

Report to the Schools Forum 13 January 2022

De-delegation for Statutory School Improvement Functions

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Schools Forum held on Thursday 18 November 2021, details of changes to the funding of local authorities statutory school improvement functions was provided.
- 1.2 In summary, since 2017, the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant has been provided to support councils to fulfil core improvement activities, with the amount received by each council proportionate to the number of maintained schools in their area. In 2021/22 the grant received by T&W was £181,652. The DfE is proposing to abolish the grant with half being removed in financial year 2022/23 and the remainder in 2023/24. No replacement funding is offered (the national grant amounts to £50m). Instead councils have to ask maintained school members of the schools forum to de-delegate funding for school improvement, to include its statutory duties.

2 Background

- 2.1 Core school improvement activities are set out in Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) and on page 36 of the DfE's Schools Causing Concern guidance. Part 4 of the 2006 Act provides councils with statutory powers to warn and intervene in schools causing concern, through issuing a warning notice setting out actions the governing body are to take – with powers to require the governing body to enter into arrangements; to appoint additional governors; to provide for the governing body to consist of interim executive members; or to suspend the right to a delegated budget, if the governing body fails to take the required action.
- 2.2 The Schools Causing Concern guidance sets out expectations that councils should:
- Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress;
 - Work closely with the relevant Regional School Commissioner (RSC), diocese and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support their need to improve;
 - Where underperformance has been recognised in a maintained school, proactively work with the relevant RSC, combining local and regional expertise to ensure the right approach, including sending warning notices and using intervention powers where this will improve leadership and standards; and
 - Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools; and enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.
- 2.3 Since 2017 councils have also been permitted, with the agreement of the schools forum, to de-delegate funding from schools' budget shares, to fund the provision of additional improvement services that go above and beyond core improvement

activities, for example providing or funding access to improvement support. T&W has not asked for this additional de-delegation.

3 Telford & Wrekin School Improvement

3.1 Most of the traded element of school improvement functions is carried out through the Severn Teaching School, but there are still some income generating activities carried out by relevant T&W staff. As in other areas, over the last few years, the Council has aimed to make services as efficient as possible and this has led to a hybrid model for some staff roles, mixing statutory duties and income generating activities. The core posts involved in statutory school improvement are the Service Delivery Manager: Education Achievement and Enrichment (overseeing the area), the School Performance team Leader, the Quality Assurance Specialist and Teaching and Learning Specialist.

3.2 72% of schools in the borough are currently maintained (55 schools) and the local authority continues to retain the statutory functions outlined above in relation to these schools, even following cessation of the grant.

3.3 The details of how Telford and Wrekin Local Authority fulfils these statutory functions is outlined in the Securing School Improvement Protocol which can be found via the link below:

<http://www.telfordeducationservices.co.uk/media/2980/securing-school-improvement-protocol-2021-22.pdf>

3.4 The local authority has a strong working relationship with head teachers and governing boards and has a track record of successfully monitoring, supporting and, very occasionally, intervening in schools to ensure the best provision is secured for pupils. All schools graded as being in the higher risk categories in relation to the Securing School Improvement Protocol have made improvements over the last three years.

3.5 We have also established a very productive working relationship with our school improvement partners; STEP which includes our local Severn Teaching School and more recently with Challenge Education, and the RSC office, to ensure schools receive the school improvement support they need. Our successful processes for partnership working and early intervention can be demonstrated by the fact that the Local Authority have only invoked powers of formal intervention once in the last 5 years.

3.6 We believe Local Authorities have a unique role in the education system. As a leader of place, the LA has a democratic legitimacy in ensuring accountability for schools to both parents and to the local community. The Local Authority is a central part of all aspects of the provision of education and schooling in Telford and Wrekin, including school improvement, regardless of school governance arrangements.

3.7 The overall net cost of the area has been kept broadly within the level of school improvement grant allocated to the authority and thus, unlike in other local authorities maintained schools have not been asked before now to de-delegate any additional funds for school improvement

- 3.8 At the time of writing (Monday 10 January) there is still no information available from the DfE concerning the results of the consultation regarding the removal of the School Improvement Grant. We are therefore currently operating on the assumption that the DfE will follow-through on its proposals.
- 3.9 For financial year 2022/23, we propose that half the value of the 2021/22 grant, amounting to £90,826, is de-delegated from maintained school budgets. This would maintain 2022/23 funding for school improvement at the level of 2021/22, albeit without any allowance for inflationary pressures.
- 3.10 We are proposing to de-delegate on the basis of an amount per pupil, and so with 14,402 pupils in maintained schools based on the October 2021 census, this would result in de-delegation of £6.31 per pupil.
- 3.11 ***Maintained school members of the Schools Forum are asked to approve de-delegation of funding for school improvement as described above. If, when the DfE confirms its plans, the reduction in funding is less than that consulted on, then the amount de-delegated will be reduced accordingly, to match the actual reduction in the School Improvement Grant.***

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