

De-delegated Funding: Targeted Intervention

Schools' Forum Date	12 th January 2023
Type of Decision	For decision
Background Documents	Local Authority School Improvement Brokering Grant Consultation
Author	Philip Haslett, Head of Education Strategy and Inclusion
Purpose of Report	To provide an update on next steps regarding de-delegation of targeted school intervention funding for Local Authority Maintained schools.
Key Recommendations	Forum members are asked to consider and approve de-delegation at the per pupil rates shown for targeted intervention for primary maintained schools.
Resource Implications	Local Authority maintained school budgets to include a de-delegation of £9.27 per pupil to support targeted intervention school improvement activity.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. At the Schools Forum in November 2022 forum members, specifically the representatives for LA maintained schools, were asked to consider and approve the continued de-delegation of funding to support targeted intervention work. The report prepared for the November forum is attached as annex A for reference and provides detail of how this funding is used and the impact that it has in supporting LA maintained schools that are at risk, either educationally or financially.
- 1.2. Following discussion at the November forum, LA members did not feel able to vote and approve the recommendation. This was in part because only 2 of the eligible voting members were in attendance at the meeting, but also because a number of questions were raised by the Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers (GAPH), via members. It was agreed to delay the recommendation and decision so that further clarification regarding levels of de-delegated funding and how it is used could be provided to GAPH.

2. Engagement with the Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers

- 2.1. Following the forum meeting in November, the Head of Education Strategy and Inclusion met with GAPH representatives on the 2nd December to explore the de-delegation in more detail and answer any questions that GAPH members had about the use and impact of funding. A short briefing note, addressing questions raised ahead of the meeting, is attached as annex B to this report.

2.2. Since the meeting with GAPH executive, they have confirmed that they are happy to support the proposed de-delegation for targeted intervention as outlined in the November report. The details and recommendation are shown below, and LA maintained school forum representatives are asked to approve the recommendation.

De-delegation proposal	Eligible to vote	Budget based on maintained schools October 2022 census numbers & known academy conversions. Primary 33,746	
		Per pupil Rate £	Total £000
Targeted intervention – Primary	Darren Preece Lisa Jones Rhian Evans Mikey Ezewudo Matthew Bishop Karen Lewis	9.27	312,825

Recommendation: Forum members are asked to consider and approve de-delegation at the per pupil rates shown for targeted intervention for primary maintained schools.

2.3. As part of the discussions with GAPH it was agreed that there should be increased dialogue and oversight of de-delegated funding through the heads association. It was clear, that despite the de-delegations having been in place and operating for many years, there was a lack of understanding regarding the level and purpose of funding.

2.4. The Head of Education Strategy and Inclusion is attending the next GAPH executive meeting on the 20th January 2023 to discuss this in more detail and agree next steps. However, there are two actions that have already been agreed with GAPH

- During the Spring Term we will undertake a full review of the maintained school de-delegated funding with GAPH to ensure each element is operating effectively and efficiently for 2024/25.
- GAPH will meet with the school improvement team to discuss and agree oversight of the targeted intervention work, including the risk assessment process, the number of schools receiving support, average spend, average length of project group etc.

Annex A

School Improvement Funding

Schools' Forum Date	10 th November 2022
Type of Decision	For Decision
Background Documents	Local Authority School Improvement Brokering Grant Consultation
Author	Clare Dudman
Purpose of Report	<p>To provide an update to the schools forum on the local authorities plans to support school improvement, following the removal of the grant.</p> <p>To agree de-delegation funding levels to support targeted intervention in mainstream schools.</p>
Key Recommendations	Forum members are asked to consider and approve de-delegation at the per pupil rates shown for targeted intervention for primary maintained schools.
Resource Implications	Local Authority maintained school budgets to include a de-delegation of £9.27 per pupil to support targeted intervention school improvement activity.

1. Context

- 1.1. School's Forum members will be aware that the 2021/22 financial year has been particularly challenging for the Education Intervention and Outcomes Team (EO&I) due to significant changes in the way the DFE funds school improvement. For many years a significant proportion of our intervention and support in Local Authority Maintained Schools had been through the Local Authority Monitoring and Brokering Grant (LAMB). In November 2021 we were notified of the DFE's intention to remove this funding. Local Authorities were given the option to recoup this lost funding by 'top slicing' budgets in a similar way to how multi-academy trusts do to their individual schools. The government response to the consultation was published on the 11th January 2022 and announced that it would be going ahead with the removed the LAMB grant.
- 1.2. For Gloucestershire this meant being notified of a £720,000 reduction in budget to be phased over a two-year period. 50% removed in April 2022 and the remainder in April 2023.

- 1.3. Gloucestershire has a far greater proportion of LA maintained schools than is seen across the Southwest (35% of schools in comparison to 55% of schools across the SW region) and so the LAMB grant, which was allocated according to the number of LA maintained schools in each area, disproportionately impacts on Local Authorities with a higher-than-average number of maintained schools.
- 1.4. The decision to cut the LAMB grant was followed on the 28th March by the Education White Paper '[Opportunity for all Strong schools with great teachers for your child](#)' which, alongside ambitions to raise standards and improving attendance, the government's ambition is for all schools to be part of a multi-academy trust, or be planning to be in one, by 2030 with academies taking the lead on school improvement.
- 1.5. There are 17 MATs operating across the LA, 6 of which are national/regional and 11 solely Gloucestershire based (local MATS). The local MATS are generally smaller than seen across the region with 5 schools per trust in comparison with the South West regional average of 7. We also have a larger than average number of Single Academy Trusts (SATs) verses Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). This equates to 43% of Gloucestershire Academies in comparison to 14% across the SW region. The DFE would like all SATs to become part of MATs.
- 1.6. This means that, at present there are not enough MATs of a suitable size for LA schools and SATs to move into, and so there will need to be a period of growth whilst a significant proportion of schools remain with Gloucestershire LA and will therefore require challenge and support from the Local Authority.
- 1.7. So, with a reduction in funding and the local system still developing its path to Academisation, the EOI team have been working on a new, partially traded, operating model to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of support for schools that need it.
- 1.8. It was decided last year that we would not top-slice maintained schools further, as suggested by the DFE but, as a result, the remaining Schools Block funding is vital to the overall success of school improvement in the County

2. Development work and mitigations

- 2.1. To adapt to the reduction in funding we have made a range of changes to the way in which the EOI team operates. These are:
 - 2.1.1. **Cost reductions** - The EO&I team have pivoted their work to fulfil the LA's strategic functions with significantly reduced funding.
 - 2.1.2. **Framework for external advisers** - A framework for external advisers has been set up to broaden the range of support we can offer to schools. New advisers include MAT leaders, former directors of education, former HMI,

serving Ofsted inspectors and SEND specialists. This also provides greater flexibility for deployment and greater continuity.

2.1.3. **Income generation** - The EO&I team have sought to expand their offer and provide greater support to subscribing schools. As a result, 'Gloucestershire School Improvement' known as 'GLOSSI' has generated £255,000 (as of 14.10.22) with further income expected from training courses. This is a positive position considering the time frame under which the LAMB grant was removed and the uncertainty this created. We are confident that other schools will consider this offer next financial year particularly as we look to expand our offer to academies.

3. De-delegation from school's block

3.1. De-delegated funding remains a key element of the funding to support the EOI team. The activities outlined above have enabled us to resist the need to increase de-delegation funding rates and retain them at the same level as previous years.

3.2. Decision-making on de-delegation rests with maintained school representatives of the forum only and decisions need to be made separately for each phase. Deductions are made from the formula allocations for maintained schools only. The aggregate total for each de-delegated budget changes each year to reflect both changes in maintained pupil numbers and reductions due to further academy conversions.

3.3. In 2021/22, de-delegated funds were allocated as follows;

2021/22	Schools Block	
Prevention budget		199,842
Targeted Intervention Deficit Schools		105,769
IEB		10,851
Overall Result		£316,462

How is the funding used?

3.4. De delegated funding directly impacts on LA maintained schools who find themselves in challenging circumstances, usually when they meet or likely to meet criteria under 'Schools Causing Concern' and in line with the LA's School

Improvement Strategy. The aim is to develop and support a self-improving school system.

- 3.5. The prevention budget is administered by the Education Lead for the area to ensure that local knowledge is applied alongside a rigorous risk assessment process in order to identify all schools that are at risk of decline, including those currently judged 'outstanding' and puts in place a model for bringing about rapid improvement.
- 3.6. Additional support is commissioned or brokered where necessary, including through the locality partnerships, with the two Teaching Hubs, other good and outstanding schools and Framework advisers to ensure that the capacity for further sustained improvement in all LA maintained schools remains strong.
- 3.7. There is a differentiated, bespoke approach to support and targeted intervention for schools. In some cases, the funding has been used to support new, acting or interim leadership arrangements. In others, it has been used to provide urgent support with training and coaching of staff, or to secure urgent improvements in, for example, safeguarding or governance. The project group approach and the risk assessment is undertaken collaboratively with head teachers and governors.
- 3.8. The targeted intervention allocation funds a range of finance and HR support for schools:
 - Directly funds specialist HR adviser support for schools in challenging circumstances
 - Contributes towards finance advice for schools.
 - To commission other forms of specialist support, for example around health and safety and safeguarding.
- 3.9. In order to ensure that budgets are used effectively, schools are monitored and potential deficit is challenged robustly by the deficit scrutiny group. The targeted intervention deficit budget has been used to support schools in particular difficulty to address financial management concerns.
- 3.10. The IEB fund is used when we need to set up an Interim Executive Board if there has been a breakdown of governance and support advice and guidance to the new board.
- 3.11. Without continued Schools Block funding, the ability for the team to intervene at an early stage to prevent poor outcomes would be compromised,

Impact

- 3.12. All maintained schools who are risk assessed as requiring support receive significant support through Project Groups.

3.13. Of the 64 Ofsted inspections that took place, which are risk assessed and are often targeted at those schools causing the greatest concern. 32 of which were in LA maintained schools.

3.14. The current overview of outcomes are as follows:

- 90% of our LA maintained primary schools are good or better.
- 78% of academy primary schools are good or better.
- 100% of our LA secondary schools are good in comparison with 92.5% combined and academy.

3.15. This places us joint third out of 15 authorities in the South West Region for Ofsted outcomes and in line with national average.

3.16. Overall, maintained primary schools 86.8% primary in the county are schools are judged good or outstanding and 92.5% secondary schools are judged good or outstanding.

De-delegation proposal	Eligible to vote	Estimated Budgets based on maintained schools October 2021 census numbers & known academy conversions. <i>(Will be updated for October 2022 census)</i> Primary 33,502	
		Per pupil Rate £	Total £000
Targeted intervention – Primary	Darren Preece Lisa Jones Rhian Evans Mikey Ezewudo Matthew Bishop Karen Lewis	9.27	310,564

Recommendation

Forum members are asked to consider and approve de-delegation at the per pupil rates shown for targeted intervention for primary maintained schools.

Annex B

Briefing Note: Primary Maintained Schools: De-delegated funding

Introduction

This briefing note responds to questions raised by the Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers about the use of de-delegated funding to support targeted intervention for primary schools. The questions raised were:

- A breakdown of how de-delegated funding is used to support maintained schools.
- What efficiencies have been taken by GCC to save costs including redundancies and cost efficiencies.
- What other funding sources are being drawn upon, including whether a clawback from schools with a surplus has been considered.

There was also a point raised about the maintained schools' awareness of the level of funding and its link to purchasing support through GLOSSI.

Why do we de-delegate?

De-delegation enables the local authority and maintained schools to top-slice and ring-fence funding to provide a service to all LA schools. It is a more effective and efficient way to fund services that all LA maintained schools can access. This mechanism has been in place for a long time and is akin to the top-slicing approach that many multi-academy trusts undertake. Although the approach trusts' take is often based on a percentage of the school budget (circa 5%), rather than per pupil funding. In some instances, trusts are now moving to [GAG pooling models](#).

De-delegation: Targeted intervention

The de-delegated funding that supports targeted intervention has been in place for over 10 years. The funding is a contribution from all maintained schools to ensure there is effective support in place for schools that are identified as 'at risk', either educationally or financially. This should not be conflated with the universal school improvement offer that has been available to all maintained schools through their performance adviser (now through GLOSSI). It is additional targeted support for schools at risk.

The funding has operated at the current per-pupil level since [2015/16](#). The School's Forum review and agree de-delegation annually. As part of this process the maintained school representatives, which includes Governors, are asked to formally vote on the recommended levels of de-delegation.

As such I am concerned that maintained schools weren't aware of this level of de-delegation ahead of their decision making regarding GLOSSI. It would be useful to

discuss the communication links between GAPH and the Schools Forum to ensure they are operating effectively.

How the funding is used

A high-level overview of how de-delegated funding was used last year is provided in the Schools' Forum report (attached to this briefing note). To put this in more context, there are currently 37 schools that are identified as causing concern; the majority of which are receiving much more intensive support and intervention through project groups.

The funding is used to support LA officer capacity (School Improvement, HR and Finance) to support the operation of the project groups and to fund specific support agreed by each group. This can include support such as:

- Direct support with school development and improvement planning.
- Teaching and learning reviews
- Leadership reviews
- Curriculum support (highest priority-subject audits)
- SEND reviews
- Pupil premium reviews
- Governance reviews
- Bespoke Governor training tailored to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the board
- School to school support for leadership development

When making decisions regarding support, the school's financial position is considered and consequently activity can be fully funded by the LA, School or part funded by both.

How are we keeping costs down?

The de-delegation rate for targeted intervention support has not increased since 2015/16, despite the increasing cost of the Education Outcomes and Intervention team through pay progression and pay awards. In effect the service has been managing itself through real term cuts for some years.

When the LAMB grant was removed, it was the DfE's position that Local Authorities could/should extend their use of de-delegation to cover the lost income (circa £720k). The loss of the grant removed a significant proportion of the existing school improvement budget that supported maintained schools.

From the start we have resisted the DfE's recommendation to increase de-delegation by focussing on the development of a traded service model and by driving efficiencies in the service.

The traded model, which uses a mix of employed staff and consultants, has enabled us to create more flexibility in the way that we deploy resources and consequently create efficiencies by reducing the fixed costs of the service. For example, several permanent roles have not been replaced this year and will be back filled more efficiently using the pool of consultants. We believe this fixed and variable model will provide us with more flexibility to adapt to increasing or decreasing pressures on the service, without increasing expenditure.

We have successfully managed to address the loss of the LAMB grant for 2023/24 without the need to change the local approach to de-delegation. This is not the case in all local authorities and in fact a number have ended in an appeal by the LA to the Secretary of State.

What other routes of funding have been explored?

We have looked at a range of options to address the loss of the LAMB grant. However, we have not explored routes to redress the loss of the existing de-delegated funding, as this provides essential support for high-risk schools. As such the focus has been on attempting to not increase de-delegation.

In terms of funding options:

- Clawback from schools with a surplus. This has been discussed at Schools Forum several times over the years. It is an incredibly challenging process, as the majority of schools with a surplus are operating within the suggested parameters (5-8%) and those that hold more have clear plans on how they are proposing to use the funding. It was last discussed at [School's Forum in September 2019](#) and as a consequence was removed from the local financing regulations. This was in part due to the complexity and divisiveness of the process, but also because it is not in the financial regulations for Academies.
- Section 106 – I am not clear on what was being asked here. S106 funding is capital funding specifically ringfenced for additional places to meet demand from new housing.
- Central Services Block – This does provide a mechanism to support limited funding for school improvement, but it must be all schools (including academies), so can't be used to support this activity.
- Core Council Funding – The pressures on the Children and Families budgets are significant, which when last reported to the School's Forum, showed an underlying over-spend of £8.302 million.

Conclusion

We are conscious of the financial pressures that schools are under, even after the inclusion of additional funding in the Autumn statement. We have attempted to mitigate the loss of the LAMB grant in the most effective way possible for all those affected by the DfE's decision to withdraw funding.

We are acutely aware that this means maintained schools are paying (through GLOSSI) for support that was previously provided for free by the LA. As such we took the approach of a voluntary traded model of school improvement support, to ensure that schools could make their own decisions on how to proceed.

The targeted support work has been funded through de-delegation for many years and as such we have not consulted or proposed any changes to it for 2023/24. In fact, we were delighted to be able to keep it at the same per-pupil level as last year, rather than increase it. This is an essential part of the support for maintained schools, and we strongly believe needs to proceed in 2023/24.

However, through this process it has become clear that maintained schools do not have a clear view of the targeted support that is provided to schools. We haven't publicly shared the details of the schools that are deemed at risk or those that are receiving more intensive support and the type and nature of support they have received. As this information, without much greater detail and context, could create unnecessary concern or reputational damage to the school.

It would also seem that communication between the LA, Schools' Forum members and the schools they represent could also be strengthened, particularly in relation to key decisions that impact maintained schools.

As such we would welcome discussion and agreement on how we can:

- Strengthen the reporting to maintained schools' as to how the targeted intervention funding is used to support schools at risk (whilst ensuring confidentiality).
- Agree a stronger mechanism to update primary schools of key items on the forward plan and any key decisions that are taken at Schools Forum.