

# Schools Forum

Thursday 23 January 2025  
Via MS Teams

# Schools Forum online meeting

- In order to facilitate the smooth operation of the meeting:
- Please mute your microphones when not speaking
- Officers will briefly present their reports, using a PowerPoint presentation to get across the key aspects
- Use the 'Raise your hand' facility if you would like to raise a question or comment
- Alternatively use 'Chat' to advise the Chair that you would like to speak
- Turn off your video if bandwidth becomes an issue
- Please note that this meeting is being recorded and will be posted on YouTube





**Paper A**  
**Minutes and Matters Arising**  
**12 December 2024**  
**(Bill Dowell)**

## Minutes and matters arising - 12 December 2024

	Action	Name	Update
1.	Send out revised consultation on pupil growth contingency, including context and contact details for primary maintained representatives to all relevant schools	SB	Revised consultation issued and school forum representatives voted B non de-delegation of pupil growth contingency
2.	Organise training session for forum members to provide context and history on the ongoing responsibilities, de-delegation and top slicing and funding decisions to primary and secondary heads prior to decisions being required in Autumn term 2025-26	DS	To be arranged during the Autumn term 2025.



## **Verbal Update**

# **Shropshire Council Financial Sustainability (David Shaw)**

## **Paper B**

# **School Funding Arrangements 2025-26 (update)**

**(Sam Bradley)**

## School Funding Arrangements 2025-26

### Update to the schools NFF for 2025-2026

- Following the guidance of NFF and completion of APT, comparison below is based on the difference between 24-25 and 25-26 funding

25-26 Post MFG Budget	24-25 Post MFG Budget	Increase to budget from 24-25 to 25-26	% Increase
£222,586,325	£209,066,275	£13,520,050	6.47%

*Notes:*

Shropshire's allocation followed NFF factor values provided in the APT.

Difference in budgets will also be due to a movement in the NOR, therefore you cannot compare budgets from year to year if the NOR has changed.

## School Funding Arrangements 2025-26

### Update to the schools NFF for 2025-2026

147 funded schools  
20 secondary schools  
127 primary schools

- Overall

Funding in the DSG Schools Block increased by 6.47% (£13,520,050) in Shropshire from 24-25 to 25-26

- 12 schools received an increase of 5.18% to 20.0%
- 91 schools received an increase of 0.02% to 3.74%
- 44 schools received a reduction of between –0.00% and –14.67% (5 of these had a reduction of –4.42% to –14.67%)



## School Funding Arrangements 2025-26

### Affordability of the Funding Formula

- The Schools Block of the DSG is allocated to local authorities based on a primary unit of funding (PUF) and a secondary unit of funding (SUF). Shropshire's 2025-26 PUF is £5,661 and SUF is £6,829. These units of funding will be multiplied by the total October 2024 school census numbers on roll in Shropshire and added to Shropshire's historic spend on premises factors to give a total Shropshire Schools Block allocation for distribution to schools through the local funding formula.
- Work completed to date on the APT is demonstrating that the NFF is affordable and we will be able to fund schools in line with the NFF.

### To Note

- Schools Forum are asked to note the School Funding arrangements outlined above to deliver the NFF.

## School Funding Arrangements 2025-26

### Transfer of Funding between Blocks

- The Schools Block remains ringfenced in 2025-26 but local authorities retain limited flexibility to transfer up to 0.5% of their Schools Block funding into another block with approval of Schools Forum. To transfer an amount above 0.5%, approval would need to be sought from the Secretary of State for Education.
- In previous financial years (apart from 2023-24 and 2024-25 due to affordability), Shropshire Schools Forum approved a transfer up to 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to support the growing pressures on the high needs budget. Agreement was given to transfer remaining Schools Block budget (up to 0.5%) after fully funding schools in line with the NFF each year, including transitional protections and caps. Balances of £784,000 (0.49%), £397,000 (0.25%), £842,000 (0.5%) and £876,218 (0.5%) and £949,077 were transferred to the High Needs Block in previous years.

## School Funding Arrangements 2025-26

### Transfer of Funding between Blocks

- Following from 2024-25 into 2025-26 and increased cost pressures within the High Needs funding, as agreed by Schools Forum on the 12th December 2024, it is our intention to transfer up to 0.5% of the Schools Block budget into the High Needs Block.
- Work completed to date on the APT demonstrates that it will be possible to transfer 0.24% (£547,218) of the Schools Block into the High Needs Block after fully funding schools in line with the NFF.
- Schools Forum is asked to agree the recommendation to transfer any remaining balance, up to 0.5% of the Schools Block, into the High Needs Block ***after fully funding individual schools in line with the NFF.***

### To Note

- Schools Forum are asked to note the transfer of the remaining balance to the High Needs Block.

## **Paper C**

# **Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25 (Stephen Waters)**

## Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25

- The 2024-25 forecast outturn position for the DSG is a **£9.174m in-year deficit**
- This deficit needs to be added to the £2.304m DSG deficit carried forward from 2023-24 resulting in a forecast **cumulative DSG deficit of £11.479m**

	£ m'
DSG deficit carried forward from 2023-24	2.304
Forecast Outturn 2024-25	9.174
DSG deficit to be carried forward into 2025-26	11.479

# Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25

- 2024-25 Outturn by Block:

	2024-25 DSG Allocation £ m'	2024-25 Forecast Expenditure £ m'	2024-25 Forecast Variance £ m'
Early Years Block	29.490	29.546	0.056
Centrally controlled or retained High Needs Block	32.415	41.448	9.033
Central Schools Services Block	2.423	2.456	0.033
De-Delegated Items from Schools Block	0.507	0.559	0.052
School Growth Fund from Schools Block	0.350	0.350	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>65.184</b>	<b>74.358</b>	<b>9.174</b>

# Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25

## High Needs Block

- The forecast outturn position for the High Needs Block is an in-year deficit of £9.033m against a centrally controlled High Needs Budget of £32.415m. This budget excludes the place funding element of the High Needs Block totalling £9.936m.
- Shropshire's 2024-25 High Needs Block DSG of £42.350m has increased by £2.194m compared to the £40.156m allocation in 2023-24. This 5.5% increase is a smaller percentage increase than the previous year's increase
- For the second consecutive financial year there was no transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

# Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25

## High Needs Block – Top-Up Funding to Mainstream Schools

- Overspend of £2.790m relates to the top-up funding paid to mainstream schools (including SEND Hubs).
- Large increase in top-up funding to mainstream schools reflecting increasing requests for EHC Needs Assessment and issuing of EHC plans.

	2022-23 Outturn (£)	2023-24 Outturn (£)	2024-25 Budget (£)	2024-25 Forecast Outturn (£)
Primary Mainstream	3,096,667	3,826,004	3,771,340	5,952,010
Secondary Mainstream	1,936,949	2,122,070	2,124,140	2,736,721
<b>Mainstream Top-Up Funding</b>	<b>5,033,616</b>	<b>5,948,074</b>	<b>5,895,480</b>	<b>8,688,731</b>
Primary Mainstream % Increase		24%		56%
Secondary Mainstream % Increase		10%		29%
<b>Mainstream % Increase</b>		<b>18%</b>		<b>46%</b>



# Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25

## High Needs Block – Top-Up Funding to Special Schools

- Overspend of £3.336m relates to the top-up funding paid to Special schools (including PRU).
- Total expenditure on top-up funding to special schools has increased significantly in 2024-25, due by changes to top-up funding levels payable to 2 Shropshire special schools
- With Severndale Specialist School, an annual review process was undertaken 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
- Planned increase in numbers at Keystone Special School, where up to 120 pupils are now able to be placed from September 2024.

	2022-23 Outturn (£)	2023-24 Outturn (£)	2024-25 Budget (£)	2024-25 Forecast Outturn (£)
<b>Special Schools</b>	<b>5,588,486</b>	<b>6,347,464</b>	<b>6,051,800</b>	<b>9,388,165</b>
<b>Special % Increase</b>		<b>14%</b>		<b>48%</b>

# Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25

## High Needs Block – Non-Maintained and Independent Providers

		2022-23 Outturn (£ m')	2023-24 Outturn (£ m')	2024-25 Outturn (£ m')	2024-25 Variance (£ m')
	Independent Providers	8.466	13.892	15.519	2.578
	% increase		64%	12%	

- **Independent Special Schools**
- Increase in demand shown by increase in numbers
- Increase in average termly cost per placement (both due to price inflation pressures and additional staffing support – increasing complexity). Typical placement cost at our most frequently used provider is £60,000 to £72,000 per annum which is over double the cost of a Shropshire Special School
- More frequent use of independent alternative providers, particularly in relation to children who are post 16

# Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25

## High Needs Block – SEN Support Services

- There is a forecast overspend of £0.970m against the SEN Support Service budget of £2.121m. Similarly to 2022-23 and 2023-24, the overspend in 2024-25 relates to staffing 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

- The Council's DSG financial position of a forecast cumulative deficit of £11.479m 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
- 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
- If the override is not extended, the High Needs deficit will have an impact on the council's overall financial position

## **Paper D**

# **Early Years Funding 2025-26 (Andy Nicholls)**

## Early Years Funding 2025-26

The early years block funds all factors relating to 3 and 4 year olds and disadvantaged 2 year olds as well as funding for children aged 2+ of working parents. From September 2025 this funding will increase to 30 hours of funding for working parents of children 9 months+. This has resulted in an increase in the budget as below:

	<b>25/26</b>	<b>24/25</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Universal 3- and 4-year-old entitlement</b>	<b>£11,981,755</b>	<i>£11,724,988</i>	<b>+£256,767</b>
<b>Extended 3- and 4-year-old entitlement</b>	<b>£6,433,924</b>	<i>£6,203,593</i>	<b>+£230,331</b>
<b>2-year-old entitlements</b>	<b>£10,811,771</b>	<i>£7,810,978</i>	<b>+£3,000,793</b>
<b>9-month-old entitlement</b>	<b>£2,866,044</b>	<i>£3,456,511</i>	<b>-£590,467</b>
<b>Expanded 9-month-old entitlement</b>	<b>£10,065,237</b>	-	<b>+£10,065,237</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£42,158,731</b>	<i>£29,196,070</i>	<b>+£12,962,661</b>

## Early Years Funding 2025-26

### How is the Early Years Block Spent?

- Provision of the Early Years SEND fund – accessible to all providers
- Provision of a disadvantaged fund
- Provision of a Sustainability fund
- Centrally retained costs to support Early Years throughout the county – Maximum that can be retained is 4% - moving to 3%.
- Balance is distributed to providers

When calculating the overall spending of the EY block our aim is to ensure we can:

- Cover the required supplementary costs set out above
- Remain within the 4% ceiling for retained costs and;
- Ensure the hourly rates of funding to providers remain as reflective as possible of the costs of provision of high quality, affordable and accessible early learning and childcare.

## Proposed Supplementary Costs for 25/26

- Early Years SEND fund: **£1.25m** (10% increase on previous year)
- Disadvantaged supplement: **£300K** (no increase for past 5 years)
- Sustainability funding: **£300k** (no increase on previous year – it is hoped that by increasing main hourly rates this funding will reduce in future years)
- Centrally retained costs (maximum 4%): **£1.050m** (2.40% - well within guidelines) This is an increase on the previous year. Would like to recruit new EY SEND Advisory Teachers into the service. The role of these new posts will be to provide targeted information, advice and support to providers as well as working directly with children to support with meeting their needs - with the long term vision of reducing the pressure on the above SEND fund. Following discussions with providers, it is also the intention to enhance the centralised training function, offering greater 'free at point of delivery' high quality CPD available to all providers / settings. A small proportion of these retained costs will also be used to enhance and upskill centrally retained colleagues.

# Approval: Hourly Rates of Funding for 25/26

For the first time ever, it is proposed to include in the 3 & 4 year old funding a nominal SEND allowance (similar to school funding) for all children of 10pph - this equates to £114 additional funding per child accessing 30 hours of funding per year. For a setting such as a 26 place school nursery this will bring an additional £2,964 to support the setting in supporting children with SEND – hopefully reducing the pressure on the EY SEND allocation.

## **Proposed allocation of funds direct to providers for the Early Years Block 25/26:**

Entitlement	23/24 Rates	Increase	24/25 Rates	25/26	Increase
<b>3&amp;4 YO – both universal and extended</b>	£4.75	+20p	£4.95 (£5.03 EYTPG)	<b>£5.42</b>	<b>+39p (to include 10p nominal SEND allowance)</b>
<b>2YO – both disadvantaged and expanded</b>	£6.90	No Change	£6.90	<b>£7.15</b>	<b>+15p</b>
<b>9 Month old</b>	N/A	N/A	£9.15	<b>£9.25</b>	<b>+10p</b>



## **Approval**

**Schools Forum are asked to approve the proposed 2025/26 funding rates for Early Years settings.**

**Schools Forum are asked to approve the allocation of funds from the Early Years Block 2025/26 as outlined in the paper.**



# **Presentation**

## **GSP and Top-Up Funding Update (Lisa Taylor and John Rowe)**

# Changes to Graduated Support Pathway (GSP)

- Support earlier intervention – right support at the right time
- Enable schools to access high needs top up funding faster
- Reduce unnecessary EHCNA requests and reduce demand on the EHCP team

# Changes to Graduated Support Pathway (GSP)

1. Requests will be presented by school staff at a panel
2. Funding will be awarded for 12 months as standard – no ‘1, 2 or 3 term’ option on the application form.
3. Schools will usually be unable to request GSP if an EHCNA request has been submitted or due to be submitted within the next 30-ish weeks.
4. Exception to point 2 above: CYP who have highly complex needs and an EHCP is agreed to be appropriate, but the school have not had the opportunity to do a graduated response. These cases will need prior agreement from the EHCP team due to the school needing funding in the short term..
5. There will limitations on using GSP to fund Alternative Provision.

# Use of GSP for Alternative Provision

## **Registered provision**

Schools cannot request funding to cover the costs associated with registered AP (TMBSS). This is because this offer is already subsidised by the LA.

## **Use of unregistered provision at secondary**

Secondary schools will not be able to request funding to cover the costs of unregistered AP – this is because all secondary schools are already being supported to provide AP through the AP Development Fund.

## Use of unregistered provision at primary

Primary schools will be able to request funding to cover the cost of **short term** (up to 6 weeks) AP provided the following conditions are met:

- All other avenues of support and strategies have already been tried
- The need for AP is agreed by the panel (ideally it will have been recommended by an independent external professional)
- Intended outcomes are clearly identified
- The school has also undertaken a thorough QA process and evidence of this is provided with the application
- Parent carers agree to the use of unregistered AP

# Primary AP Development Fund

## Proposal for Group Requests – primary schools only

- Group requests as described below are **only for primary settings** – secondary settings already have access to this resource via the AP development fund.
- Where primary schools have a group of children with similar needs and wish to ‘pool’ GSP funding in order to provide a **shared internal resource** (*e.g. a nurture type provision*), then a group GSP request can be considered for up to 10 pupils. Schools should submit individual application forms for each child so that these can be recorded against their individual details and so that we have parental consent for each one. In addition, they should submit a fully costed proposal outlining what will be provided.

When considering a group request, schools should take account of the following:

- All children being put forward as part of the group requests should have high level needs and there should be a minimum of 2 cycles of APDR submitted for each child.
- Funding will be provided for a maximum of 3 terms – there is no guarantee that funding will be granted again after this.
- An EQA will visit the school at least termly to monitor the quality and impact of any provision delivered via a GSP group funding allocation.
- Schools cannot request individual GSP funding for any child receiving funding via a group request.
- If a child in receipt of a group funding allocation is granted a shared placement at TMBSS, the group funding payment will be reduced accordingly.
- If an EHCNA is granted while a child is in receipt of a GSP group funding allocation, the group funding payment will be reduced accordingly.

Groups of schools could consider a joint request to develop a provision to be accessed by pupils from different settings.



# Next steps...

## **Pilot panels – 1 x primary and 1 x secondary**

- In person at The Guildhall, Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 9am-12pm
- 4 test cases at each panel
- Test cases to use new GSP request form
- March – make any changes to the process and paperwork

## **April – panels commence**

- 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of the month (unless a school holiday).
- Primary panels: 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 3<sup>rd</sup> July
- Secondary panels: 10<sup>th</sup> April, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 19<sup>th</sup> June, 17<sup>th</sup> July

# Changes to costed provision maps for schools and funding for hubs

- At present, schools complete a costed provision map with out-of-date indicative costs (£12 p/h). This is unrealistic.
- It is proposed to immediately increase this figure to £16 p/h in the first instance. It is recognised that this figure is still less than it ought to be and will be reviewed at the end of the academic year.
- Work is underway to adjust bandings for all schools and hubs and there is a commitment to further adjust this figure in collaboration with colleagues.

# Changes to funding for state-funded specialist provision

- Individual conversations are taking place with respect to the funding arrangements for state-funded specialist provision (maintained and academies)
- In order to inform these discussions, schools will be asked to submit details of current balances, and current funding levels via MS Form and for schools to provide details where there are perceived to be gaps in funding.

## **Paper E**

# **Schools Forum Work Programme 2025-26 (Sam Bradley)**

Meeting	Report
23 January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Funding Arrangements 2025-26 Update</li> <li>Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2024-25</li> <li>Early Years Funding 2025-26</li> </ul>
20 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26</li> <li>Shropshire Schools Forum Constitution and Membership</li> <li>Impact of the AP/Inclusion Development Fund (Jan 24 - Jan 25)</li> <li>Graduated Support Pathway (GSP) and EHCP Top Up Funding</li> </ul>
19 June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated Dedicated Schools Grant 2025-26</li> <li>School Balances as at March 2025</li> <li>Growth Fund Allocations 2024-25 and 2025-26</li> <li>Early Years Block Allocation 2025-26</li> <li>Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26</li> </ul>
11 September 2025 (TBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Dedicated Schools Grant 2024-25</li> <li>Updated Dedicated Schools Grant 2025-26</li> <li>School Revenue Funding Update 2025-26</li> <li>Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26</li> </ul>
13 November 2025 (TBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central Retention of Dedicated Schools Grant from April 2025</li> <li>Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26</li> </ul>
11 December 2025 (TBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Funding Arrangements 2025-26</li> <li>Consultation on the Central Retention of Dedicated Schools Grant from April 2026</li> <li>Central School Services Block 2025-26</li> </ul>



# **Communications**

## **(Bill Dowell)**