

Report to the Schools Forum 17 November 2022

Funding for Local Authority Monitoring and Brokerage (Quality Assurance) in maintained schools in 2023/24

1 Background

- 1.1 Since 2017, the Local Authority Monitoring & Brokering Grant has been provided to support councils to fulfil statutory duties relating to quality assurance of maintained schools, 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.
- 1.2 However, the DfE decided in early 2022 to abolish this grant, with half being removed in 2022/23 and the remainder in 2023/24. This decision was made despite the majority of responses to the DfE's consultation *not* agreeing that this would leave services adequately funded and despite the statutory requirements for local authorities remaining in place.
- 1.3 The Local Authority's statutory requirements 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 The Local Authority's quality assurance role is also used to support schools where intelligence is shared during OFSTED inspections given it is the responsible body for maintained schools.
- 1.6 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 quality assurance

activities, for example providing or funding access to improvement support. T&W has never asked for this additional de-delegation. The Local Authority's role in Telford and Wrekin therefore purely focuses on quality assuring provision. The delivery of school improvement is instead commissioned independently and directly by schools themselves. The majority of primary maintained schools in Telford and Wrekin commission the Severn Training School Alliance (STSA) for their school improvement work. Secondary maintained schools use other providers.

2 Telford & Wrekin Local Response 2022/23

- 2.1 The above situation was discussed with the Forum at the meetings dated 18 November 2021, 13 January 2022 and 19 January 2022. The last of these meetings was convened specifically to decide upon de-delegation for school monitoring and brokerage in 2022/23.
- 2.2 Following discussion with clusters, maintained members of the Forum voted unanimously to de-delegate £90,826, representing £6.31 per maintained school pupil, to replace the half of the monitoring and brokerage grant that was removed in 2022/23.
- 2.3 Telford currently delivers its statutory duties through an annual risk assessment of its maintained schools (2 secondary, 42 primary, 4 special/PRU), as outlined in the Securing School Improvement Protocol, link here: [securing-school-improvement-protocol-2022-2023.pdf \(telfordeducationservices.co.uk\)](https://www.telfordeducationservices.co.uk/securing-school-improvement-protocol-2022-2023.pdf)
- 2.4 The protocol also outlines how the Local Authority carries out monitoring of maintained schools in proportion to the risk of underperformance identified through the annual risk assessment, including the level and frequency of monitoring and quality assurance. The numbers of schools classified into each level of risk varies over time depending on circumstance.
- 2.5 The Local Authority recognises that there have been changes to staffing in the delivery of its quality assurance function over 2022/23. Where there has been staff absence and vacancy, alternative officers have been redeployed in order to deliver commitments in line with the securing school improvement protocol. All schools were visited during the academic year 22/23 with a combination of time from 2 officers, plus a seconded deputy headteacher. Recently additional capacity has been added to the team using a consultant with significant school improvement experience, who will further support delivery of an offer. The current model will remain in place until the end of March 2023.

3 2023/24 School Monitoring and Brokerage funding

- 3.1 The DfE have determined that there will be no School Monitoring and Brokerage Grant for 2023/24. The only funding available for local authorities' statutory quality assurance functions will be that which is de-delegated from maintained schools.
- 3.2 In the context of the withdrawal of the grant in 2023/24, such that the full responsibility for financing these statutory functions falls on maintained schools through de-

delegation, the LA is reviewing the provision. The plan is to take schools views of the future shape of the provision into account whilst still funding the LA's statutory functions.

- 3.3 To that end, a working group involving senior officers and maintained schools has been established to consider the forward plan. The aim is to work with the group, plus consult with the primary head executive group and primary head forum during the autumn and early spring term 2023, to consider proposals for 23/24.
- 3.4 Feedback suggests that the following needs to be considered:
- That clear communication is provided to maintained schools so that they understand the roles of the different players in the system. The Local Authority's role for quality assurance and as the responsible body in OFSTED inspections, is different to the role of school improvement partners (i.e. STSA).
 - That the annual review of school performance, using the classification system is reviewed and possibly replaced with a continuous cycle of discussion.
 - That the way in which the Local Authority delivers its quality assurance function is reviewed and consideration is given to the way it collects its intelligence and possible use of a school to school model.
- 3.5 The aim is to work with the maintained school community between now and the School Forum meeting in January to work and consult on the detail of these proposals so that an informed decision can be made by forum when voting for de-delegation for 2023/24.

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