

Bristol Schools Forum
Schools Block 2024/25

Date of meeting:	16 th January 2024
Time of meeting:	5:00 pm
Venue:	Zoom

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform and seek agreement of the Schools Forum on the final application of the funding formula for mainstream schools and academies for 2024/25, prior to final decision by Cabinet and submission of the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

2. Recommendations

Schools Forum is invited to:

- 2.1 Indicate which of the two proposed formula models for 2024/25 mainstream funding formula is preferred. The LA recommends the option to maximise the lump sum first, for the reasons set out in the report.
- 2.2 Approve the proposed arrangements for the 2024/25 mainstream funding formula, including the amount set aside for the Growth Fund
- 2.3 Provide feedback, as appropriate, to Cabinet and Council, for their consideration in making final decisions on the Schools Budget for 2024/25.

Maintained primary school representatives of Schools Forum are invited to:

- 2.4 Agree to de-delegation of the following services at the amounts per pupil indicated in table 2 for 2024/25:
- a) Employee and Premises Insurance
 - b) Assessment of eligibility for free school meals
 - c) Maternity supply cover
 - d) Schools in financial difficulty
 - e) Trade Union facility time
 - f) Education Psychology
 - g) School Improvement Services

Maintained secondary school representatives of Schools Forum are invited to:

- 2.5 Agree to de-delegation of the following services at the amounts per pupil indicated in table 2 for 2024/25:
- a) Employee and Premises Insurance
 - b) Assessment of eligibility for free school meals

- c) Maternity supply cover
- d) Trade Union facility time
- e) Health and safety roving reps
- f) Education Psychology
- g) School Improvement Services

3. Funding available

3.1 The DSG overview paper elsewhere on this agenda explains the overall strategy for schools finance for 2024/25. This indicates that the allocated funding for Schools Block in 2024/25 is £344.3m.

3.2 At the meeting held November 2023, Schools Forum agreed the following:

- The transfer of 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block;
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be set at +0.0%;
- The lump sum was to be set at maximum allowed £139,849.82;
- Any remaining funding directed to the Additional Education Needs (AEN) factors, then Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU); and
- £2.0m top-slice of Schools Block to create the Growth Fund for 2024/25.

3.3 **Table 1** sets out how it is proposed that this funding be calculated and applied.

Table 1: Proposed Schools Block Budget 2024/25

Funding	£'000	Cost	£'000
Pupil led DSG funding	£330.1m	Transfer of 0.5% to HNB	£1.7m
Premises led DSG funding	£12.2m	Growth Fund	£2.0m
Growth funding	£2.0m	Balance remaining for Mainstream Schools formula	£340.6m
DSG Schools Block Total Allocation	£344.3m	Schools Block Total	£344.3m

*The 2023/24 mainstream schools additional grant has been rolled into the National Funding Formula (NFF) for 2024/25 and is therefore, included in the schools block allocation.

3.4 The component elements of the calculation have been refreshed, upon release of the October 2023 census data. Each of the components is explained below.

3.5 **Pupil led DSG funding £330.1m.** This is the sum allocated to the LA based on the number of pupils recorded in the October 2023 census. Primary age pupils attract unit funding of £5,200.70, which is an increase on 2023-24's £4,946.84.

Secondary age pupils attract unit funding of £6,873.45, up from £6,513.22. The allocation to Bristol is based on a recorded 34,671 primary age pupils, down from last year's 35,001. Secondary is based upon 21,789 pupils, up from last year's 21,376.

- 3.6 **Premises led funding £12.2m.** This is the element of the Schools Block DSG that recognises costs not defined by NFF values, and is derived from the 2023/24 NFF baseline.
- 3.7 **Growth Funding £2.0m.** This element of the DSG Schools Block settlement is calculated by the ESFA based on the observed differences between the October 2022 and October 2023 school censuses. Growth is measured at the level of middle layer super output areas (MSOAs). This allocation is intended to meet the cost of both the growth fund and the additional cost of those pupils in growing schools not yet present in the school census, but can be insufficient as it is based on the historic change and not the anticipated change it is required to fund.
- 3.8 **Schools Block Total £344.3m.** This is the sum of the proposed allocations above.
- 3.9 **Transfer 0.5% of Schools Block to High Needs Block £1.7m** Schools Forum agreed to the transfer of 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block at its meeting in November 2023. 0.5% is the maximum the Department for Education (DfE) allows to be agreed locally.
- 3.10 **Growth Fund allocation £2.0m** This funding as agreed at November's schools forum, is the top-slice of the Schools Block taken in order to fund growth expansions in existing schools for the following academic year, separate to the growth commitment in "new and growing" schools" which is funded within the formula mechanism.
- 3.11 **Balance remaining for Mainstream Schools formula £340.6m.** This is the remainder of the Schools Block allocation available for the mainstream funding formula, including the mandated elements of the formula.
- 3.12 **Schools Block Total £344.3m.** This is the total of the elements above.

4. Growth Fund

- 4.1 The growth funding into the Schools Block is £2.0m, and this intended to support both the "new and growing" schools funded via the APT and create a growth fund to support existing schools that have been expanded.
- 4.2 Officers have estimated the requirement in "new and growing schools" to be for 210 FTE pupils, and this cost is built into the school funding formula.

- 4.3 Officers have also considered the existing commitments on the Growth Fund and projected these forward for a potential cost in 2024/25. This commitment is estimated to be approximately £1.2m, and includes the effect of existing growth moving from KS3 into KS4.
- 4.4 In addition to the existing known commitments it is possible further expansion may be needed, as the primary age bulge continues to move into secondary schooling. The Growth Fund of £2.0m leaves approximately £0.8m over the estimated known commitment to support any additional growth commitments and exceptional funding requests that may arise.

5. Funding formula

- 5.1 Schools Forum agreed the principles for the operation of the mainstream formula at its meeting in November 2023, including:
- Appropriate allocations are made for NNDR/rates
 - A Minimum Funding Guarantee of +0.0%
 - The Additional Educational Needs (AEN) factor values to be a function of the available funding
 - The lump sum is set to maximum allowed at £139,849.82 for both Primary and Secondary
 - An allocation of £2.0m is set for the Growth Fund
 - No decisions were made for de-delegation and representatives asked that this was deferred to January's schools forum. As de-delegation is applied after formula shares are determined, these outstanding items have no direct impact on the information presented in this report.
- 5.2 Following December's announcement from Education and Skills Funding Agency, when distributing the allocated schools block funding, it was not possible to maximise AEN and the lump sum in the same funding calculations. This is because of the Autumn census data adding proportionally more secondary pupils than the previous census. As Secondary pupils are funded at a higher level, once we met the statutory minimum requirements, the remaining unallocated funding was not sufficient to maximise the AEN and lump sum. Therefore, we have modelled two options and schools forum is being asked which one to apply.
- 5.3 Two options for the Schools Block formula have been modelled within the above constraints:
- Scenario 1: AEN factors have been prioritised with remaining funding being distributed through lump sum.
 - Scenario 2: Lump sum has been set to maximum allowed with remaining funding being distributed through AEN factors.

- 5.4 In both scenarios, the basic entitlement uses the AWPU rates at the minimum allowed for 2024/25. The total funding distributed by this factor is £235.4m (69% of the pre-MFG total). The per-pupil rates for 2024/25 are as follows:
- Primary £3,501.80
 - KS3 (years 7-9) £4,937.55
 - KS4 (years 10-11) £5,565.65
- 5.5 Scenario 1 favours the majority of secondary schools (18 out of 22), 2 all-through schools and 15 Primary schools. Whilst scenario 2 favours the most primary schools (70 out of 103) and 3 Secondary schools. The remaining 19 schools will receive the same level of funding from both of the proposals.
- 5.6 Scenario 2 does result in a slight decrease in some of the AEN factor values (FSM, IDACI, EAL3 and Low attainment) compared to 2023/24. However, the minimum funding guarantee along with increases in statutory minimum per pupil funding protects these schools from any potential loss resulting in a reduction of these factor values. This scenario also brings the factor values closer to the NFF values which supports the transition to hard NFF. Overall, this scenario is still more beneficial to majority of primary schools due to increase in lump sum and MFG protections.
- 5.7 Scenario 1 results in the lump sum being £133,649.08 for each setting, which distributes a total of £16.9m for all settings (4.98% of the pre-MFG total). In scenario 2, the lump sum is set to maximum allowed £139,849.82 which distributes a total of £17.7m for all settings (5.22% of the pre-MFG total).
- 5.8 The Minimum per Pupil funding levels were made a mandatory item in 2020/21 and remain mandatory in the formula, the rates have been dictated by the NFF. For 2024-25 the Primary rate is £4,610, whilst is £5,995 for secondary school pupils.
- 5.9 Overall in scenario 1, 109 of the 127 schools are set to receive an increase in cash funding in 2024/25, whilst 18 schools will receive less funding than in 2023/24. In scenario 2, 110 of the 127 schools are set to receive an increase in cash funding in 2024/25, whilst 17 will receive less funding than in 2023/24. Where schools receive a reduction in funding, this is being caused by a reduction in pupil numbers on roll that does not offset per-pupil funding gains in the formula.
- 5.10 The LA recommends option two over option one as this favours more schools, and as these schools are mainly primary, have smaller overall budgets than secondary schools. Option two also has the advantage of the formula factors becoming closer to the NFF values, which is required in the transition to a hard formula.
- 5.11 In total, 60 schools have a reduced NOR in 2024/25, whilst 8 are static and 59 have increased NOR.

5.12 Forum should note that the formula is subject to final approval from ESFA so figures in the report and appendices are therefore still indicative at this stage.

5.13 The detail of the unit values, the allocations against factors and individual school budget shares are shown in the appendices.

- Appendix A shows the formula unit values
- Appendix B shows the distribution of the funding across the relevant factors
- Appendix C shows the school budget shares and indicates which model benefits each school.

6. De-delegation

6.1 In November's schools forum, maintained primary and secondary school representatives were asked to agree to de-delegation for services listed in table 2. However, representatives asked to defer this decision to January's schools forum pending further information.

6.2 On 3rd October 2023, a consultation paper on 2024-25 School's Funding which included de-delegation was sent to head teachers for all settings via email and was also included in the Head Teacher's bulletin.

Table 2: De-delegation rates per pupil for primary and secondary schools

	Primary rate £	Secondary rate £
Employee and Premises Insurance	29.92	29.92
FSM Eligibility	1.23	1.23
Maternity Supply Insurance	33.55	48.72
Schools in Financial Difficulty	0	N/A
Trade Union Facility Time	4.15	4.15
Health and Safety Roving Reps	N/A	0.98
Educational Psychology	6.27	6.27
School Improvement Services	5.31	5.31

6.3 De-delegated items 2024/25:

Employee and Premises Insurance

This funds insurance cover as arranged by the local authority. If delegated, schools would need to assure the LA that cover arranged by the school (if not bought back) is fit for purpose. Pooling the funding ensures proper cover and

allows schools' to avoid bureaucracy.

More information on the RPA for schools can be found here: [The risk protection arrangement \(RPA\) for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-risk-protection-arrangement-rpa-for-schools)

Rate: Per-pupil charge has increased by 8% from 2023/24. This includes £2 increase in RPA rate which DfE have announced.

Assessment of eligibility for free school meals

This funding enables the service to schools for the checking of free school meal eligibility.

Rate: Per-pupil charge has increased by 5% from 2023/24

Maternity Supply Cover

Supports schools by funding the costs incurred covering staff taking maternity / paternity leave or staff on adoption leave.

Rate: Per-pupil charge has increased by 5% from 2023/24.

Schools in Financial Difficulty for primary schools

Provides support to schools in or forecasting a deficit. Access to the support is generally dependent on a school producing an agreed Recovery Plan. The use of funds is directed by the head of school partnerships.

For information: there is currently available balance of £335k on this fund.

Rate: No contribution proposed for 2024/25.

Trade Union Facility Time Fund

Employers have a statutory obligation to release trade union representatives for representation in cases. The facilities fund held by Bristol City Council is used to remunerate schools that release their teachers who are TU representatives to carry out casework for their members. In the absence of any facility fund, maintained school bear the cost of releasing staff.

For information: there is currently available a balance of £192k available to be used for this purpose.

Rate: Per-pupil charge has increased by 5% from 2023/24.

Health and Safety Roving Reps in Secondary Schools

"Roving" reps are safety representatives who are appointed by TUs to cover multiple school sites. Their work includes effective consultation with employees in relation to employee health and safety issues. Compared to previous years, there are fewer safety representatives, and the cost of training is reduced. School head teachers retain overall responsibility, with the TU rep acting on the Head's behalf.

Rate: Per-pupil charge has increased by 5% from 2023/24.

Education Psychology (EP)

The Education Psychology Service provides professional advice to young people, families and educational settings. The de-delegated funding supports the delivery of EP visits to schools to discuss and identify vulnerable children and young people, and support a robust graduated response to needs including cost effectiveness. This is in addition to the Educational Psychology work in to the SEN assessment process, paid for by the LA as a statutory responsibility.

Rate: Per-pupil charge has increased by 5% from 2023/24.

School Improvement Service

The ending of the DfE School Improvement monitoring and brokering grant for 2022-23 impacted on the current model of school improvement service. We are now working to create a model to support quality provision for children and young people. This model is to meet both statutory improvement needs and provide a holistic approach to school improvement across the city. The request of £86,000 is to commit to investing into the service to future proof and become a self-sustainable model and not simply to meet the statutory requirements. The model places children and young people at the heart of the work and we want to ensure an equitable service is funded realistically and fairly.

Rate: Per-pupil charge has increased by 46% from 2023/24. However, de-delegation for 2023/24 was based on 9 months funding, whereas 2024/25 is being requested for the full year.