



Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Date:

**Committee:
Schools Forum**

Date: Thursday, 7 November 2024
Time: 8.30 am
Venue: MS Teams

You are requested to attend the above meeting.
The Agenda is attached

Tim Collard
Assistant Director - Legal and Governance

Members of Schools Forum

Mark Rogers
Marilyn Hunt
Stephen Matthews
Reuben Thorley
Sandra Holloway
Alison Ashley
Georgia Moss
Mark Cooper
Bill Dowell
Carla Whelan
Sue Lovecy
Sarah North

Sarah Finch
Lisa Henshall
Rachel Williams
Sarah Godden
James Pearson
James Staniforth
John Hitchings
Shelly Hurdley
Sian Lines
Charles Thomas
Andrew Smith

Your Committee Officer is:

Jo Jones DSG Funding Co-Ordinator, Learning and Skills – People Directorate
Tel: 01743 254343
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AGENDA

1 Apologies

2 Election of Chair (David Shaw)

3 Minutes and Matters Arising - 13 June 2024 (Pages 1 - 10)

Paper A attached.

4 Verbal Update on Shropshire Council Financial Sustainability (David Shaw)

5 Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024/25 (Stephen Waters) (Pages 11 - 16)

Paper B attached.

6 School Revenue Funding Update 2025-26 (Sam Bradley) (Pages 17 - 18)

Paper C attached.

7 Early Years and Childcare Funding Update (Andy Nicholls) (Pages 19 - 22)

Paper D attached.

8 Presentation and Verbal Update on the implementation of Shropshire Ordinarily Available Provision (SOAP) (John Rowe) (Pages 23 - 28)

Paper E attached.

9 Communications

10 Future meeting dates

Thursday 5 December 2024	8.30 – 10.30	Microsoft (MS) Teams
Thursday 9 January 2025 (Provisional)	8.30 – 10.30	Microsoft (MS) Teams
Thursday 23 January 2025	8.30 – 10.30	Microsoft (MS) Teams

Thursday 20 March 2025	8.30 – 10.30	Microsoft (MS) Teams
Thursday 19 June 2025	8.30 – 10.30	Microsoft (MS) Teams
Thursday 11 September 2025 tbc	8.30 – 10.30	Microsoft (MS) Teams
Thursday 13 November 2025 tbc	9.00 – 11.00	Face to Face tbc

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Date: 7 November 2024

Time: 9.00 a.m.

Venue: Council Chamber,
Shirehall**A**

Public

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 20TH JUNE 2024 – HELD VIA MS TEAMS**Present****School Forum Members**

Bill Dowell (Chair)
John Hitchings – (Vice Chair)
Shelley Hurdley- Early Years
Mark Rogers – Primary Headteacher
Sian Lines – Diocese of Hereford
Andrew Smith – Independent Post 16
Sandra Holloway – Primary governor
Stephen Matthews - Primary Governor
Sarah North – Primary Headteacher
Sarah Godden - TrustEd
Alison Ashley- Special School Representative
James Pearson - TMBSS
Reuben Thorley – Secondary headteacher
Marilyn Hunt – Primary Headteacher
Sue Lovecy - Headteacher
John Boken – NEU
Rachel Williams – Primary Headteacher
Lisa Henshall – St Bart's Multi-Academy Trust

Members

Kirstie Hurst-Knight

Officers

David Shaw
Andy Nicholls
Stephen Waters
Karen Levell
Helen Owen

Observers

Roger Evans
Nick Bardsley

The chair welcomed all to the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Carla Whelan.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

Stephen Matthews asked for clarification around the new childcare offer and wrap around capital grant funding, it was agreed that Steve Compton would recirculate the briefing.

- School Forum Slides including the link to the Delivering Better Value (DVB) resource pack circulated.
- Link to the Shropshire Ordinarily Available Provision (SOAP) framework to be circulated.
- Comparative finance Information and benchmarking postponed to the September Meeting.

DS

- Identify any Challenges/training needs related to SEND and supporting the increased range of SEND needs in mainstream.
– Alison Ashley had given the feedback to the National Teaching Schools Council. There is continued engagement with the DfE, However there are now changes happening with the schools council so there was no further feedback at this stage.
- Raise challenges regarding school and SEND funding with MPs and DfE to increase awareness of the challenges being faced. – MPs briefing drafted and completed in April 2024, the briefing has also been shared with Bill Dowell. The matter has also been raised formally with the DfE.

3. **Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2023-24**

Stephen Waters presented his paper.

- The 2023-24 outturn position for the DSG is a £4.486m in-year deficit.
- This deficit needs to be added to the £2.181m DSG surplus carried forward from 2023-24 resulting in a cumulative DSG deficit of £2.304m

Early Years Block

- The outturn position for the Early Years Block is a £0.087m overspend against a provisional budget of £17.868m.
- The overspend is explained by a £0.287m budget pressure on SEND support against a budget set of £0.600m. The demand experienced on this budget has grown in recent years with Shropshire seeing a growing number of children presenting with a range of developmental and emotional difficulties which require support.
- This position on the Early Years budget is provisional and could change once the final 2023-24 Early Years DSG allocation is published in July 2024

High Needs Block

- The outturn position for the High Needs Block is an in-year deficit of £4.128m against a centrally controlled High Needs Budget of £28.997m. This budget excludes the place funding element of the High Needs Block totalling £9.515m.

Independent Special schools

- Increase in demand shown by increase in numbers.
- Increase in average termly cost per placement. Typical placement cost at the most frequently used provider is £60,000 to 72,000 per annum. Over double the cost of a Shropshire special school.



- Increase in value of, and number of contributions to complex, Joint funded placements with social care and the Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- To counter this increase in demand for independent Special School placements we have increased top-up funding to mainstream schools, building capacity in SEND hubs attached to mainstream schools, increased top-up funding through an increase in banding levels in our 3 Special Schools and are providing a robust challenge around any placement decisions through the SEND team's commissioning and Procurement panel.

Top Up Funding to Special Schools

- An overspend £0.97m relates to top-up funding paid to Shropshire's special schools.
- Expenditure of £6.347m on top-up funding to Shropshire special schools is higher than previously forecast.

Top Up Funding to Mainstream Schools

- £0.258m relating to top-up funding paid to mainstream schools where expenditure totalled £5.943m in 2023-24. Representing an 18% increase compared to 2022-23.
- An increase in demand for top-up funding in mainstream settings mirrors the national picture. This figure includes the Graduation Support Pathway Payments as well as top-up funding.

SEN Support Services

- An overspend of £1.610m against this budget totalling £1.898m in 2023-24. The majority of the overspend relates to one-off staffing overspends, where additional staff have been employed, sometimes as agency workers to support the wider increase in demand.
- The Council's DSG financial position is moving from a cumulative surplus carried forward of £2.181m at the start of this financial year to a cumulative deficit of £2.304m at the end of this financial year.
- The 2024-25 provisional High Needs Block DSG allocation (before deductions) has been published. Shropshire's allocation is £42.188m representing a 5% increase compared to the 2023-24 allocation of £40.156m. Given that expenditure in 2023-24 on the High Needs Block increased by 26% or £9.048m compared to the 2022-23 figure of £34.854m, future expenditure growth is likely to outstrip future growth in High Needs Block DSG allocations.
- The High Needs Block DSG 3-year forecasting exercise undertaken in early 2023 forecasted that the council would



move to a DSG deficit position due to this shortfall in funding relative to increase in expenditure. There is an ongoing review of this 3 year forecast exercise to assess the extent by which future expenditure is likely to exceed future high needs block DSG income. This exercise will explore the plans that can be put in place to mitigate this, and timescale for delivery of these mitigations.

Marilyn Hunt asked whether and work has been done to compare the increase in DSG to similar local authorities.

David Shaw replied that yes, this work was being done and is part of the wider work that will be brought back at the September meeting.

David also pointed out that it is important to note that there is recoupment of costs from other authorities of around £373,000 and that the council have created around 200 additional special school places.

Sarah Godden raised the point of costs to pay agency staff and enquired whether there would be more permanent staff used in future. David Shaw said that this is something that the council is committed to improving.

Karan Levell added that they are linking with other local authorities to look at structures, strategies, and steps forward.

4. Special School Top-Up Bandings 23/24 and 24/25, including an overview of all current High Needs Banding Levels.

Karen Levell presented the paper.

Purpose and Background

- To inform Schools forum of the work that has been undertaken to align the top-up banding levels for children and young people with SEN attending Shropshire special schools.
- Special school places not only offer a lower cost alternative to independent places, but also allow pupils to be educated in their community. It is recognised that special schools are facing significant financial pressure due to increasing numbers of pupils with ever greater levels and complexities of need.
- Special Schools are funded from the High Needs Block - £10,000 per commissioned place, plus a top up for each child placed.
- 3 Special Schools in Shropshire – Severndale (415), Woodlands (82) & Keystone (90 rising to 120)
- Current funding arrangements for Severndale and Woodlands have been in place since 2014. Commissioned Place Funding and Top-Up rates remained unchanged.



- Different approaches across Special Schools – Severndale = banded. Woodlands & Keystone = single flat rate.

Banding Levels

Severndale – 4 levels

- Band A £1,000
- Band B £4,314
- Band C £11,696
- Band D £18,628

Woodlands & Keystone – flat rate £12,585

Severndale

- Concerns raised over insufficient funding to provide specialist provision, including level of staffing required to safely deliver the provision outlined in EHC plans. Challenges in managing School budgets within the current funding bands.
- Agreed action necessary between Local Authority and Trust to work together to ensure school was financially sustainable and able to provide good quality education to the Children and Young people.

Two Stage process:

- Firstly, working through annual review process with each individual pupil to confirm needs and appropriate banding for each CYP using Banding Criteria and back dating resulting banding changes to September 2023
- Secondly, review banding rates in line with local/ regional and national benchmarking to ensure school is safe and secure.

Severndale Review

- Full audit of the school
- Agreed minimum guarantee of staffing to keep school safe.
- Findings – too many children on wrong band and value of banding insufficient.

Proposed Funding for 2023-24					
Row Labels	2324 Numbers	% Split	Current		
			Banding Value	Sum of Banding Value	
Band A	0	0%	£1,000		0
Band B	84	21%	£11,696		£982,464
Band C	204.5	50%	£11,696		£2,391,832
Band D	51.5	13%	£18,628		£959,342
Band E	69.5	17%	£25,650		£1,782,675
Grand Total	409.5				£6,116,313
Commissioned	415		£10,000		£4,150,000
TOTAL Top Up & Place					£10,266,313

Woodlands

- Agreed minimum guarantee of staffing to keep school safe.



- Findings – too many children on wrong band and value of banding insufficient
- Agreed action necessary between Local Authority and Trust to work together to confirm number of commissioned places at 82 & move from flat rate top – up funding system to a 3 Band model reflective of pupil need.
- Firstly, developing banding descriptors for each level. Followed by alignment of pupils to the appropriate bands based on individual need resulting in pupils being placed on one of 3 bands.
- Secondly –providing additional top –ups within the banding – identification of pupils through SEN panel – working closely with Woodlands admissions team

Woodlands Review

Top up funding to be provided on a three-band pathway model (further detail of the three band descriptions has been provided)

Banding rates:

- Pathway 1: £12,585 34 students
- Pathway 2: £19,500 24 students
- Pathway 3: £26,000 24 students

Findings – disproportionate level of pupils at Pathway 3

Conclusion

- New banding rates reflective of continuum of provision and level of need
- Impact Forecast overspend on HNB from £4.5 m to £6m
- Reduced supply staff – more stability
- Seeing increasing confidence – more capacity to meet needs of complex pupils – reducing reliance on INMSS sector.
- Leading to prevention of external placements and increased scope for bringing pupils back

Alison Ashley pointed out the amount of work that Karen and her team have put into the work on Banding.

Marilyn hunt pointed out that the 3 different pathways may cause confusion.

Karen stated that work is being done to align the terminology used.

Alison Ashley added that Karen and David have been working in association with schools so any changes would be agreed by all involved.

Verbal Update, Outline of the EHCP Placement process, including challenges and opportunities of moving CYP.



Karen updated the Schools Forum on the process of looking at children who are in out independent and maintained Special Schools and the activity and process of bringing those children back.

- Through Annual Reviews of the EHCPs that statutory procedure which entails a significant timeline that involves the provider holding an annual review meeting and potentially additional assessments and updates from Educational Psychology teams.
- Statutory timeline that entails the Local Authority receiving the annual review reports, amending the reports, going out to consultation with parents and then finalising a plan.
- It is important to note that many of the children will have been on a considerable journey before attending the non-maintained and independent provisions.
- The Local Authority must give families rights of appeal, through mediations or the SEN tribunal.

Karen provided case examples to highlight the process.

Alison Ashley pointed out the lack of choice and lack of locality of Special School provision in Shropshire compared to larger Local Authorities.

Stephen Matthews asked if this situation was likely to improve.

Alison Ashley responded that opening Free Schools or Hubs would mean children with less complex needs could be kept in their locality area, which would bring down transport costs and free up spaces for more complex children.

David Shaw reiterated the length of time that this work would take, that it could take three to five years or longer.

Shelly Hurdley commented from an early years perspective on the importance of early intervention.

4. **Update on the development of new SEND Hubs**

Andy Nichols presented the paper.

To Summarise (as of June 2024):

- 4 new hubs created (Bowbrook, Ellesmere, Whitchurch, Morda)
- 1 Hub expanded (Bridgnorth)
- 50 additional places (up 47%)
- 3 new Education Quality Advisors (SEND and AP) appointed.
- Projected 5-year cost reduction to HN budget of £8.5m v's placing in independent.



Next Steps:

- Expand provision further - rebuilds not just refurb.
- Co-production / collaboration
- Keeping the focus upon local provision wherever possible

5. **SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework.**

David Shaw presented the Papers.

Purpose

- This strategy sets the direction and commitment from the Area Send Partnership to develop an inclusive system where everyone can thrive.

Our Priorities

The draft proposed system wide priorities will enable the implementation of our vision and address the themes emerging from our self-evaluation;

- Develop local, high quality, inclusive provision across the system. Including strengthening the graduated response and ordinarily available provision (SOAP) whilst ensuring consistency and effectiveness of the emotional health and mental wellbeing offer in mainstream education settings, across all phases.
- Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.
- Enable children and young people to communicate confidently, contribute to decisions, and feel visible and valued members of their community.
- Develop a proactive, supportive, and clear alternative provision offer.
- Develop a system that makes sense and works together, improving co-production, communication and engagement with families and professionals from all services. Including Improving the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, annual reviews, and transition pathways.
- Develop a data informed and intelligence rich approach.
- Enable children and young people to feel visible and valued members of their community, ensuring they are supported to be as socially and economically independent as possible to achieve their next steps in life.

6.

Outcomes Framework

There are two important reasons to develop an agreed outcomes framework.



- We need to measure our performance by focusing clearly on how our work is impacting on outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- We need to ensure that we have a framework of consistent, regular measurements that we can apply year on year to see how our impact on children and young people with SEND is changing over time.

A summary

Feedback is welcomed from Schools Forum Members by the 1st of July 2024.

Feedback is also being gathered from a range of other people and groups, including CYP directly.

Public consultation on the SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework is now planned for w/c 8th July and will run for 6 weeks.

Sarah Finch pointed out the importance of attendance once a child is in place in a provision and that there needs to be a tighter definition on achievement with regards to wherever the starting points are.

David Shaw welcomed the feedback.

7. Schools Forum Work Programme and Membership

David Shaw presented the paper.

- 20 June 2024 –
- Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring
- 12 September 2024 –
- Final Dedicated Schools Grant update 2023-24
- Updated Dedicated Schools Grant 2024-25
- Schools Revenue Funding Update 2025-26
- Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25
- Updated Dedicated Schools Grant 2024-25
- Growth Fund Allocations 2023-24 and 2024-25
- Early Years Block Allocations 2023-24 and 2024-25
- 7 November 2024
- Central Retention of Dedicated Schools Grant from April 2025
- Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25
- 5 December 2024
- School Funding Arrangements 2025-26
- Consultation on the Central Retention of Dedicated Schools Grant from April 2025
- Central Schools Services Block 2024-25
- 9 January 2025 (Provisional)



- Extraordinary meeting if needed to make decisions on APT submission.
23 January 2025
- School Revenue Funding Settlement 2025-26
- Shropshire Schools Forum Constitution
20 March 2025
- Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25
- High Needs Block 3 Year forecasting

David Shaw asked whether Forum Members would value having some Face-to-Face meetings as well as online.

8. **Communications**

Bill Dowell pointed out that a lot of things would have to wait until after the election and thanked everybody for attending.

9. **Future Meeting Dates**

12 September 2024
7 November 2024
5 December 2024
9 January 2025
23 January 2025

Meeting was closed at 9.48 am.



DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MONITORING

Responsible Officer Stephen Waters
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Summary

This report outlines to Schools Forum members the centrally retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) forecast outturn position at the end of October 2024.

Recommendation

This report is for information only.

REPORT

1. The overall 2024-25 outturn against centrally retained DSG is forecast to be £5.142m in deficit as at the end of October. It should be noted that this figure is the in-year deficit and needs to be added to the £2.304m deficit carried forward from 2023-24 in order to give an overall cumulative DSG deficit position of £7.446m.

De-delegated Items

2. In December 2024, Schools Forum agreed to de-delegate a portion of their school budgets in relation to Maternity Leave supply cover. As at the end of October, there is a forecast overspend of £0.161m against the £0.267m de-delegated budget. As expenditure in 2023-24 totalled £0.267m, there is a significant increase in expenditure in this financial year. The forecast level of expenditure of £0.427m does seem high compared to previous years so this financial year's expenditure could be a one-off occurrence but will have to be closely monitored.

Centrally Controlled Early Years Budget

3. In July 2024, the provisional Early Years Block DSG allocation was updated based on the number of part time equivalents (PTEs) taking up the entitlements as recorded on the January 2024 PTE census numbers. Shropshire's Early Years Block DSG allocation for 2024-25 is £29.140m as of July 2024.
4. The indicative allocations for Early Years Block DSG entitlements will be updated following new termly headcounts in the summer 2024 and autumn 2024 terms, and the January 2025 census. The final Early Years Block DSG allocations will be based on (five-twelfths January 2024 PTE census numbers) + (seven-twelfths January 2025 PTE census numbers).



5. The forecast outturn position for the Early Years Block is showing a £0.018m overspend against a provisional budget of £29.140m. This variance relates to the £0.396m centrally retained budget relating to staffing. There are no variances to budget forecast at this stage in the year relating to the large budgets for universal free entitlement for 3-4 year olds or 2 year olds entitlement. Once officers have finished processing the invoices for the Autumn Term funding for 2 year olds and 3-4 year olds a more precise forecast will be made and this position will be reported at the next Schools Forum.

Centrally Controlled High Needs Budget

6. The centrally controlled High Needs Block for 2024-25 is £32.337m. This budget excludes the place funding element of the High Needs Block totalling £9.936m. The total High Needs Block DSG allocation (before deductions) is £42.272m. It is important to note that Shropshire's 2024-25 High Needs Block DSG has increased by £2.116m compared to the £40.156m allocation in 2023-24. This 5.3% increase is a smaller percentage increase than the previous year's increase.
7. In January 2024, Schools Forum members confirmed that the National Funding Formula should be applied with minimal adjustment to funding factors. This meant that there was no further funding available to enable up to a 0.5% transfer from the schools block to the High Needs Block DSG. This is the second consecutive financial year where no transfer has been applied.
8. Overall, the forecast outturn position for the High Needs Block is an in-year deficit of £4.965m against a centrally controlled High Needs Budget of £32.337m.

Lines 1.2.1 & Line 1.2.2 - Top Up funding – Mainstream Schools

9. On budget lines 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, shown in the Appendix, there is a forecast overspend of £2.622m.

Top Up funding - Mainstream Schools

10. Within this £2.622m forecast underspend, an overspend of £0.122m relates to the top-up funding paid to mainstream schools. As anticipated, there has been a large increase in top-up funding to mainstream schools reflecting increasing requests for EHC Needs Assessment and issuing of EHC plans.
11. There is currently a £0.242m underspend forecast against the net recoupment budget which represents recoupment of top-up funding between local authorities. This budget is difficult to forecast accurately as top-up funding is recouped, in some cases up to a year in arrears.

Lines 1.2.1 & Line 1.2.2 - Top Up funding – Special Schools

12. In addition to the figures mentioned in paragraphs 10 and 11, there is a £2.742m overspend on top-up funding to special schools.
13. Total expenditure on top-up funding to special schools is forecast to increase significantly in 2024-25, due by changes to top-up funding levels payable to 2 Shropshire Council special schools as reported to Schools Forum in the June meeting.
14. With Severndale Specialist School, an annual review process was undertaken over the Summer to review each pupil's needs and therefore the appropriate banding level. The banding levels were increased and pupils allocated to appropriate banding levels and the resulting changes backdated to the start of the 2023/24 academic year. As a result, a one-off payment of £2.274m was made to the school which accounts for much of the budget pressure on this budget line.

15. This review of, and subsequent increase in, banding levels across the Council's special schools aligns with the strategy to build capacity in these settings where appropriate.

Line 1.2.2 - Post 16 Further Education Colleges

16. There is a budget of £2.159m allocated for Post 16 funding at further education colleges and sixth form colleges.
17. The 2023-24 outturn position reported actual expenditure of £1.685m and therefore an underspend of £0.475m against the 2023-24 budget.
18. For 2024-25, despite the overall increase in High Needs Block DSG allocation, a decision was made to keep the budget for Post 16 Further Education Colleges at the same level of £2.159m to reflect the decrease in spend on this type of placement in the last 3 financial years.
19. There is a forecast increase in expenditure of £0.212m compared to 2023-24 outturn position, however despite this increase there is still a significant forecast underspend of £0.262m being reported.
20. Despite the forecast underspend, it is important to note that significant growth in the expenditure on post 16 further education college placements is the national picture and Shropshire has seen particularly significant growth in recent years in terms of the number of post 16 EHC Plans.
21. We understand that there is a higher proportion of post 16 pupils attending Independent Special Schools or independent alternative providers and the expenditure for these young people is showing in the budget area relating to independent providers instead.

Lines 1.2.3 - Top Up funding - Non-Maintained and Independent Providers

22. The 2024-25 budget of £12.941m for Independent Providers has been increased by £2.958m compared to the 2023-24 budget level of £9.983m. The large increase in budget reflects that Shropshire experienced a significant increase in expenditure in this budget area in 2022-23 and 2023-24, highlighted by actual expenditure totalling £13.892m in 2023-24, an overspend of £3.910m in that year. Increasing the budget to £12.941m, while increasing the budget by £2.958m still results in a budget that is £0.951m less than last year's outturn figure. This emphasises the need to bring down expenditure in this area and not only reduce the increase in expenditure.
23. Forecast expenditure for 2024-25 is £15.092m, resulting in a forecast overspend of £2.151m.
24. There are several explanations for the large increase in forecasted expenditure in 2024-25. Firstly, the Council has experienced a sharp increase in demand year on year for Independent Special School placements as evidenced by the number of new placements, particularly at one SEMH provider where capacity has been increased. There also continues to be a more frequent use of independent alternative providers, particularly in relation to children who are post 16. This trend has continued in 2024-25 and partly explains the overspend as well as the underspend on the Post 16 Further Education College placements budget.
25. The Council has established a SEND Commissioning and Procurement Panel to review requests and make decisions on high needs funding for Independent Special Schools and Mainstream Special Schools. The panel also acts as a forum to ratify and respond to fee uplifts from all settings in conjunction with and accounting for decisions made at the West Midlands Price Review Panel on behalf of the 14 local authorities including Shropshire.

Lines 1.2.5 – SEN Support Services

26. There is a forecast overspend of £0.430m against the SEN Support Service budget of £2.121m. Similarly to 2022-23 and 2023-24, the overspend in 2024-25 relates to staffing overspends where additional staff have been employed, sometimes as agency workers to support the wider increase in demand. Some of these employees are working with the Educational Psychology Service to address increasing demand. There is also an increase in the use of external Speech and Language Therapists.

Overall position

27. The Council's DSG financial position of a forecast cumulative deficit of £7.446m as at the end of the 2024-25 financial year reflects a continuing pressure on the total High Needs budget as expenditure continues to increase sharply year on year. This increase has been particularly pronounced over the last 2 financial years; 2023-24 and 2024-25.
28. On Wednesday 30th October, the Chancellor announced the government's Budget for 2025-26. £1bn of additional funding has been earmarked for High Needs, recognising that the number of children with SEND is increasing and the associated costs of SEND provision has become one of the leading drivers of financial pressures for local authorities.
29. As it stands, there is a DSG Deficit statutory override in place until March 2026. This means that any deficit associated with the DSG is kept off the councils' balance sheet due to the statutory override set out in The Local Authorities Capital Finance and Accounting (England) Regulations. Nationally, there is concern that no announcement has been forthcoming on whether this override will be extended. If the override is not extended, the High Needs deficit will have an impact on the council's overall financial position and this risk will need to be addressed through the council's medium term financial strategy.
30. The National Audit Office (NAO) report published in October 24 provides a useful independent summary of the national position regarding the DSG High Needs Block. The report is available in the link below;
31. [Support for children and young people with special educational needs - NAO report](#)

APPENDIX

CENTRALLY RETAINED DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FUNDING PERIOD (2024-25)

	2024-25 Budget £	2024-25 Forecast Spend £	2024-25 Variance £
DEDELEGATED ITEMS			
1.1.1 Contingencies	53,710	53,710	-
1.1.2 Behaviour Support Services	-	-	-
1.1.3 Support to UPEG and bilingual learners	-	-	-
1.1.4 Free school meals eligibility	-	-	-
1.1.5 Insurance	-	-	-
1.1.6 Museum and Library Services	-	-	-
1.1.7 Licences/subscriptions	-	-	-
1.1.8 Staff costs Maternity supply cover	266,950	427,985	161,035
1.1.9 Staff costs Trade Union Duties	27,800	28,234	434
1.1.10 School Improvement	158,430	158,430	-
DEDELEGATED ITEMS SUB TOTAL	506,890	668,359	161,469
CENTRALLY CONTROLLED EARLY YEARS BUDGET			
1.3.1 Central Expenditure on Children under 5	395,250	412,978	17,728
1.0.1 Individual Schools Budget - Early Years PVI's and Maintained Nursery Provision	28,744,860	28,744,860	-
CENTRALLY CONTROLLED EARLY YEARS SUB TOTAL	29,140,110	29,157,838	17,728
CENTRALLY CONTROLLED HIGH NEEDS BUDGET			
1.2.1 Top Up funding - Maintained Providers	3,703,720	3,597,319	- 106,401
1.2.2 Top Up funding - Academies, Free Schools and Colleges - Excluding FE College Placements	9,726,680	12,454,909	2,728,229
1.2.2 Top Up funding - Academies, Free Schools and Colleges - FE College Placements	2,159,300	1,897,218	- 262,082
1.2.3 Top Up funding - Non-Maintained and Independent Providers	12,940,970	15,092,016	2,151,046
1.2.4 Additional High Needs Targeted Funding for Maintained Schools and Academies	400,000	527,415	127,415
1.2.5 SEN Support Services	2,121,150	2,551,087	429,937
1.2.6 Hospital Education Services	170,190	149,935	- 20,255
1.2.7 Other Alternative Provision Services	143,500	171,328	27,828
1.2.8 Support for Inclusion	971,140	860,566	- 110,574
1.2.9 Special Schools and PRUs in Financial Difficulty	-	-	-
1.2.10 PFI / BSF Costs at Special Schools and AP / PRUs	-	-	-
1.2.11 Direct Payments (SEN and Disability)	-	-	-
1.2.12 Carbon Reduction Commitment Allowances (PRUs)	-	-	-
CENTRALLY CONTROLLED HIGH NEEDS BUDGET SUB TOTAL	32,336,650	37,301,792	4,965,142
CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK			
1.4.1 Contribution to combined budgets	-	-	-
1.4.2 Schools Admissions	308,150	288,183	- 19,967
1.4.3 Servicing of Schools Forums	10,000	7,348	- 2,652
1.4.4 Termination of employment costs	756,330	756,330	-
1.4.5 Falling Rolls Fund	-	-	-
1.4.6 Capital Expenditure from Revenue (CERA)	-	-	-
1.4.7 Prudential Borrowing Costs	295,350	295,350	-
1.4.8 Fees to independent schools without SEN	-	-	-
1.4.9 Equal Pay - Back Pay	-	-	-
1.4.10 Pupil growth / Infant Class sizes	-	-	-
1.4.11 SEN Transport	-	-	-
1.4.12 Exceptions agreed by Secretary of State (Deficit)	-	-	-
1.4.13 Other Items (Copyright Licensing Agency fee)	276,700	276,700	-
1.5. Ongoing duties	776,230	796,240	20,010
CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK BUDGET SUB TOTAL	2,422,760	2,420,151	- 2,609
TOTAL CENTRAL DSG	64,406,410	69,548,140	5,141,730
SCHOOLS BLOCK GROWTH FUNDING (PART OF ISB)	350,000	350,000	-
TOTAL CENTRAL DSG + SCHOOLS BLOCK GROWTH FUNDING	64,756,410	69,898,140	5,141,730

	£
DSG DEFICIT CARRIED FORWARD FROM PREVIOUS YEARS	2,304,440
2024-25 IN YEAR DEFICIT	5,141,730
CUMULATIVE CENTRAL DSG SURPLUS	7,446,170

Breakdown of total DSG:

TOTAL CENTRAL DSG	64,756,410
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High Needs Budget - Place Funding	
Post 16 FE Colleges	1,080,000
Pre and Post 16 SEN Places - Special Academies	4,967,500
Pre-16 Special Free Schools	1,075,000
Pre and Post 16 SEN Places - Resourced Provisions	464,500
Total deduction to 2024-25 High Needs Block for direct funding of places by ESFA	7,587,000
TMBS	1,560,000
Maintained School SEND Hubs	382,000
Additional Commissioned Place Funding at Special Academies	78,500
Teachers Pay/Pension for Special Academies	328,020
Total deduction to 2024-25 High Needs Block for central funding of places	2,348,520
HIGH NEEDS BUDGET - Place Funding	9,935,520

INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS BUDGET SHARES (Excluding De-delegated Items and transfer to Growth Fund)	208,578,834
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TOTAL DSG Allocation (Updated July 2024)	283,270,753
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Schools Forum

Date: 07 November 2024

Time: 9.00 am to 11.00 am

Venue: Council Chamber,
Shirehall

Paper

C

Public

SCHOOLS REVENUE FUNDING 2025-26

Responsible Officer Sam Bradley

Email: Samantha.bradley@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743 256411

Briefing Note on update on the National Funding Formula:

On the 7 October 2024 the LA received a small update on the Schools Funding Arrangements for 2025/26

- Due to the timing of the general election, the publication of the notional schools and high needs national funding formula (NFF) allocations for 2025 to 2026 has been delayed.
- There will be no substantial changes to the NFF for 2025 to 2026. • The DFE aim to publish notional NFF allocations following the budget announcement on 30 October 2024. The DSG allocations will then be published in December 2024.
- Due to the delay in confirming the NFF factor values there will not be a modelling Authority Proforma Tool (APT) for 2025/26 because the tool has limited use without these.
- As the individual NFF factors for 2025/26 will operate in the same way as in 2024/25, the disapplication process to similar timelines as last year and the deadline is 18th November 2024.



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Agenda Item 7	
Schools Forum	Paper
Date:	D
Time:	
Venue: (MS) Teams	
	Public

Early Years Update 24/25

Responsible Officer Andy Nicholls, Education and Childcare Sufficiency Manager
email: Andy.nicholls@shropshire.gov.uk

Summary

This paper details the updates that have taken place regarding early years provision and team structure in the past few months – highlighting how Shropshire is meeting its sufficiency duty. As well as updating Schools Forum on additional grant funding for 3 / 4-year-olds that will be passed on to settings.

Recommendation

Schools Forum are asked to consider, comment upon and approve the Local Authorities proposed plans for the use of the additional EY Budget Grant as set out below.

REPORT

1 Background

Over the past few months there have been some changes to the management structure of Early Years at Shropshire Council. These changes have allowed a greater focus to be put upon sufficiency and readiness in preparation for the expansion of the free child care offer to 30 hours for children of 9months+ for working families from September 2025.

2 Responsible officers:

The following officers have responsibility for sufficiency of places (including capital projects) and for the management of the Early Years Funding Budget:

1. Andy Nicholls – Education and Childcare Sufficiency Manager
2. Dan Steele – Senior Development Officer - Childcare and Sufficiency.



3 Readiness / Sufficiency

In order to meet our sufficiency duty, the Department for Education made capital grant payments to all local authorities – Shropshire was awarded £541 000. The approach that has been taken is that all settings (private, voluntary, independent and schools) who were interested in expanding their provision were asked to complete expressions of interest, these were then ranked according to identified need for spaces and value for money. Visits to settings have taken place and capital grants awarded – to date circa £400k has been awarded creating approximately 300 extra spaces. The latest information from the DfE suggests that there is a need in Shropshire to generate circa 400 new spaces by September 2025. We (and the DfE) are confident that our sufficiency duty will be met.

Current sufficiency data

When looking at current sufficiency data, Shropshire is better placed than most Local Authorities. We rank **first** in the West Midlands, **first** against our Statistical Neighbours and 3rd Nationally when examining the % of codes requested by parents compared to codes validated by providers. The latest figures are as follows (24.10.24):

All Ages

Shropshire - 92.56%

West Midlands – 88%

National -87%

Under 1s

Shropshire - 88.14%

West Midlands – 85%

National – 84%

1YOs

Shropshire - 93.06%

West Midlands – 89%

National – 88%

2YOs

Shropshire - 93.77%

West Midlands – 87%

National – 87%

This is an encouraging picture, however, as mentioned above there is a need to ensure that sufficient places are created and we are ready for the expansion of places – particularly the expansion of Under 1 and 1 year old provision.



Next Steps

Over the next few months, as well as continuing the capital expansion programme, officers will be examining ways of gathering local data in order to meet our sufficiency duty. There is a need to clearly understand the local provision picture by ward level as well as school place planning area level. This exercise will be undertaken alongside officers from other teams within the council as well as with officers from the DfE, Childcare Works and other LAs who have successfully completed this important piece of work.

4 Additional Early Years Budget Grant (EYBG)

It has recently been announced that Shropshire has been awarded an additional £1.4m to account for the uplift in the teachers pay award for 24/25. EYBG is to support early years providers who are delivering the government's early years entitlements with their costs, following the recent teachers pay award, for the period September 2024 to March 2025. It is expected that the full grant is passed onto providers – this equates to an additional 8p per hour for all 3 and 4 year olds – increasing the hourly rate to £5.03 per hour.

All other rates will stay the same as agreed at Schools Forum January 2024.

All rates will be reviewed, as current practice, once the new budget is announced for 25/26.

New Hourly Rates of Funding for 24/25 **(Commencing September 2024- Paid retrospectively)**

The new proposed funding rates are as follows:

Entitlement	Current 24/25 Rates	Increase	New 24/25 Rates
3&4 YO – both universal and extended	£4.95	+8p	£5.03
2YO – both disadvantaged and expanded	£6.90	No Change	£6.90
9 Month old from Sept 24	£9.05	No Change	£9.05

Schools Forum are asked to approve this increase and agree to backdating to September 2024.



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Implementation of Shropshire Ordinarily Available Provision (SOAP)

November 2024

Aims from September 2024

- Priority 1: All schools and settings understand and are aware of Ordinarily Available Provision
- Priority 2: SEND Hubs begin to work towards becoming 'centres of excellence'
- Priority 3: All schools and settings have access to models of best practice in order to build their capacity to meet the needs of CYP with SEND

Priority 1- All schools and settings understand and are aware of Ordinarily Available Provision

Autumn Term

- Education Quality Advisers introduced to primary and secondary schools.
- Support visits undertaken with respect to inclusive practice in settings and schools
- Three locality-based SEND and Inclusion network meetings shared with schools
- Production of SEND and Inclusion newsletter to include 'SOAP spotlight'
- Implementation of 'test and learn' project with group of schools

Spring and Summer Terms

- Finalise EY and Post-16 OAP
- SOAP relaunch and sharing of best practice in SEND and Inclusion network meetings
- Completion of school and LA commissioned SEND reviews within schools and settings to provide support and challenge with respect to OAP.
- Test and learn project with focus group schools to review their use of SOAP and develop further their implementation. Use feedback provided on successes and challenges to feed into SOAP review.
- Draw out key themes to develop a CDP offer.

Priority 2: SEND Hubs begin to work towards becoming ‘centres of excellence’

Autumn Term

- Education Quality Advisers linked to hubs to provide challenge/support building on SeaView trust reviews
- Implementation of SEND hubs quality improvement cycle.
- SEND hub network established which provides supervision, support and coaching to hub leaders.
- Development of SEND Hub quality assurance criteria and risk assessment tracking systems that supports the QA of hubs.
- School performance monitoring to include SEND hub categorisation (to inform future challenge/support by EQAs)

Spring and Summer Terms

- School performance monitoring to include SEND hub categorisation (to inform future challenge/support by EQAs)
- Further monitoring of implementation SOAP within SEND Hubs through SEND review process.

Priority 3: All schools and settings have access to models of best practice in order to build their capacity to meet the needs of CYP with SEND

Autumn Term

- Relaunch and rebranding SENCo network meetings as SEND and Inclusion forums.
- EQA facilitated solution circles to provide support to SENCOs
- Review of systems with respect to Early Intervention Grant (EIG) and Graduated Support Pathway funding to include aspects of support.
- EQAs secured funding for SEND Outreach service funded through change programme
- Development of Resource Bank to underpin SOAP

Spring and Summer Terms

- School performance monitoring to include SEND hub categorisation (to inform future challenge/support by EQAs)
- Further monitoring of implementation SOAP within SEND Hubs through SEND review process.
- Delivery of SEND outreach support (4 x FT Outreach teachers (North, Central, South and EY specialist) – funded through change programme in first instance (before moving to traded service)

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