

Schools Forum 25 June 2024

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Dedicated Schools Grant – School Specific Contingency Reserves 2023/24 Outturn and 2024/25 Budget

Purpose of report

1. To update Schools Forum on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) School Specific Contingency Reserve in 2023/24 and the proposed use of this Reserve in 2024/25.

Schools Forum Role and Responsibilities

2. Schools Forum is the 'guardian' of the local Schools Budget, and its distribution among schools and other bodies, and therefore must be closely involved throughout the development process.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Schools Forum members note the report on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) School Specific Contingency Reserve in 2023/24 and the proposed use of the Reserve in 2024/25.

Background

4. It was previously agreed that reports would be presented to Schools Forum to confirm further details of the balances remaining within the Schools Specific Contingency Reserve and to give Schools Forum the details of the Director of Children's Services proposals regarding the use of the reserve.

5. The table below reflects the position of the School Specific Contingency Reserve in 2023/24 and the planned spend for 2024/25.

Activity	Opening Balance 01/04/2023 £000s	Use in year (-) £000s	Closing Balance 31/03/2024 £000s
Ring fenced contingency – Professional Development Programme grant reserve. Continuing activities to meet grant requirements	0.087	-0.020	0.067
Support to schools for implementation of the SEND Strategy - training and other support to mainstream and special schools on SEND and Inclusion	0.511	-0.068	0.443
Ring fenced Union Facilities – De delegations. Agreed to roll forward underspends from vacancies to support pressure in future years	0.083		0.083
Growth Fund Contingency - under / overspends compared to in-year allocation	0.283	-0.169	0.114
Business Rates - contingency to support revaluations	0.273		0.273
Total	1.237	-0.257	0.980

6. As previously agreed at Schools Forum in October 2021, a proportion of the £0.511m SEND Strategy Funding is being used for the appointment of a SEND Lead Practitioner and two SEND Support Officers. The SEND Lead Practitioner co-ordinates a response to SEND and pupil needs between the Core SEND team and School Improvement. The post becomes the bridge between the code of practice and day to day implementation in schools. This was focused on being a secondment opportunity from someone currently within a Dudley school/LA.
7. In supporting this role, two designated SEND Support Officers will with the SEND Lead Practitioner collectively form a SEND Development Team which ensure that the work of the Core SEND team and School Improvement is linked and effective. This will ensure that SEND is a high-profile initiative and across the school estate. The cost of these posts are approximately £0.150m for the SEND Lead Practitioner post (fixed term two years) and £0.110m for the two SEND Support Officers (fixed term two years). In addition, £0.080m is earmarked for staff training and school workforce development. A plan for this is being developed now that the

Lead Practitioners and SEND Support Officers are in post. Additional CPD resource will be allocated to support nurture and resilience and TIAAS. The spending plan is influenced by the concurrent Delivering Better Value spending plan and consideration is being given to the optimum funding stream for each related activity.

HTCF - Budget Working Group Discussed

Yes – 18 June 2024.

Finance

8. From 1 April 2006, the Schools Budget has been funded by a direct grant: Dedicated School Grant (DSG).

Law

9. The funding of schools is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) through the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2024.
10. The Schools Forum is a statutory decision making and consultative body constituted in line with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and its associated regulations, including the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012, to enable members of the local school community to work in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council when making decisions about school funding and finances.

Risk Management

11. There are no material risks to the Council's Risk Management Framework resulting from the contents of this report.

Equality Impact

12. This report has no direct implications for the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

13. This report has no direct implications for organisational development, human resources or service transformation.

Commercial/Procurement

14. There is no impact on the potential to commercially trade and no impact on our customer base.

Council Plan

15. The 2022/2025 Council Plan is clear in its ambitions for educational outcomes including raising skills, educational and work potential, increasing good or better schools and closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils.

This report relates to the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant funding to support the educational outcomes of children and young people in the borough.

As a result of the Council's focus on an Improvement and Sustainability Programme, the current Council Plan has been paused to allow a new one-year plan which will reflect the focus on improvement and financial sustainability.



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