

**Schools Forum 8 December 2009**

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**Support for Schools' Statutory Data Returns**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise Schools Forum of the additional statutory data collection required by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) on behalf of schools and to request financial support from Schools Forum under the combined budget provision from 2010/11.

**Budget Working Group Discussed**

2. Yes.

**Schools Forum Role and Responsibilities**

3. The Schools Funding Regulations include a provision for "Combined Budgets" under the types of funding that can be retained centrally from the Dedicated Schools Grant; it is conditional that the Schools Forum agrees the amounts involved.
4. In considering whether to approve a request from a local authority to retain an amount of funding centrally for this purpose, the Forum must ensure that an educational benefit test is met. To do this the local authority must demonstrate to the Schools Forum that there are clear benefits to pupils and schools from the increased contribution.

**Action for Schools Forum**

5. To note the statistical data collection undertaken on behalf of schools and to approve financial support to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in Children's Services Information Team to maintain essential data provision for schools.
6. The request is in accordance with Schools Forum powers under the combined budgets provision of the School Funding Regulations.

**Attachments to Report**

7. Appendix 1 - Expected Outcomes of Additional Information Team Staff

Dean Woodhouse  
EMS Manager – Children's Services  
18 November 2009

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**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise Schools Forum of the additional statutory data collection required by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) on behalf of schools and to request financial support from Schools Forum under the combined budget provision from 2010/11.

**Combined Budgets**

2. In considering whether to approve a request from a local authority to retain an amount of funding centrally for this purpose, the Forum must ensure that an educational benefit test is met. To do this the local authority must demonstrate to the Schools Forum that there are clear benefits to pupils and schools from the increased contribution.
3. If Schools Forum agrees to a deduction from the Schools Budget under the combined services regulations, then there is no need for the authority to seek the Schools Forum's formal agreement to the continuation of the deduction, but the local authority should report to their Schools Forums on the progress of the joint working.
4. Central government policy clearly envisages a key role for school partnerships in the reform and development of children's services as a whole, working with other providers and agencies to meet the full range of children's needs

**PLASC/School Census**

5. In 2002 there was a statutory duty placed on all local authorities to collect individual pupil level information for each of its maintained schools and to pass this data on to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) once validated. This task has been undertaken primarily by a central team within Children's Services working closely with all maintained schools.

6. In subsequent years there have been numerous changes to the various collections undertaken which have resulted in an overall increase in the amount, depth and frequency of data required. This complexity has placed significant additional pressures on the team and staff supporting this work. This is illustrated in the table1 below:

**Table 1 – Data Collections on behalf of Dudley Schools**

<b>Name of collection</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2009</b>
Primary school census	Annual collection	Three collections per school year
Secondary school census	Annual collection	Three collections per school year
Special school census	Annual collection	Three collections per school year
Foundation Stage Profile	Not collected	Annual collection
Coordinated admissions reporting	Not collected	Required bi-annually from 2008
Key stage 2 teacher assessment	Not collected	Collected annually
Consistent financial reporting (CFR)	Not collected	Collected annually
School Workforce Census	Not collected	To be collected in Spring and Autumn from January 2010

7. During this period of increasing demands the level of staffing supporting this activity has remained static. This situation is untenable for the future and increases the risk that the authority and schools may fail to complete these statutory returns to the required standards and within stipulated timescales.
8. Consideration has been given to redirecting resource within the team to address this increasing burden. However this is not sustainable or a desirable solution as it would jeopardise the rigour of data returns in areas other than schools. In addition any possible redirection would be insufficient to service the increased demand.

### **Other Additional pressures**

9. In addition to the demands for statutory data returns there are a number of other related activities underway that also receive direct support from the team. This contribution will provide significant benefits for schools and pupils. These key areas are highlighted briefly below;

#### **i) Co-ordinated Admissions Process**

The Information Team also supports the Schools Admissions Service to process all school admission applications. This includes the new online admissions system now available to all parents/carers in Dudley.

From September 2010, support is also required to coordinate the in-year applications and also support the introduction of the Coordinated Primary Admissions statutory requirements.

#### ii) Schools Data Quality

With the launch of Contact Point in November 2009, the local authority is supporting schools to improve the accuracy of its electronic pupil data that will eventually be fed to the national Contact Point database.

#### iii) Primary Capital Program

This programme is also creating increased demands for the production of baseline analysis relating to the latest available school-level data on places, building condition, educational performance, deprivation and extended services.

#### iv) Black Country Challenge (BCC)

Similarly the Black Country Challenge has created numerous additional short notice demands for information and data analysis that it has proved very difficult to cope with on the basis of current staffing levels.

### **Proposal**

10. In order to ensure there is sufficient capacity for this work to be undertaken on behalf of the authority and all maintained schools, there is a need to supplement the pool of information officers currently employed by the team. The local authority currently deploys 1.5 FTE officers to this work.
11. It is proposed to appoint two additional Information Officers to this team. It is envisaged these will be full time permanent positions. Salary levels would be set at SO1/SO2 at a salary range of £24,646 - £28,636 per annum. This grade is comparable to existing information officer posts in the team. The additional resources required, including oncosts, would be £70k for 2010/11.
12. The £70k can be funded from the central budget areas of the Dedicated Schools Grant without diverting funds from schools or breaching the Central Expenditure Limit (CEL). However, as this type of expenditure is not directly eligible to be charged to the DSG then Schools Forum is required to approve the budget as a combined budget.

### **Expected Outcomes**

13. This approach ensures the local authority is able to respond to the increasing amount of work being placed on it in terms of data management and to be responsive to the Workforce Reform agenda, DCSF Information Management in Schools agenda, and the increasing necessity for high quality data in schools. The key benefits for schools are detailed in Appendix 1.

## **Risks**

14. There are a number of associated risks if additional capacity is not created to cope with the increasing DCSF information management agenda. These are summarised briefly below:
- Detrimental impact on school and authority finances due to inaccurate pupil data; including the information necessary to accurately calculate the DSG
  - Failure to comply with statutory requirements
  - Returns which are neither robust nor complete
  - Inability to deal with additional ad-hoc information demands from schools
  - Inability to deploy resources effectively due to incomplete data
  - Lack of confidence in decision making due to poor management information
  - Poor reputation of the authority and schools in information management in the wider community

## **Finance**

15. The funding of schools is prescribed by the DCSF through the School Finance (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2008.
16. Schools Forums are regulated by the School Forums Regulations 2002 as already amended by the Schools Forums (Amendment) Regulations 2004 the Schools Forums (Amendment) 2005 Regulations and the Schools Forums (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.
17. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006, the Schools Budget has been funded by a direct DCSF grant: Dedicated School Grant (DSG)

## **Law**

18. Councils' LMS Schemes are made under Section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The Education Acts 1996 and 2002 also have provisions relating to school funding.

## **Equality Impact**

19. The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy is taken into account when considering the allocation of resources.

## **Recommendation**

20. Schools Forum is invited to:

- Note the statutory role of the Information Team in respect of data collection on behalf of schools; and
- Approve financial support from the dedicated schools grant to appoint two additional information team officers, at an estimated cost of £70k per annum, in accordance with their powers under the combined budgets provision of the School Funding Regulations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Wyatt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Mark Wyatt**

**Director of Children's Services**

Contact Officer:

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## Appendix 1

### Expected Outcomes of Additional Information Team Staff

Benefit	Schools	Local Authority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of termly school census for the benefit of primary, secondary and special schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools' census completed on time</li> <li>Accurate pupil numbers on roll for each school</li> <li>Accurate school funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools' census returned to DCSF on time</li> <li>Better planning for future needs</li> <li>Maximise resources for Dudley</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinated admissions reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools to receive statistical information on school admissions</li> <li>Allow efficient planning of resources for new academic year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinated admissions reporting completed biannually for DCSF</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transfer of results to the National Assessment Academy (NAA) and other Schools at the end of Key Stages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary schools to receive additional individual pupil and school level analysis on key stage performance which is currently not provided through other means</li> <li>Secondary school to receive early access to KS2 performance for new intake (before end of summer term)</li> <li>Allow secondary schools to plan for new academic year by banding new cohort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authority has early access to key stage performance data</li> <li>School Improvement Partners (SIPs) enabled to develop improvement plans earlier than possible using national data feeds</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carrying out more regular analysis and quality control checks on data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools have more accurate and robust data</li> <li>Increased confidence in resource planning</li> <li>Improved management information for school profile, school governors, parents etc</li> <li>Schools to receive feedback on data inconsistencies to improve data quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved data quality and consistency between schools and the local authority management information systems</li> <li>Improved management information reporting</li> <li>Improved efficiency in processing data returns and improved services for children</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting schools with transmission of their common transfer files (CTF)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools supported in receiving CTF within stipulated timescales</li> <li>Allows smoother integration of pupil into new school setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More detailed and accurate pupil records</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved forward planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved benchmarking</li> <li>Trending data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeting support at priority areas</li> </ul>