

Report to the Schools Forum 16 November 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. It also left local authorities statutory duties unchanged.
- 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.
- 1.5 At the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 19 January 2023, Forum representatives of maintained schools voted to de-delegate £9.43 per pupil, a total of £135,000 towards the cost of the local authority's statutory quality assurance functions. This replaced approximately three-quarters of the grant that the DfE removed over 2022/23 and 2023/24 and also represented approximately three-quarters of the cost of the service. The local authority agreed to fund the remaining 25%, or £45,000.

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 had 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 had not asked for any de-delegation from schools, before the grant was removed.

3 Telford & Wrekin Quality Assurance

3.1 During 2022 and early 2023, local provision was reviewed through the establishment of a working group involving senior officers and maintained schools (the group met on 27/06/22, 9/11/22, 6/12/22 & 11/01/23). This was 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 Following this process, 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 Since agreement to this model and subsequent agreement from maintained school members of the schools forum to de-delegate £135,000 to cover approximately 75% of the cost (the local authority covering the remainder), a quality assurance specialist has been appointed

3.8 The proposal is to de-delegate on the basis of an amount per pupil. Based on the 14,314 pupils in maintained schools as at the October 2022 census, this would result in de-delegation of £9.43 per pupil in 2024/25 (i.e. same as 2023/24) but we will adjust the sum once we have updated October 2023 pupil data.

- 3.9 ***Maintained school members of the Schools Forum are asked to approve delegation of funding for statutory school quality assurance functions, as described above.***

Tim Davis
Group Accountant
November 2023