

## **Report to the Schools Forum 19 January 2023**

### **De-delegation for Statutory School Quality Assurance Services**

#### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 On 11 January 2022 the government announced that it would remove the school improvement monitoring and improvement grant, half being taken in 2022/23 and the remaining grant being removed in 2023/24.
- 1.2 This policy was adopted despite the majority of respondents to the preceding consultation disagreeing with the DfE's contention that this would leave local authority's statutory school improvement functions adequately funded.
- 1.3 No additional funding was provided to local authorities or maintained schools. The DfE advised councils to ask maintained school members of the schools forum to de-delegate funding for these statutory duties.
- 1.4 At the meeting of the Schools Forum held on Wednesday 19 January 2022, Forum representatives of maintained schools voted to de-delegate £6.31 per pupil, a total of £90,826 towards the cost of the local authority's statutory quality assurance functions. This replaced the half of the grant that the DfE removed in 2022/23.

#### **2 Background**

- 2.1 Core school quality assurance 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 Quality Assurance**

3.1 The Forum was updated on the current position at the last meeting, November 2022. The LA has been reviewing local provision through the establishment of a working group involving senior officers and maintained schools (27/06/22, 9/11/22, 6/12/22 & 11/01/23). This has been supplemented by consultation with the primary head executive group (09/11/22, 11/01/23) and primary head forum (24/11/22). Maintained schools also had the opportunity to respond individually to proposals via a survey that was sent to them via a special education notice (8/12/22).

3.2 Consultation questions were as follows:

- Do you feel that the information provides sufficient clarity so that schools are aware of the different roles played by key stakeholders in the quality assurance/school improvement system?
- Do you find the annual classification letter helpful, or would this be better replaced with an email following any school visit where the classification is changed, copying in your Chair of Governors?
- Is it clear enough how schools are classified under the current protocol?
- Is it clear enough that classification should be a joint endeavour between the school and LA?
- Is it clear enough what indicators will signal that a school's classification should change (either up or down)?
- Which of the following options would you prefer to see as the Quality Assurance (QA) model, in preference order (1 being most preferred)
  - A The LA quality assurance role is fulfilled with the use of one or more professionals with a dedicated quality assurance role – (as previously)
  - B Peer to peer model for gathering intelligence about the effectiveness of schools and maintain local authority oversight
  - C Brokerage of the function from an independent provider already experienced in fulfilling the statutory responsibility (for example a neighbouring local authority)

3.3 Regarding the questions above focussing on the clarity of the process, responses were generally positive, but with some constructive suggestions around making clear any changes to the classification since the previous year and sharing notes of visits with Chairs of Governors.

- 3.4 Regarding the alternative options for delivering the required quality assurance, A was the clear preferred option, only one respondent choosing B and none C.
- 3.5 Following the survey, further discussions with schools were held to determine the make-up of a quality assurance model based on option A and the following consensus was reached in terms of a staffing model:
- 1 FTE Quality Assurance specialist, with a salary commensurate with a Headteacher, in order to attract suitable candidates;
  - Line management equating to approximately one day per week from the appropriate local authority Service Delivery Manager;
  - 0.5 FTE administration support, provided by a Business Support Officer;
  - Wider officer attendance at classification meetings, to be held twice each term.
  - Associated costs of accommodation, IT, training, central support services etc.
- 3.7 The costs of the above service would be similar to the value of the grant that has been removed (around £180,000) but in recognition of the additional costs for maintained schools in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23, given de-delegation now would have to cover the full cost, the local authority proposes to cover 25% of this sum (£45,000) with de-delegation covering the remainder (£135,000).
- 3.8 The proposal is to de-delegate on the basis of an amount per pupil, and so with 14,314 pupils in maintained schools based on the October 2022 census, this would result in de-delegation of £9.43 per pupil in 2023/24.
- 3.9 ***Maintained school members of the Schools Forum are asked to approve de-delegation of funding for statutory school quality assurance functions, as described above.***

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