

Bristol Schools Forum Feedback

In approving the 2024/25 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Council Budget, members are asked to note the feedback from Bristol Schools Forum meeting of 16 January 2024 below.

Context

Schools Forum is responsible for making the following key decisions in relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant:

- Movements of up to 0.5% from the schools block to other blocks
- De-delegation of funds from mainstream maintained schools
- Use of the Growth Fund for pupil growth and falling rolls
- Certain categories of central expenditure including Early Years Block provision and contributions to combined budgets

Schools Forum must also be consulted on the following in relation to key funding decisions made by the Local Authority:

- Funding formula changes including redistributions
- Arrangements for Pupil Referral Units and pupils with SEND
- Arrangements for Early Years provision
- Exclusions from the Minimum Funding Guarantee

The Local Authority is responsible for making key funding decisions in relation to:

- Funding formula changes including redistributions
- Setting the budget for the High Needs Block

Feedback

Bristol Schools Forum provides the following feedback to Cabinet and Council, for their consideration in making final decisions on the DSG Budget for 2024/25:

- Whilst an increase in the funding allocation from government is welcomed in the new financial year, Council is asked to note the substantial cost pressures in the sector for both schools and Early Years. These challenges have been evident for several years and exacerbated primarily due to the pandemic and a range of cost-of-living increases that have impacted on schools and settings. Any support that the council can provide in their wider engagement with government and supporting the voice of schools and early years in securing additional funding to support these ongoing cost pressures would be welcomed.
- Schools Forum noted that the funds allocated by the DfE for 3- & 4-year-olds were not viewed favourably by those responding to the Early Years consultation, where more voted against it than for it. Whilst it was recognised that the values are prescribed and not determined by the council, Schools Forum members expressed general concern at the Early Years funding situation.
- Schools Forum supports the 0.5% transfer from Schools Block to the High Needs Block to support the High Needs budget and the plans, as proposed, in relation to the utilisation of the Central School Services Block.