



Schools Forum

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Item

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Paper

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DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MONITORING

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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 September 2021.

Recommendation

This report is for information only.

REPORT

1. The overall 2021-22 outturn against centrally retained DSG is forecast to be £0.348m in surplus as at the end of September 2021. It should be noted that this figure is the in-year surplus and needs to be added to the £0.659m overspend carried forward from 2020-21 in order to give an overall cumulative DSG deficit position of £0.311m.
2. Please note that this cumulative DSG deficit is provisional at this point in time as the final Early Years Block DSG allocation for 2020-21 is not expected to be published until later in the year.
3. In December 2020, Schools Forum approved a transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to support growth pressures on the High Needs Block. Agreement was given to transfer the remaining schools block budget, up to 0.5% after fully funding schools with the National Funding Formula factors and values. In 2021-22, the Council has been able to fully fund schools in this way, while transferring across the full 0.5% of the Schools Block budget to the High Needs Block budget which has increased the High Needs Block budget in year by £0.876m from the published allocation of £31.767m to a budget of £32.644m.

Centrally Controlled Early Years Budget

4. The outturn position for the Early Years Block is still forecast to be at the provisional budgeted level of £17.028m.

Centrally Controlled High Needs Budget

5. The centrally controlled High Needs Block for 2021-22 is £24.141m. This budget excludes the place funding element of the High Needs Block totalling £8.503m but does include the transfer of £0.876m funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block as approved by Schools Forum.
6. It is important to note that Shropshire's High Needs Block DSG allocation has increased by £3.751m from £28.016m in 2020-21 to £31.767m in 2021-22. This is partly due to the funding floor factor in the high needs national funding formula for 2021-22 providing for every local authority to receive an underlying increase of at least 8% per head of 2 to 18 population. The other explanation for the increase is that the High Needs Block DSG now incorporates the Teachers Pay and Pension grant for both Special Schools and Alternative Provision settings.
7. Overall, the forecast outturn position for the High Needs Block is an in-year surplus of £0.362m. Given that £0.876m of high needs funding represents a one-off transfer of funding from the Schools Block, this indicates that the High Needs Block DSG allocation without the transfer of funding from the Schools Block to Shropshire is insufficient to meet expenditure requirements if currenting spending levels continue.

Lines 1.2.1 & Line 1.2.2 - Top Up funding – Mainstream Schools and Post 16 Further Education

8. On budget lines 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, shown in the Appendix, there is a forecast underspend of £0.325m. This accounts for the majority of the £0.362m projected in-year surplus on the High Needs Block DSG.

Post 16 Further Education Colleges

9. Within the "1.2.2 - Top Up funding - Academies, Free Schools and Colleges" budget heading there is a budget of £2.770m allocated for Post 16 funding at further education colleges and sixth form colleges. Of the overall increase in allocation against the High Needs Block DSG, £0.581m was allocated against this budget heading.
10. The reason for significant growth in the expenditure budget on post 16 further education college placements is that this reflects the national picture and Shropshire has seen particularly significant growth in recent years in terms of the number of post 16 FE college placements. In 2021-22, forecasted expenditure on Post 16 FE college placements is £2.440m so there is a forecast underspend of £0.331m against this budget heading but as with top-up funding to mainstream

settings it is important to note that while there is a forecast underspend against the budget set internally which anticipated significant growth, the recent trend of increasing expenditure does continue as evidenced by this year's forecast expenditure of £2.440m being £0.222m higher than last year's outturn.

11. The Council has and will continue to experience significant expenditure growth in this area as a direct result of changes in legislation which has seen local authorities having significant new statutory duties for students with special educational needs up to the age of 25 years under the Childrens and Families Act (September 2014). The local authority's SEN team work closely with local colleges to increase accessibility to education within mainstream colleges rather than more expensive independent specialist providers. Council officers have been successful in achieving this to date with a much lower proportion of Post 16 students in independent specialist provider settings when compared with several years ago.

Top Up funding - Mainstream Schools

12. Significant growth has been allocated to this budget for 2021-22 and while the expenditure continues to increase year on year, the forecasted spend is close to the budgeted level showing a £0.048m overspend.
13. The 2021-22 forecasted expenditure is £4.949m so an increase of £0.515m compared to the 2020-21 outturn figure of £4.434m.
14. There has been an increase in the value of Graduated Support Pathway (GSP) payments made since their introduction in 2017-18. In 2020-21, expenditure on GSP Payments paid to primary maintained schools specifically totalled £0.339m which represents an increase of 39% on the previous year's total of £0.243m. In the first quarter of 2021-22, the expenditure on GSP Payments paid to primary maintained schools was £0.105m indicating a forecasted level of expenditure of £0.418m for 2021-22. This indicates that as well as an increase in demand for top-up funding in mainstream schools reflecting the national picture, there is also an increase in demand for GSP payments.

Top Up funding – Special Schools

15. There is also an underspend of £0.042m on top-up funding paid to mainstream schools. The 2021-22 forecasted expenditure is £5.403m so an increase of £0.609m compared to the 2020-21 outturn figure of £4.794m. This increase does include an increase of £0.327m relating to the Teachers Pay and Pension grant that has been passported on to the Council's two Special Schools via the High Needs Block DSG allocation.

De-Delegated Items

16. It should be noted that there is a £0.039m forecasted overspend on de-delegated maternity pay for schools where forecast expenditure is £0.271m but the de-delegated value from schools based on £19.27 per pupil is £0.232m.

Accounting for the DSG Deficit

17. The DSG guidance states conditions relating to DSG deficits for those local authorities that have an overall deficit on their DSG as follows:
 - Provide information as and when requested by the department about its plans for managing its DSG account in the 2020 to 2021 financial year and subsequently.
 - Provide information as and when requested by the department about pressures and potential savings on its high needs budget.
 - Meet with officials of the department as and when they request to discuss the local authority's plans and financial situation.
 - Keep the schools forum regularly updated about the local authority's DSG account and plans for handling it, including high needs pressures and potential savings

18. Given that the overall DSG deficit is forecast to reduce to £0.311m from a brought forward position of £0.659m this is positive in terms of the Council meeting the Department for Education's requirement to reduce or manage down the deficit. It is important to note that this projected reduction in deficit is as a result of forecast less growth in expenditure compared to growth in High Needs Block DSG allocation rather than any reductions to High Needs Block DSG expenditure itself.