

**Bury Schools Forum
Monday 15 January 2024
Microsoft Teams**

Attendance

Early Years

None in Attendance

Maintained Primary

Alyson Malach,
Simon Waddington,

Governor (Plus Governors Forum) (S)
Headteacher – Hollins Grundy Primary

Maintained Secondary

None in Attendance

Academy Primary

Rachel Pars
Kristie Bloomfield

Bury College Education Trust – Elton Primary
Oak Partnership

Academy Secondary

None in Attendance

Special

Katherine Ashworth

Millwood Special School (S)

Pupil Referral Unit

None in Attendance

Non-Schools Sector

Joanne Burns
Helena Thom

NASUWT
NEU

16 – 19 Education Representative

Carina Vitti

Principal – Holy Cross College

Children's Services Department

Paul Cooke
Victoria Lambert
Alison Vidler
Clare Williams

Head of Schools & Academies

Principal Finance Officer (Schools & Systems Finance)

Observer(s)

None in Attendance

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Richard Ainsworth
James Bradley
Joanne Hurst
Orienne Langley-Sadler (headteacher)
Tina Owen
Martin Van Hecke

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

3 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the Minutes of the last meeting.

5 NATIONAL FUNDING & BURY'S FORMULA

Alison Vidler presented the Schools & Academies Funding update 2024-2025.

1. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2024-25

Following the publication of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations on 19 December 2023, which takes into account the fully validated October 2023 pupil census, the 2024-25 DSG for Bury was summarised in the table set out in the report.

It was explained that the 2023-24 baseline shown includes the Mainstream Additional Grant in the Schools Block and the Early Years supplementary Grant in the Early Years Block. This is for the purpose of demonstrating the actual variance as these have been incorporated into the 2024-25 DSG.

2. Schools Block

The application of the NFF unit values, agreed at Schools Forum in November 2023, across the above factors results in the allocations shown in the table set out in the report. The amount of funding distributed to schools, including the centralised Rates payments, equates to almost 100% of the Schools Block Funding. The effect of pupil number variances between the October funding census collections for 2022 and 2023 needs to be noted in respect to the impact on the figures included in the table below.

Primary schools have seen an overall net reduction of 190.5 pupils.
Secondary schools have seen an overall net increase of 66 pupils.

It was stated that for both sectors there will be individual schools with reductions, and others with gains to pupil numbers. They will all need to financially plan for pupil number changes, in order to sustain their balanced budget positions.

£621,511 transfer to the High Needs Block is 0.39% of the total Schools Block. This is within the permitted 0.5% which was approved at the November 2023 meeting.

3. Central Schools Services Block

It was explained that Schools' Forum is required to approve the allocation of budgets included under the CSSB, which was created several years ago in place of the former Education Services Grant (ESG) retained functions funding for Local Authorities. The former ESG funding was added to the DSG in April 2018 in order to help sustain the services that it is intended to support.

The overall amount of grant in the 2024-25 CSSB has increased by 3.8%.

The following should be noted:

- funding for historic commitments within the CSSB has been reduced annually with a move towards total removal. Funding for the historic commitment for the Safeguarding in Schools Officer has therefore been built into the CYP Departmental budget;
- The centralised National Copyright Licences cost increases are not yet known but they have increased by more than the standard funding increase in recent years. Therefore provision is made for this in the figures below;
- there is a reduced requirement for the former Teachers' Pay and Pension Grant funding for teachers employed in central services due to the cessation of the Curriculum Language Access Service;
- the other services funded via the CSSB have been increased in line with the overall funding increase.

This leaves an unallocated balance of £100,300.

Decision:

Bury's Schools' Forum recommend the allocation of CSSB budgets as outlined to the applicable services for 2024-25 and to transfer the remaining balance to the High Needs Block in support of the DSG Management Plan.

The report set out the National Funding Formula for 2024- 25 and the variation 2024 -25 to 2023-24 as:

4. High Needs Block

It was explained that high needs funding is provided to local authorities through the high needs block of the DSG, enabling them to meet their statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014. The overall amount of grant in the 2024-25 High Needs Block has increased by 3.8%. The final allocations include adjustments for:

- October 2023 Special Schools census data;
- the new Brookhaven School (academy);
- hospital education funding – the 2024-25 allocation is lower than the final 2023-24 allocation which included additional funding in relation to September to March 2022-23.

Further updates on the High Needs position will be brought to future Schools' Forum meetings, including monitoring reports on the delivery of the Safety Valve agreement.

5. Early Years Block

It was reported that the Early Years Block would be adjusted in-year 2024 -2025 in respect of to fluctuations in Early Years Participation. The final funding allocation is based on two sets of data:-

January 2024 accounts for April 2024 to August 2024 (5/12ths)

January 2025 accounts for September 2024 to March 2025 (7/12ths)

Therefore the funding received from the DfE is based on take up of places as at the two census dates. The Authority funds Early Years providers on actual take up of places, as notified by providers through the Early Years Portal which means that there is inevitably a variance in the funding allocated and the actual costs each year. The free childcare offer will

be extended so that eligible working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week for 38 weeks per year from the term after their child turns 9 months to when they start school. The initial indicative funding for 2024-25 is therefore significantly higher than in 2023-24.

A table setting out the figures and variation was included in the report.

Included with the papers was the Early Years Funding Consultation paper.

For 2024-25 Local authorities are required to pass-through at least 95% of funding for each of the following funding entitlement streams individually:

- 3 & 4YO entitlements (no change)
- Under 2s
- 2YO disadvantaged offer
- 2YO working parents

This pass-through requirement ensures that most of the government funding reaches providers so that they can deliver the government's free entitlements. Bury has historically passported more than the minimum requirement for 2, 3 and 4 year-olds.

It should be noted that the DfE has indicated that the minimum 95% pass-through requirement is likely to be increased in future years, following the increase in Early Years funding.

The percentage retained by Local Authorities is used to contribute to Early Years SEN inclusion costs, central support services covering advisory support, sufficiency requirements, free entitlement eligibility checking, and management and administration of the complex Early Years Single Funding Formula determinations, allocations, systems, and statutory reporting requirements.

A table showing the proposed Central Early Years budget was included in the report.

Decision:

Bury's Schools' Forum approve the allocation of the Early Years Block as set out in the report.

6. Pupil Premium Grant

School PPG allocations are now aligned to the annual October census used for main school funding purposes.

LAC PPG is still determined using the Local Authority Looked After Children return (SSDA903) as at 31 March each year. This element of the PPG is managed by the Virtual School.

This means that schools may see an in-year reduction in their 2024-25 FSM PPG allocation if a pupil is subsequently identified as LAC on the March 2024 data return. Revised allocations are issued at the end of December each year.

7. Teachers' Pay Additional Grant

It was explained that the government had announced £525 million in 2023-24 to support schools with the September 2023 teachers' pay award with a further £900 million in 2024-2025. This is in addition to schools' allocation through the schools national funding formula.

The 2024-25 indicative allocation for Bury was reported as £2.6 million. School-level allocations will be published in May 2024.

The funding rates consist of the following 3 elements, which are based on factors already in the schools national funding formula:

- a basic per-pupil rate (with different rates for primary, key stage 3 and key stage 4);
- a lump sum paid to all schools, regardless of pupil numbers;
- a per-pupil rate for pupils who are recorded as having been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years (FSM6), with different rates for primary and secondary pupils.

Grant will be calculated by multiplying the relevant funding rates using data from the October 2023 census. The Area Cost Adjustment (ACA) will then be applied.

Maintained mainstream school budget statements issued in February will include an indicative allocation for this grant.

Mainstream academies will receive a further allocation for the period April to August 2025.

Special schools will receive funding at £466 per place plus ACA. The indicative 2024- 25 allocation for Bury is £297k. School-level allocations will be published in May 2024.

The TPAG will not continue as a separate grant in 2024-25 for early years as that funding has been rolled into the core Early Years DSG funding.

8. Teachers Pensions Increase from April 2024

The outcome of the valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme confirmed a need to increase the employer contribution rate. The rate has increased by 5% to 28.6% from 1st April 2024, to ensure that the Scheme continues to meet present and future obligations.

DfE has secured additional funding, to cover the increase in the employer contribution rate for directly funded scheme employers for the financial year 2024-25 to be distributed via a separate grant.

6. REVIEW OF DE-DELEGATION OF THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

It was explained that for maintained mainstream schools the formula mechanism contains options for schools to choose to de-delegate an amount from their formula allocation to contribute to Local Authority services that work to support them. Academies can buy back any of these services.

At the last meeting of the Schools' Forum held in November 2023 it was requested that more information be provided in relation to each of the areas included.

Free School Meals Benefits Checking.

This service is carried out by the Revenue and Benefits Team within the LA. The number of children who are entitled to free school meals has a direct correlation with the amount of Pupil Premium Grant and school budget deprivation funding that a school can be allocated with a reduction in numbers meaning a reduction in grant and school budget received.

Joanne Burns representing NASUWT explained that this could be a mammoth tasks to some schools if they had a large number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals.

Decision:

The Schools Forum agreed option 1: to continue to provide de-delegation funding for this service at £5.51 per FSM6.

Trade Union Facilities Time

The de-delegated funding for Trade Union Facilities funds the entitlement to time off for teacher trade union duties and activities.

It was explained that in LAs where this funding was not de-delegated individual schools manage their own facility time arrangements, buy into services or pool funding with other schools.

Without de-delegation, or a high level of buy-back from maintained schools and academies it is possible that there would not be sufficient funds for locally co-ordinated arrangement and schools may need to arrange their own facility time arrangements.

Helena Thom representing NEU explained that the present system gives employers the ability to allow union employees reasonable time to carry out their union duties in line with the Trade Union Act 2016. Helena also referred to the Greater Manchester Good Employers Charter which Bury was a part of.

Decision:

The Schools' Forum agrees option1: continue to provide de-delegation funding for this service at £4.41 per pupil.

Local Authority School Improvement

The way in which the Local Authority School Improvement service is funded has changed with the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokerage grant received from government removed, and the ability for de-delegation of funding to be used when approved by Schools' Forum. This funding was agreed by Schools' Forum in 2023/24 and it is proposed to continue with this funding at a value of £15.75 per pupil for 2024/25 (£15.00 in 2023/24).

Academies do not benefit and are charged separately apart from the universal QA visit, however not all academies take this up.

There were discussions around the need to look at how this would be funded in the future with more schools becoming academies and Paul Cook stated that it would be reviewed going forward.

Decision:

The Schools' Forum agrees option1: Continue to provide de-delegation funding for this service at £15.75 per pupil for 2024/25.

Schools Causing Concern

As a local authority, the service works within the "Schools Causing Concern" guidance (updated Jan 2024). This details schools that are eligible for intervention. In addition to this the Schools' Assurance Team use information from quality assurance visits to analyse where there is need. Funds are then allocated to maintained schools to address specific needs.

Early intervention is a key use of this fund for maintained schools.

Decision:

The Schools' Forum agree option 1 – continue to provide de-delegation funding for this service at £6.62 per pupil for 2024/25.

**Rachel Parrs
Chair**

Note: The meeting started at 4pm and ended at 5.05pm