primary & Nursery School (Lichfield)
£49,750 towards post-opening costs (opened in 2022)
- f) Anna Seward Primary School (Lichfield)
£57,250 towards post-opening costs (opening in 2023)
- g) Dunstall Farm, Tamworth (Lichfield)
£65,500 towards pre-opening costs (planned to open in 2024)
- h) Tamworth Golf Club (Tamworth)
£65,500 towards pre-opening costs (planned to open in 2024)
- i) Beaconfields Primary and Nursery School (Stafford)
£65,500 towards pre-opening costs (planned to open in 2024)

Total expenditure

- 9) The total allocation of **£143,611** for infant class size legislation.
- 10) The total allocation of **£727,960** for basic need growth and new schools funding.
- 11) These represents an **underspend of £1,860,759 against the budget of £2,732,330.**
- 12) Any underspends will be contributed to DSG balances.

Report author: Andrew Marsden, Head of Access to Learning, Inclusion and Improvement
Tel. No: 01785 278787

Schools Forum – 13th July 2023

Schools Budget 2022/23: Final Outturn

Recommendations

1. That the Schools Forum note the 2022/23 Schools Budget financial outturn.

Report of the Director of Finance

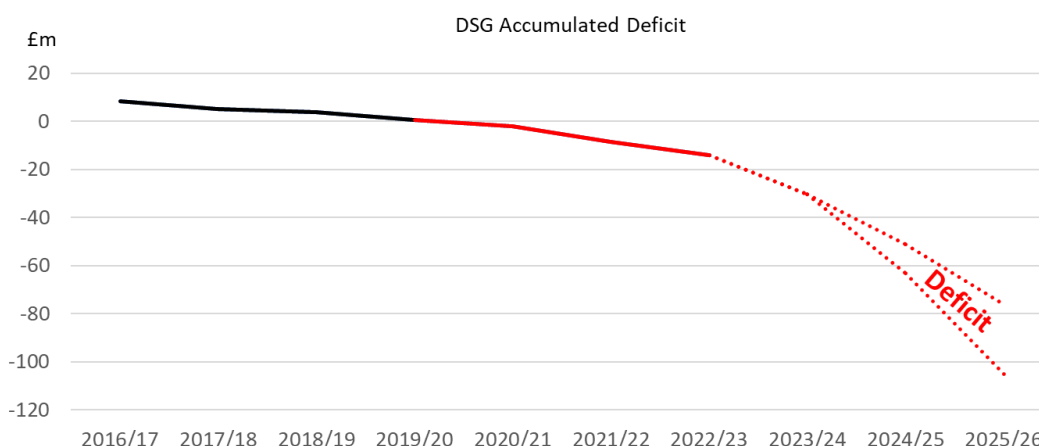
Outturn on Schools' Budgets 2022/23.

1. The outturn position for 2022/23 was a £6.0m variance (2.0%) overspend on planned expenditure across all services. A summary of balances is shown below including the effect on DSG reserves.

2022/23 Schools Budget Final Outturn				
	Budget	Final Outturn	Variation (under) / over	% variance
	£m	£m	£m	
Planned Expenditure:				
Individual Schools	156.8	155.4	(1.4)	0.0%
High Needs, excluding place funding included above	81.9	91.0	9.1	11.1%
Early Years	53.2	51.7	(1.5)	-2.8%
Central and De-Delegated Items	7.2	7.0	(0.2)	-2.8%
Total (A)	299.1	305.1	6.0	2.0%
	Budget	Final Outturn	Variation (under) / over	
Funding for 2022/23 budget:	£m	£m	£m	
2022/23 DSG settlement	(299.1)	(299.5)	(0.4)	
ESFA Post 16 funding	(26.6)	(26.6)	0.0	
Total (B)	(325.7)	(326.1)	(0.4)	
Overall variance on 2022/23 Budget (A + B)			£m	
			5.6	
DSG Reserve (Surplus) / Deficit				
			£m	
Opening DSG reserve 1 April 2022			8.6	
Use of reserve			5.6	
DSG reserve at 31 March 2023			14.2	

2. The Individual Schools Budget (ISB) is break even. This outturn relates to budgets allocated to individual schools through the funding formula. Any under or overspends are contributed to each individual school's balances.

3. The High Needs service has overspent by £9.1m (11.1%). The pressure areas in the service were top up budgets which overspent by £4.0m (mainstream £1.9m, special schools £2.1m), expenditure on independent special schools which overspent by £4.7m and an overspend of c £0.4m for Early Years (SEN Inclusion Fund). Numbers accessing the high needs service - and the complexity of need - have continued to rise, particularly in relation to top up and independent settings (the number of EHCPs is currently 7,000; an increase of 33% in the last three years).
4. The Early Years budget has underspent by £1.5m (2.8%); accordingly, any unspent contingency, which is created annually through a 'topslice' of the government funding rate to mitigate against adverse levels of demand, will be repaid to the sector during 2023/24.
5. The Central and de-delegated items have underspent by £0.2m (2.8% of the budget). This is mainly because of the growth fund allocation. Schools Forum – at its meeting in November 2021 – agreed this should continue to be used for the DSG deficit recovery plan.
6. As a result of the on going overspend in the HNB, over the last few years the DSG reserve has been fully depleted and there is no longer any buffer to mitigate any risks arising or unforeseen pressures. Staffordshire County Council is not alone in this difficult financial predicament – this is a position shared by the majority of Councils across the sector. The Government has put in place a 'statutory override' requiring that accumulated DSG deficits should remain ringfenced separate to the Council's other reserves and that this has now been extended through to end of 2025/26.
7. At the end of the financial year 2022/23 there is an accumulated deficit of £14.2m. The Council's Deficit Management Plan – that is consistent with the wider objectives outlined in the SEND Strategy - outlines the targeted interventions that will seek to mitigate the existing shortfall. However, this will take time and, at this stage, does not appear to have had any significant impact on what is a worsening position.



School Balances

8. As of 31st March 2023, maintained schools held reserves of £20.1m; a decrease of £4.18m from the position on 31st March 2022. There continues to be a number of

approved licenced deficits (19 schools, with a value of £1.9m). The funding of these is met from school balances until such time as the school repays the deficit.

9. Where a school is giving cause for concern and has significant revenue balances, then a conversation is held between the school and the local authority as to how balances are being used to improve outcomes for learners.

Report author:

Author's Name: Anthony Humphreys
Strategic Finance Business Partner

Schools Forum – 13th July 2023

High Needs Block update

Executive Summary:

- For Staffordshire the High Needs Block budget for 2023/24 is £127.0m; an increase of £12.0m compared with 2022/23 (10%). None of this funding increase will be used to repay historical deficits.
- The Council recognises the financial pressures schools across Staffordshire are facing and has increased funding this year for all state funded special schools, on a like for like basis, by a minimum of 0.5% in line with the Government set MFG. A further payment will be made equivalent to 3.4% of funding 22/23 in line with Government guidelines as part of the final DSG settlement and additional funding outlined in the last Autumn Statement.
- The forecast outturn for the 2023/24 High Needs Block is £18.0m overspend including a significant increase in costs arising as a result of EBT.
- At the end of the last financial year the DSG reserve 'deficit' increased from £8.6m to £14.2m. Given the forecast overspend in 2023/24 this will likely deepen further in 23/24 and is expected to be over £30m in deficit at the end of the current year. Left unaddressed the accumulated deficit is likely to be c £100m by the end of 2025/26.
- The Council has put in place and must maintain a 'deficit management plan' to mitigate, as far as possible, the current overspend. Whilst actions are being taken to deliver proposed changes, this will take time and so far has delivered little impact.

Recommendations:

That Schools Forum notes:

1. the High Needs Block budget 2023/24 and latest forecast outturn

Report of the Director for Children & Families

Background

2. The financial risk of the High Needs Block has been a standing agenda at Schools Forum. The increase in demand on the High Needs Block has been reported regularly. Pressures on the High Needs block are on going due to the continued increase in a range of areas. These include:
 - Additional needs requests
 - Increase in pupil numbers requiring EHCPs,
 - Extension of age group to 25 for those with EHCPs,
 - Increase in independent placements and costs,
 - Increase in 'top up' funding for special schools,
 - The funding of increased numbers of pupils educated 'other than at school'.
 - Increase in the number of pupils permanently excluded (and back to pre-pandemic levels)

- Budget 2023/24 and Forecast

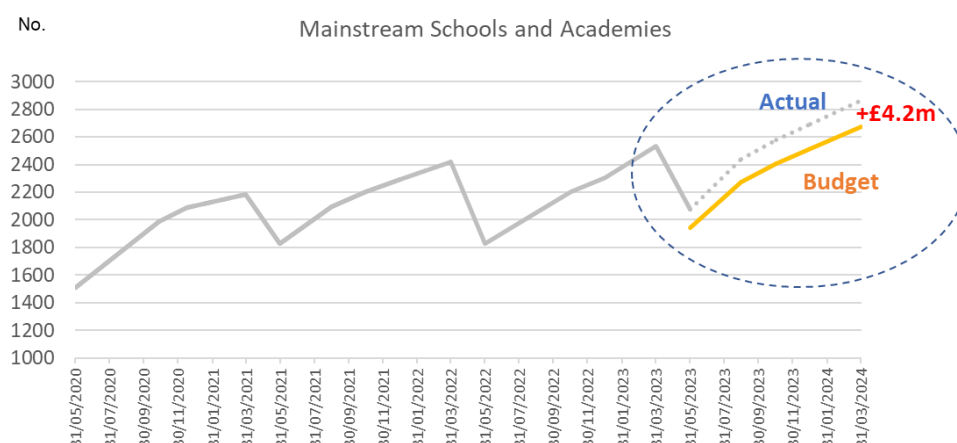
3. For Staffordshire the Government had initially indicated a High Needs Block allocation 2023/24 for c £122.2m; however, in the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor confirmed additional funding for schools of c £2bn nationally including £400m that will be directed to the HNB. Staffordshire will receive a further £4.8m in 23/24, a proportion of which, according to terms and conditions that have been confirmed alongside the extra funding, must be used to provide additional support to Special Schools (and PRUs) equivalent to 3.4% of the estimated total grant funding for each school for their increase in costs. This will be paid separately in 2023/24 and is on top of existing MFG commitments.
4. For Staffordshire the High Needs budget 2023/24 is £127.0m; an increase of £12m compared with 2022/23 (10%). This increase has been passed on in full for the provision of SEND support; none of this funding increase will be used to repay historical deficits. Most significantly this has ensured for 2023/24 Special School budgets have been set to include:
 - i. a Minimum Funding Guarantee of 0.5%; ensuring that funding for all Special Schools, on a like for like basis, will increase next year by a minimum of 0.5%. This is in line with Government guidance for a MFG of 3% over 2 years (Staffordshire approved MFG in 22/23 was 2.5%).
 - ii. there will be no capping of school gains
 - iii. [a payment equivalent to a further 3.4% will also be made to schools calculated in accordance with government guidelines outlined above]
5. Staffordshire's request this year for a transfer of 0.5% (equivalent to c £3.1m) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block was refused by Schools Forum at its meeting November 2022. The Council submitted a disapplication request for the block transfer which was rejected by the Secretary of State for Education.
6. Whilst the additional Government funding is recognised, this will not keep pace with rises in cost and demand and the gap is continuing to increase. The forecast overspend this year is circa £18.0m (see Appendix 1 for more detailed overview):

<u>High Needs Budget 2023/24</u>	Budget 23/24 £m	Outturn £m	(Under) spend £m
Planned Places	35.0	35.0	0.0
Top Up Budgets	44.3	53.1	8.8
<u>Non Top Up Budgets</u>			
Independent Schools (Mainstream & Special)	29.3	38.5	9.2
Alternative provision (inc Hubs)	3.8	3.3	(0.5)
Post 16	5.5	5.9	0.4
Other	9.1	9.2	0.1
Total Net Spend	127.0	145.0	18.0
<u>Funding</u>			
Government HNB DSG Allocation	(127.0)	(127.0)	(0.0)
Transfers from other Blocks	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Funding	(127.0)	(127.0)	(0.0)
Net Outturn	0.0	18.0	18.0

7. Key variances arising

- i. An overspend of c £8.8m against the school 'top up' budgets including most significantly:

- a rise in the number of children with EHCP/AEN support in Mainstream Schools and Academies leading to a £4.2m overspend:



- An overspend of £3.8m in special schools and academies due to the combined impact of increasing demand, complexity and costs:

Top Ups	2023/24		
	# fte		£m
Matrix 1	389	20%	0.1
Matrix 2	689	36%	1.1
Matrix 3	848	44%	7.3
School Specific	1926		2.3
Additional Places			0.8
Enhancements			1.7
Exceptional Need			0.6
Residential			1.8
Adjustments (part time / backdated)			0.3
EBT (1-10)	508		5.6
EBT (school specific)			0.4
EBT (override)			0.1
Allowance for more growth			4.0
Total Spend			26.0
Budget			22.2
Variance			3.8

- An overspend of c £0.4m for Pupil Referral Units due to increasing numbers of pupil exclusions which are now back to pre-pandemic levels

Note: Education Banding Tool (EBT) impact

The EBT has now been in place for a year and as planned a review of the implementation is being undertaken to ensure it is delivering the intended objectives. A key condition for the implementation of the EBT was that it would be broadly cost neutral overall – to both the wider school sector and to avoid any further additional cost to the HNB given the existing overspend.

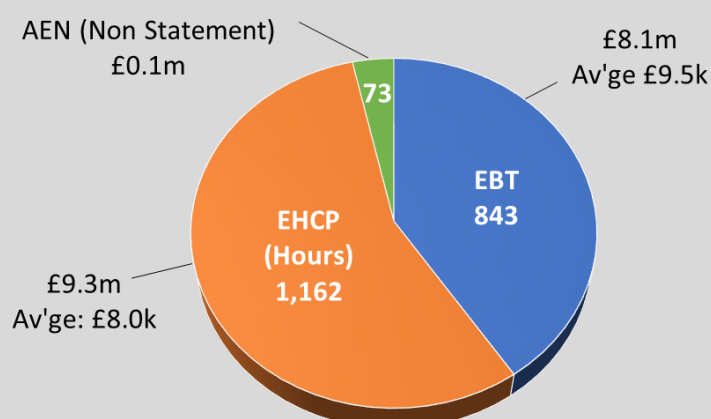
a) Special Schools and Academies

Current monitoring of the 'average' top up cost of EBT placement costs in Special Schools compared with the matrix levels indicate a concerning increase; the average 'top up' cost for placements on EBT is significantly higher at c £0.012m compared with the matrix model of c £0.007m:

	EBT	Matrix
Top Up £m	5.6	8.5
School specific £m	0.4	2.3
Enhancements/Override	0.1	2.3
Total £m	6.1	13.1
fte	508	1926
Av £m/fte	0.012	0.007

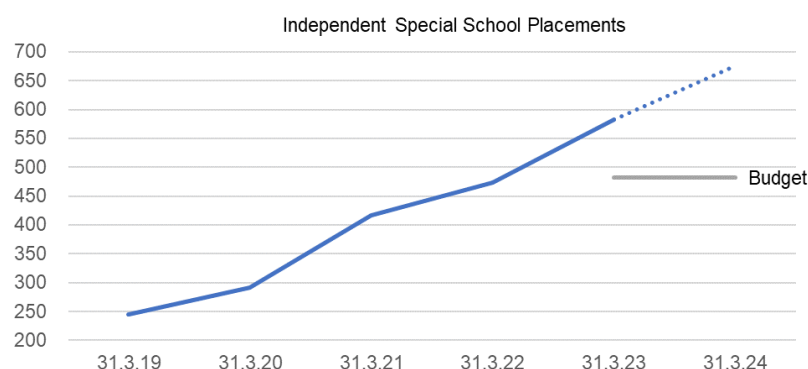
b) Mainstream Schools

As at the end of May, there are 2,078 children placed within our mainstream schools at a cost of c £17.5m. Of those 843 (40%) are currently assessed under the EBT at a cost of c £8.1m equivalent to an average £9.5k per child; significantly higher than the average cost of £8k for those that remain on the previous EHCP (Hourly rate) model.



This represents an unaffordable increase in costs (c £5m) and appears to reflect a significant 'shift' in the profile of assessments towards higher levels compared with the desktop sample / exercise that was undertaken as part of the implementation and on which the proposed EBT rates were set. This will be reviewed as part of the Education Banding Tool review.

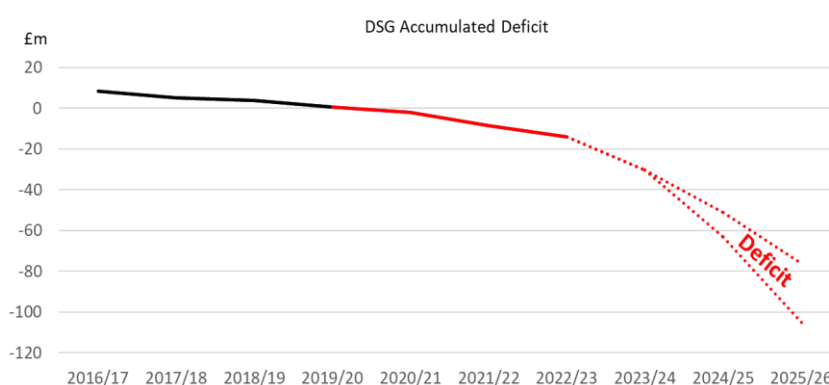
ii. An overspend of c £8.2m in Independent Special Schools



iii. Other net overspends of c £1.0m due to increasing demand, most significantly for Independent mainstream provision, Post 16 provision and Early Years (SEN Inclusion fund).

- DSG Reserve and Management Plan

8. There has been a history of underfunding nationally of the Higher Needs Block which has led to significant year on year overspends in HNB, most recently for 2022/23 an overspend of £9.1m. Staffordshire County Council is not alone in this difficult financial predicament – this is a position shared by the majority of Councils across the sector.
9. As a result of the on-going overspend in the HNB, over the last few years the DSG reserve has been fully depleted and at the end of last year the deficit increased from £8.6m to £14.2m. Given the latest forecast overspend 2023/24 that deficit is likely to increase this year and going forward until such time that the SEND strategy can impact:



10. No single action alone will be sufficient to mitigate the existing deficit, but this will only be addressed through a combination of interventions. The Council brought forward to Schools Forum in November a 'DSG deficit management plan' (DMP) outlining the actions that can be taken to address and mitigate the existing shortfall as far as possible. This reflects the actions included within the APP and sits alongside the wider service transformation and, working in partnership with

Schools Forum, will be monitored and updated going forward as required. Key actions include:

- Managing Demand and Sufficiency of Places; Strategies developed as part of the Accelerated Progress Plan;
 - will continue to support multi-agency working to enable true coproduction that is based on the principle of holistic outcomes. This will provide support prior to and a review of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) pathway so that a 'team around the child' approach is developed as part of the graduated response. The intention is to ensure the appropriate level of early intervention is available and robust decision making is in place to determine who requires an EHCNA.
 - A central EHCNA panel has been established to ensure a robust and consistent review and challenge of initial requests and graduated approach prior to assessment.
 - A review of specialist provision (mainstream, special and alternative provision) including enhanced provision in mainstream schools (Staffordshire Enhanced District Inclusion Support (SEDIS) Model) to ensure there is sustainable provision across the county that meets current and future needs and demands. It is our strategy:
 - to increase the number of CYP with EHCP who access mainstream education- wherever possible within their local community and if appropriate with specialist support
 - to provide additional capacity within our specialist sector for CYP who require a more specialist/tailored provision targeted at the increasing trend of SEMH and ASC
 - reduce reliance on Independent Specialist Provision
- Early Intervention
 - SEND & Inclusion District (Hubs) model; Staffordshire is continuing to embed the SEND and Inclusion District model which:
 - provides mainstream education providers, at a local level, with multi agency support and challenge as well as promoting inclusive practice
 - builds on and promotes the early help model and graduated approach as a key tool for inclusion and meeting the needs of CYP at the earliest opportunity and before they escalate and require an EHCNA / EHCP to access support.
 - SEND Inclusion Fund; There has been a significant increase in demand for support to Early Years (pre-school) children pre EHCP. Accordingly the Council has made significant additional investment through the SEND Inclusion Fund to provide early support and intervention that prevent needs from escalating.
- Capital Investment; Staffordshire has approved a capital programme to deliver new places and improve existing provision, within education settings, for CYP with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This is in accordance with the Vision and Priorities outlined in the Staffordshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2021-2026.

- Financial Management:
 - Through the Staffordshire SEND and Inclusion Partnership Group - which is co-chaired by the local authority and Integrated Care Board (formerly the CCGs for Staffordshire) - we will continue to develop joint commissioning arrangements with health colleagues.
 - Review of non-statutory activity that is funded by HNB - this includes a review of:
 - existing policy for the acquisition of additional planned places procured throughout the year.
 - existing contracts for residential education provision
 - alternative funding sources where appropriate
 - The Council will continue to monitor closely contracts for independent provisions to ensure they are cost effective, adequately meet needs and continue to offer good value.
 - We are reviewing of our direct payments and personal budgets to ensure that they meet the needs of CYP and there is sufficient information and support for schools, practitioners and parents.
 - Transfer of 0.5% funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. This will be invested to fund the Council's transformation programme outlined above.
 - Other: Schools Forum has agreed that the following other contributions should be earmarked for transfer to the Council's DSG reserve:
 - surplus Growth Fund money (after amounts have been used to fund NFF shortfalls and contributions to schools for in year growth). This is estimated to be c £1.5m for 23/24.
 - surplus unallocated funds, as part of the allocation of on going education functions (central schools services block). For 2023/24 this is forecast to be c £0.5m (including both on going functions and historic commitments).
11. Whilst the service continues to take action to deliver the above programme, this will take time and so far has delivered little financial impact to mitigate a rapidly worsening position.
12. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), following our meeting last year on 30 September 2022, have recently requested a further update on the Council's High Needs Block position and deficit management plan delivery. It is anticipated this will be scheduled for late July / early August.

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Appendix 1 – Forecast Outturn 2023/24 (as at Quarter 1)

2023-2024 HIGH NEEDS BUDGET (Quarter 1)	Latest Budget	Forecast Outturn	Over/(Under) spend
	£m	£m	£m
Planned Places	35.0	35.0	0.0
Top Up Budgets	44.3	53.1	8.8
Staffordshire Special Schools and Academies	21.7	25.6	3.9
Staffordshire Mainstream Schools	17.9	22.1	4.2
Pupils in other LA Special & Mainstream Schools & Academies	2.3	2.6	0.3
Pupil Referral Units	2.4	2.8	0.4
Non Top Up Budgets	47.7	57.0	9.2
Independent Schools Mainstream	2.3	3.3	1.0
Independent Schools Special	27.1	35.3	8.2
Independent Hospital Fees	0.2	0.3	0.1
Early Years PVIs	0.4	0.6	0.2
Alternative provision (inc Hubs)	3.2	2.8	(0.5)
Education Other Than At School (EOTAS)	0.6	0.6	0.0
SEN Support Services	8.5	8.3	(0.2)
Post-16 FE Placements & Top-ups for ISPs	5.5	5.9	0.4
GRAND TOTAL	127.0	145.1	18.0
Funding	(127.0)	(127.0)	(0.0)
High Needs Allocation from Government	(127.0)	(127.0)	(0.0)
Transfers from other Blocks	0.0	0.0	0.0
NET FORECAST OUTTURN	0.0	18.0	18.0

Schools Forum – 13th July 2023 **Education Banding Tool Review**

Executive Summary:

- Following the implementation of the Education Banding Tool in March 2022 a review has been undertaken
- Key findings have been shared within this report (paragraphs 6 to 24)
- To date 24.2% (1,209) of pupils with an EHCP have their Element 3 top up funding calculated through the EBT
- The average 'top up' cost for placements on EBT is significantly higher at c £0.012m compared with the matrix model of c £0.007m within special schools
- An average £9.5k per child within mainstream schools which is significantly higher than the average cost of £8k for those that remain on the previous EHCP (Hourly rate) model.
- The LA must consider a reduction of EBT Band values from September 2023 due to increased cost following the implementation of the EBT, which is not linked to an increase in EHCPs
- Resolving the health funding of pupils with medical needs remains a priority for the LA and Health.
- Implementation in the FE sector to be delayed further
- Additional quality assurance to be implemented to ensure consistency

Recommendations:

That Schools Forum notes:

- The changes to the specialist and mainstream EBT band values from September 2023
- The recommendations as detailed in paragraphs 25 to 33 below

Report of Director for Children and Families

Background

1. In March 2022 the Local Authority introduced the Education Banding Tool (EBT) to calculate the High Needs Bock (HNB) top-up funding for pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
2. The EBT was to be applied to any Staffordshire pupil with an EHCP attending a maintained, academy and independent mainstream and Staffordshire maintained and academy specialist and PRU provider.
3. From March 2022, the EBT was applied to:
 - i. ALL draft EHCPs following an EHC needs assessment
 - ii. ALL amended EHCPs where there was a significant change in need as identified through the annual review process
4. The EBT supports fair, equitable and consistent funding mechanisms across education providers and localities. It is a need-led tool rather than a provision

based one and it is not about reducing funding but about making it fair across the system.

5. Areas covered within the review consisted of:
 - i. Data held within CareCalc and Capita
 - ii. Power Bi
 - iii. SEND Assessment Team
 - iv. Key Staff Training and Learning Hub
 - v. Mediation and Tribunals
 - vi. SEND Finance
 - vii. EBT Override
 - viii. Parent Carer Forum
 - ix. SENDIASS
 - x. Local Offer
 - xi. Health
 - xii. Early Years
 - xiii. FE
 - xiv. Quality Assurance
 - xv. Benefits Realisation Plan
 - xvi. Imosphere Health Check/Review
 - xvii. Finance and High Needs Budget (HNB)

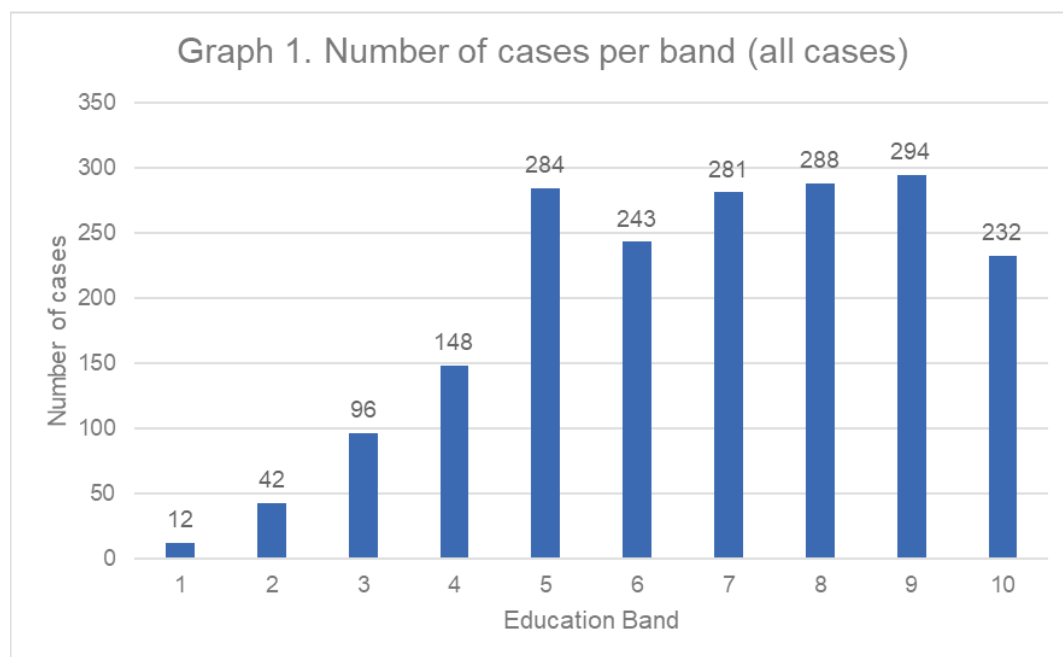
Key Findings

6. As of June 2023, 24.2% (1,209) of pupils with an EHCP, in scope of the EBT, have their Element 3 top up funding calculated through the EBT.
7. Higher than expected level of pupils at EBT Level 9 and above.
8. 11 of the 23 special schools have over 50% of their pupils who have been taken through the EBT on Levels 9 and above.
9. Previously 44% of pupils in special schools were funded at Matrix Level 3 which equates financially to EBT Level 8b. However, there are 50% of pupils now funded at EBT Levels 8b and above as a comparison.
10. There have been no SEND Mediations linked to the EBT, however there are a small number of SEND Tribunals where the provision has not been adequately specified and quantified. Plus, SEND Tribunals where funding for a pupil has been reduced from previously agreed levels, due to the application of the EBT, but the needs of the pupil have not changed. It was always acknowledged that there would be a reduction of some pupil's funding with the EBT due to the inconsistencies of funding decisions linked to the previous mechanisms across both mainstream and special.
11. There are currently 37 recorded incidents of EBT Override, a small number of which were to maintain existing funding levels. The majority of these are for pupils in mainstream schools and with provision provided by a Communication and Support Worker.
12. The EBT Local Offer advice pages remain very popular and referrals to SENDIASS represent 0.1% of their total referrals during 2022 (10,465).

13. Health funding for individual pupils with medical needs remains an issue for Staffordshire EHCPs. However, work has started with Health colleagues following the creation of the Integrated Care Board and includes special school representatives. The first meeting was held on the 28th April 2023 and further meetings will focus upon specific tasks to agree when an intervention is specifically health, education or social care.
14. The EBT does not appear to have been fully implemented for all settings in scope of the EBT e.g. PVI's, independent mainstream and other LA maintained and academy mainstream schools.
15. The agreement to implement the EBT in FE settings was delayed in March 2022. FE high needs numbers have continued to increase, and work is being undertaken to understand this increase by the Skills and Employability Team. Unfortunately, pupils placed in FE have not been routinely taken through the EBT and therefore there is limited data to enable budget modelling to proceed with implementation in this sector.
16. The 4 levels of quality assurance of EBT have not fully been undertaken.
 - i. EBT Band Level Ratification
 - ii. Monthly Audit
 - iii. Termly Moderation
 - iv. Annual Standardisation
17. The Education Survey to providers, which was live between live from Friday 14th April until 5.00pm Friday 26th May 2023, resulted in 16 responses – a 4% return rate. Many the comments within the survey related to the timeliness of EHCPs, EHCNA refusals, wider SEND Service issues, which are not directly linked to the EBT.
 - i. Mainstream schools (10 responses) generally felt that following the EBT introduction, funding was fair and equitable however schools required clarity on how a level was agreed and where the EBT funding did not cover the previous hours awarded.
 - ii. Special schools (4 responses) disagreed with each of the statements linked to fair, equitable, transparent and consistent. They felt it was not being applied consistently, that the setting considered should affect the band level and that any EBT lower than 5c would provide insufficient funding and in general the pupil's needs should be met in a mainstream setting. However, 2 of the schools felt it was an improvement to the Matrix funding, but it required further work to ensure it is successful.
 - iii. PRUs (2 responses) generally disagreed with each statement but they raised the issue that EBT funding was not being applied to their pupils with EHCPs.
18. The 4 identified areas within the Benefits Realisation Plan were revisited. The areas linked to the EBT being fair, consistent and transparent is difficult to evidence having been met as expected as they are linked to the Education Provider survey which had a very low response rate which could be interpreted as providers happy with the new methodology of funding pupils with EHCPs. There is a reduction of pupils admitted to special schools without funding levels agreed and there is not a high number of override funding agreed, which

support the improved funding agreement timescales and fair funding allocated to pupils through the EBT.

19. Imosphere undertook their annual health check based on data held within the CareCalc platform. 1,920 EBT submission of which 1,622, the majority, had a final EBT Level of Band 5 or higher. This is a higher proportion that would generally be expected across the bands, and different to the sample plans used to set the banding rates.



20. Of the 778 CYP submitted as mainstream school, 158 (20%) scored at level 9 and above. Of the 411 CYP submitted as special school 167 (41%) scored at level 9 and above. Both these figures are high and will require re-visiting at annual review stage
21. Whilst the number (FTE) of children assessed on the EBT remains relatively low at this time, the average 'top up' cost for those placements in specials is significantly higher (c £11,800) compared with the matrix model (c £7,000) and in mainstream it is c £9,500 compared to c £8,000. A key condition for the implementation of the EBT was that it was to be broadly cost neutral overall and to avoid any further additional cost to the HNB given the existing overspend.
22. Imosphere benchmarking data other LA funding values shows that for mainstream schools EBT Level 9-10 values range from £20,625-£27,093 compared to Staffordshire's £16,221-35,678; and for special school EBT Level 9-10 values range from £26,262-27,835 compared to Staffordshire's £12,061-£35,678.
23. Budget modelling has been undertaken and the most appropriate, to achieve a cost neutral impact on the HNB, will mean a reduction of 40% for each of the specialist band levels and 20% for mainstream band levels is required.

Recommendations

24. Re-modelling of Specialist band values to ensure HNB expenditure does not exceed previous spending levels of average special school pupil funding of £7,000, with the intention of a 40% reduction in Specialist EBT values from September 2023 for new pupils.
25. Re-modelling of Mainstream band values to ensure HNB expenditure does not exceed previous spending levels of average mainstream pupil funding of £8,000, with the intention of a 20% reduction in Mainstream EBT values from September 2023 for new pupils.
26. Undertake further budget modelling in Spring 2024 to ascertain affordable EBT Band Levels for both Specialist and Mainstream April 2024.
27. Pupils on EBT Level 9 and above will have their EBT level reviewed as part of the pupil's scheduled annual EHCP review process.
28. Where a pupil with an EHCP is placed as a single/main roll pupil in a PRU the Element 3 Top-up funding will be in accordance with the Specialist Education Banding Tool value and will not be the TRIG-8 value unless the Specialist Education Banding Tool level is below the TRIG-8, then the difference will be funded through the Education Banding Tool Override facility.
29. Delay the implementation of the EBT in the FE sector to embed in mainstream and special and to undertake further investigation and budget modelling as it is too high a risk to implement across FE at this point
30. Ensure the full implementation of the agreed 4 levels of quality assurance with the addition of a further level for all new pupils at EBT Band Level 9 and above. In addition, ensure the internal process are maintained and regularly reviewed e.g. training of key staff, recording of EBT levels within Capita One etc
31. Ensure the EBT is featured within the SEND Self-Evaluation Framework
32. LA Officers across Education and Social Care to progress the work with health and special school representatives linked to funding medical health needs across mainstream and special schools.

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Schools Forum Work Programme

There are a number of items the Schools Forum considers annually; these are set out in the work programme below.

The "Schools Forums: operational and good practice guide" (October 2013) states that:

Local authorities should as far as possible be responsive to requests from their School Forums and their members. Schools Forums themselves should also be aware of the resource implications of their requests.

Forum Members are therefore able to suggest an item for consideration at a future Forum meeting as long as it is within the remit of the Forum. Any request must be agreed by the Schools Forum before being included on the work programme. Each Forum agenda is set by the Chairman in consultation with the Director and the Clerk. The scheduling of items included on the work programme will therefore be agreed through this process and taking account of resource implications and agenda management.

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Meeting	Item	Details
Autumn Term 9 November 23	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Primary Behaviour Support Services – 2024-25 Financial Year	Annual item
	Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) 2024-25 Financial Year	Annual item
	Schools Budget 2024-25: De-delegation, Central Expenditure and Education Functions.	Annual item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and Education Banding Tool	Standard item

Meeting	Item	Details
Spring Term 18 January 24	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Schools Budget Update	Standard item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and Education Banding Tool	Standard item

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Meeting	Item	Details
Spring Term 21 March 24	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Schools Budget Update	Standard item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and education Banding Tool	Standard item

Meeting	Item	Details
Summer term 11 July 2024	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Growth Fund Allocation 2023/24	Standard item
	Schools Budget 2022/23 Final Outturn	Annual item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and Education Banding Tool update	Standard item

Meeting	Item	Details
Autumn Term 17 Oct 24	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Primary Behaviour Support Services – 2025-26 Financial Year	Annual item
	Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) 2025-26 Financial Year	Annual item
	Schools Budget 2024-25: De-delegation, Central Expenditure and Education Functions.	Annual item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and Education Banding Tool update	Standard item

Meeting	Item	Details
Spring Term XX January 25	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Schools Budget Update	Standard item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and Education Banding Tool	Standard item

Meeting	Item	Details
Spring Term XX March 25	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Schools Budget Update	Standard item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and education Banding Tool	Standard item

Meeting	Item	Details
Summer Term XX July 25	Election of Chair and Vice Chair	Every two years
	Membership update	General update if required
	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Growth Fund - Allocation Funding 2023/24	Standard item
	Schools Budget 2022/23 Final Outturn	Annual item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and Education Banding Tool update	Standard item

Pending	
County Council Redundancy Policy	When there is something to report
Update on the review of Education Banding Tool review	Update to be provided in July 23 Forum.
Update on the budget announcement on Nursery funding and wraparound childcare	Update to be provided in July 23 Forum.