

Report to the Schools Forum December 2025

Funding Statutory Services for Schools - 2026/27 Central Schools Services Block and De-delegation

1 Background

- 1.1 Many of the local authority's statutory functions for schools had been funded from the Education Services Grant (ESG) which ceased in 2017/18. A few had been funded via central top slices agreed by the Schools Forum. In 2018/19 some of these funding streams were brought together into the new Central Schools Services Block (CSSB), a new DSG block.
- 1.2 The current arrangements have therefore now been in place for several years, but in order to see clearly the overall cumulative effects of the DfE's policies over the last few years, it is useful to separate the local authority and school impacts.
- 1.3 Firstly from an LA budgetary perspective:

Table 1: ESG and Schools Budget Funding of LA Services – LA Income

	£'000				
	14/15	17/18	22/23	24/25	25/26
ESG	2,805	592	0	0	0
Central top-slice from all schools including academies for services formerly funded by ESG*	0	510	907	924	967
Central top-slice for BSF (CERA)	342	0	0	0	0
Central top-slice for asset management (CERA)	252	0	0	0	0
Central top-slice for admissions	392	357	0	0	0
Central top-slice for safeguarding	25	25	0	0	0
Central top-slice for schools forum	17	17	0	0	0
Total central top slices from all schools including academies	1,028	909	907	924	967
De-delegation from maintained schools only for services formerly funded by ESG	0	350	387	387	323
De-delegation for behaviour support	52	0	0	0	0
De-delegation for Multi-Cultural Development	0	0	0	0	0
De-delegation for Free School Meal eligibility checks	17	24	34	35	31
Total de-delegation from maintained schools only	69	374	421	422	354
Total funding for LA services from ESG and school budgets	3,902	1,875	1,328	1,346	1,321

* net of DfE licence cost charges

1.4 Thus from an LA perspective, funding for school services is a third of the total in 2014/15.

1.5 The picture from a schools budgetary perspective is as follows:

Table 2: Contributions from Schools Budgets to LA Services

	£'000				
	14/15	17/18	22/23	24/25	25/26
Addition by DfE to school budget for element of ESG relating to services for all schools including academies	0	(410)	(410)	(410)	(410)
Central top-slice from all schools including academies for services formerly funded by ESG *	0	510	907	924	967
De-delegation from maintained schools only for services formerly funded by ESG	0	350	387	387	323
Central top-slice for BSF (CERA)	342	0	0	0	0
Central top-slice for asset management (CERA)	252	0	0	0	0
Central top-slice for admissions	392	357	0	0	0
Central top-slice for safeguarding	25	25	0	0	0
Central top-slice for schools forum	17	17	0	0	0
De-delegation for behaviour support	52	0	0	0	0
De-delegation for Multi-Cultural Development Team	0	0	0	0	0
De-delegation for Free School Meal eligibility checks	17	24	34	35	31
Total	1,097	873	918	936	911

* Includes £81,747 added to CSSB for Teachers Pensions in FY2021-2022 and net of DfE licence cost charges

1.6 Despite the abolition of the ESG, partly replaced by contributions from the CSSB to central services, the contribution from schools to central services reduced compared to 2014/15 and has since been around £900,000. The substantial contributions from 2018/19 onwards towards statutory services formerly funded by ESG has been partly offset by the additional funds added to Schools Block in 2017/18. In addition, the ending of CERA (both BSF and asset management) reduced the call on DSG.

- 1.7 In addition to the above costs, the abolition of the School Improvement & Monitoring Grant (see separate paper) has added costs to both maintained schools and the local authority.
- 2 2026/27 Funding of Statutory Services for Schools**
- 2.1 Although the DfE has created a specific block for statutory central services, any funding for these services is still subject to an annual Forum vote
- 2.2 This means that there will be two Forum votes, the first by the whole Forum covering services funded from the CSSB, the second by maintained school Forum representatives only, covering statutory services for maintained schools only, funded by de-delegation.
- 2.3 Central retentions for statutory duties are calculated at an individual school level based on an amount per pupil. We replicate the DfE's previous scaling arrangements with regard to ESG for special schools (4.25) and PRUs (3.75).
- 2.4 Section 35 of the ESFA's operational guide for 2026/27 suggests the following information is provided to the Forum in order to decide how to vote:
- planned total spending for 2026 to 2027 on each of the headings set out at Annex 4 [included as Appendix B to this paper];
 - spending shown to at least the level of detail provided in the 2026 to 2027 section 251 budget statement
 - comparable figures for previous years' spending, split where relevant between those relating to all schools and those for maintained schools only
 - consequences for the funding and delivery of each of the services provided if the request was not approved
 - the impact on individual school budgets and their overall financial position
 - the impact on the local authority if the amount was not held centrally
 - detail of the results of the equalities impact assessment carried out to assess the impact of the central retention of the funding on children or other people who have one or more of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.5 The details of the request for 2026 to 2027, including this information, are shown in Appendix A.
- 2.6 The CSSB allocation to T&W has been reducing per pupil by 2.5% per year, as protection is removed. This reduction has in recent years been offset by increasing pupil numbers meaning that the overall CSSB allocation has increased modestly, from £1.124m in 2021/22 to £1.185m in 2025/26. However, in addition to local authority services, the CSSB also funds the cost of national licences for schools purchased by the DfE. Neither the local authority nor schools have any control over this sum. The cost of these licenses has increased significantly, in recent years, from £140,728 in 2021/22 to £202,099 in 2025/26. As a result, the amount available for local authority services had stayed flat in cash terms for five years.
- 2.7 However the amount of CSSB in 2026/27 will increase significantly due to the addition of funds to cover the National Insurance and Schools Budget Support grants. This potentially enables the full cost of services to be covered, where the inflationary pressures of recent years have not been matched by any increase in the CSSB.

- 2.8 This is illustrated in the proposals in 2026/27. Charging the actual costs of the team (where the CSSB funds a specific team) or applying CPI inflation indices to the 2021/22 amounts (where the CSSB funds a contribution to costs) results in a balance remaining on the CSSB of £104K, although this is expected to reduce to below £100K when the final CSSB allocation is made based on October 2025 pupil numbers, which are expected to be lower than October 2024.
- 2.9 The amounts proposed for de-delegation, for the elements of statutory services that apply only to maintained schools, are lower than in 2025/26 due to there being fewer maintained schools and pupils following further academy conversions. The amounts per pupil have been increased compared to 2025/26 by 2%.
- 2.10 *The Forum is asked to approve the amounts detailed in Appendix A for statutory central services in 2026/27. Any remaining balance on the CSSB is proposed to be used to fund high needs provision.***

Tim Davis
Finance Manager
December 2025

Appendix B – Statutory Responsibilities for local Authorities previously funded by the Education Services Grant (text taken from Annex 3 of the DfE’s Schools revenue funding 2026 to 2027 operational guide)

References are to the schedules in the current schools and early years finance (England) regulations 2025

Central Services	
Responsibilities local authorities hold for all schools (funded by the central school services block with the agreement of schools forums)	Responsibilities local authorities hold for maintained schools (funded from maintained school budgets only with agreement of the maintained school members of the schools forum)
<u>School Improvement</u> No duties <u>Statutory and regulatory duties</u> Director of children’s services and personal staff for director (Sch 2, 15a) Planning for the education service as a whole (Sch 2, 15b) Authorisation and monitoring of expenditure not met from schools’ budget shares (Sch 2, 15c) Formulation and review of local authority schools funding formula (Sch 2, 15d) Internal audit and other tasks related to the authority’s chief finance officer’s responsibilities under Section 151 of LGA 1972 except duties specifically related to maintained schools (Sch 2, 15e) Plans involving collaboration with other LA services or public/voluntary bodies (Sch 2, 15f) Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education (SACREs) (Sch 2, 17) Consultation costs relating to non-staffing issues (Sch 2, 19) Provision of information to or at the request of the Crown other than relating specifically to maintained schools (Sch 2, 21)	<u>School Improvement</u> Expenditure related to core school improvement activities of local authorities with respect to maintained schools (Sch 2, 53) <u>Statutory and regulatory duties</u> Functions of LA related to best value and provision of advice to governing bodies in procuring goods and services (Sch 2, 58) Authorisation and monitoring of expenditure in respect of schools which do not have delegated budgets, and related financial administration (Sch 2, 59) Monitoring of compliance with requirements in relation to the scheme for financing schools and the provision of community facilities by governing bodies (Sch 2, 60) Internal audit and other tasks related to the authority’s chief finance officer’s responsibilities under Section 151 of LGA 1972 for maintained schools (Sch 2, 61) Functions made under Section 44 of the 2002 Act (Consistent Financial Reporting) (Sch 2, 62) Investigations of employees or potential employees, with or without remuneration to work at or for schools under the direct management of the headteacher or governing body (Sch 2, 63) Functions related to local government pensions and administration of teachers’ pensions in relation to staff working at maintained schools

Central Services	
Responsibilities local authorities hold for all schools (funded by the central school services block with the agreement of schools forums)	Responsibilities local authorities hold for maintained schools (funded from maintained school budgets only with agreement of the maintained school members of the schools forum)
Revenue budget preparation, preparation of information on income and expenditure relating to education, and external audit relating to education (Sch 2, 22)	under the direct management of the headteacher or governing body (Sch 2, 64) HR duties, including: advice to schools on the management of staff, pay alterations, conditions of service and composition/organisation of staff (Sch 2, 65); determination of conditions of service for non-teaching staff (Sch 2, 66); appointment or dismissal of employee functions (Sch 2, 67) Consultation costs relating to staffing (Schedule 2, paragraph 68) Compliance with duties under Health and Safety at Work Act (Sch 2, 69) Provision of information to or at the request of the Crown relating to schools (Sch 2, 70) School companies (Sch 2, 71) Functions under the Equality Act 2010 (Sch 2, 72) Establish and maintaining computer systems, including data storage (Sch 2, 73) Appointment of governors and payment of governor expenses (Sch 2, 74) Budgeting and accounting functions relating to maintained schools (Sch 2, 75) Retrospective membership of pension schemes where it would not be appropriate to expect a school to meet the cost (Sch 2, 77)
<u>Education welfare</u> Functions in relation to School attendance (Sch 2, 16) Responsibilities regarding restrictions on the employment of children (Sch 2, 18)	<u>Education welfare</u> Inspection of attendance registers (Sch 2, 80)

Central Services	
Responsibilities local authorities hold for all schools (funded by the central school services block with the agreement of schools forums)	Responsibilities local authorities hold for maintained schools (funded from maintained school budgets only with agreement of the maintained school members of the schools forum)
Functions in relation to the exclusion of pupils from schools, excluding any provision of education to excluded pupils (Sch 2, 20)	
<u>Asset management</u> Management of the LA's capital programme including preparation and review of an asset management plan, and negotiation and management of private finance transactions (Sch 2, 14a) General landlord duties for all buildings owned by the local authority, including those leased to academies (Sch 2, 14b)	<u>Asset management</u> General landlord duties for all maintained schools (Sch 2, 76a & b (section 542(2)) Education Act 1996; School Premises Regulations 2012) to ensure that school buildings have: • appropriate facilities for pupils and staff (including medical and accommodation) • the ability to sustain appropriate loads • reasonable weather resistance • safe escape routes • appropriate acoustic levels • lighting, heating and ventilation which meets the required standards • adequate water supplies and drainage • playing fields of the appropriate standards General health and safety duty as an employer for employees and others who may be affected (Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974) Management of the risk from asbestos in community school buildings (Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012)
<u>Central support services</u> No functions	<u>Central support services</u> Clothing grants (Sch 2, 54) Provision of tuition in music, or on other music-related activities (Sch 2, 55) Visual, creative and performing arts (Sch 2, 56)

Central Services	
Responsibilities local authorities hold for all schools (funded by the central school services block with the agreement of schools forums)	Responsibilities local authorities hold for maintained schools (funded from maintained school budgets only with agreement of the maintained school members of the schools forum)
	Outdoor education centres (but not centres mainly for the provision of organised games, swimming or athletics) (Sch 2, 57)
<u>Premature retirement and redundancy</u> No functions	<u>Premature retirement and redundancy</u> Dismissal or premature retirement when costs cannot be charged to maintained schools (Sch 2, 79)
<u>Monitoring national curriculum assessment</u> No functions	<u>Monitoring national curriculum assessment</u> Monitoring of National Curriculum assessments (Sch 2, 76)
<u>Therapies</u> No functions	<u>Therapies</u> This is now covered in the high needs section of the regulations and does not require schools forum approval
<u>Other ongoing duties</u> Licences negotiated centrally by the Secretary of State for all publicly funded schools (Sch 2, 8) – this does not require schools forum approval Operation of the system of admissions & appeals (Sch 2, 9) Fees or expenses payable in connection with the attendance of non-SEN pupils at schools not maintained by any local authority (Sch 2, 10) Remission of boarding fees at maintained schools and academies (Sch 2, 11) Servicing of schools forums (Sch 2, 12) Back-pay for equal pay claims (Sch 2, 13) Writing to parents of year 9 pupils about schools with an atypical age of admission,	

Central Services	
Responsibilities local authorities hold for all schools (funded by the central school services block with the agreement of schools forums)	Responsibilities local authorities hold for maintained schools (funded from maintained school budgets only with agreement of the maintained school members of the schools forum)
such as UTCs and studio schools, within a reasonable travelling distance (Sch 2, 23)	
<u>Historic commitments</u> Capital expenditure funded from revenue (Sch 2, 1) Prudential borrowing costs (Sch 2, 2(a)) Termination of employment costs (Sch 2, 2(b)) Contribution to combined budgets (Sch 2, 2(c)) Special educational needs transport costs (Sch2, 2(d))	
<u>Additional note</u> Services set out in the table above will also include administrative costs and overheads relating to these services (regulation 1(4)) for: • expenditure related to functions imposed by or under Chapter 4 of Part 2 of the 1998 Act (financing of maintained schools), the administration of grants to the authority (including preparation of applications) and, where it's the authority's duty to do so, ensuring payments are made in respect of taxation, national insurance and superannuation contributions • expenditure on recruitment, training, continuing professional development, performance management and personnel management of staff who are funded by expenditure not met from schools' budget shares and who are paid for services • expenditure in relation to the investigation and resolution of complaints • expenditure on legal services	