



Schools Funding Forum 13th January 2022

ITEM 9

Subject Heading:

De-delegation of funding for core school improvement activities 2022-23

Report Author:

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Eligibility to vote:

LA maintained school representatives

SUMMARY

This item provides details the Department for Education Consultation ‘Reforming how local authorities’ school improvement functions are funded’ and proposes the de-delegation of funding to cover the shortfall created, if the proposals to phase out the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant go ahead.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Schools’ Funding Forum agrees to:

- (i) the de-delegation of £5.11 per pupil for core school improvement activities should the proposals outlined in the Government consultative document ‘Reforming how local authorities’ school improvement functions are funded’ be implemented

REPORT DETAIL

The DfE have held a consultation ‘Reforming how local authorities’ school improvement functions are funded’. This ran from 29th October 2021 to 26th November 2021. To date the DfE response to the consultation has not been published. This is now expected in early January.

The School Improvement Monitoring & Brokerage Grant

The DfE sought views on removing the 'School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant' and changing regulations to allow local authorities to fund all of their school improvement activity, including core school improvement activities, via de-delegation. The Grant would be reduced by 50% for the 2021-22 financial year and then removed completely for 2022-23. Havering currently receives £169k a year.

The Grant has been provided since 2017 to support councils in fulfilling their core improvement activities. These include the statutory power to warn and intervene in schools causing concern. Guidance sets out the expectations that councils should:

- Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area and work with them to explore ways to support progress.
- Work closely with the Regional School Commissioner, diocese and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need
- Where underperformance is recognised, work with the RSC to ensure the right approach, including warning notices and intervention powers
- Encouraging good and outstanding schools to take responsibility for their own improvement, support other schools and enable other schools to access the support they need.

The DfE believe that in effective local authorities there is no longer a clear distinction between core improvement activities and additional improvement activities. Core improvement activities form part of a wider continuum of support.

The DfE believe that funding to support core improvement activities overlaps with wider improvement provision creating disparity with how improvement provision is funded in multi academy trusts.

Grant represents 26% of the funding for the non-traded activities carried out by Hsis, which encompass the core improvement activities detailed above. For schools identified as requiring additional support this will include regular school performance review meetings and implementing any actions agreed. This can include support for senior leadership, middle leadership, specific curriculum subjects or any other areas of concern.

Support may be provided by Hsis staff, or HSiS may arrange for support to be provided in conjunction with another school, providing that school with the opportunity to be a system leader. This will in turn provide development opportunities for staff at the supporting school.

The core improvement support received will vary considerably between schools, based on performance and need, but can also vary over time. A school may not require additional support at present but may do as circumstances change. An adequately funded school improvement service helps to ensure that schools requiring support are identified early and support put in place when needed, wherever that may be across the family of Havering schools. It should be remembered that currently all LA maintained schools in Havering are judged by OFSTED to be Good or Outstanding.

Funding core improvement activities through de-delegation

With the agreement of schools' forums, local authorities are already permitted to de-delegate funding for additional improvement services, and will also provide other services on a traded basis. From the 2022-23 financial year, the DfE is proposing to give councils the power to fund all improvement activity, including core activity, via de-delegation with the agreement of schools forums or the Secretary of State.

De-delegation of funding for 2022-23

Making up the 50% shortfall for 2022-23 would require £89k of de-delegated funds, which equates to £5.11 for each pupil Year R -11. Havering is seeking the agreement of the Schools Funding Forum to de-delegate this amount.

The DfE require local authorities to submit funding proposals for 2022-23 by 21st January 2022. This means that LAs do not have time to wait for the publication of the response to the consultation before seeking approval from their Schools Funding Forum to de-delegate funds. The DfE have recommended that if local authorities are seeking to de-delegate funds for core school improvement they should obtain conditional agreement, i.e. that de-delegation is approved in the event that the reduction in grant funding goes ahead.