

Schools Forum

7 November 2022

Movement of Funds From the Schools Block (SB) to the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) – New Request

This report is for decision (ALL)

1. Recommendations:

That school forum members:

- 1.1 Approve the principle to consult on the top-slice of funds from the Schools Block (SB) to the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB).
- 1.2 Approve the inclusion of 3 options for the 2023-24 annual contribution for the Attendance function in the Schools Consultation Document.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 Schools Forum have within their control the power to top-slice up to 0.05% of funds from the SB to any other Block of the DSG.
- 2.2 This paper sets out the reasons for the request to top-slice the Schools Block to fund the Central Schools Services Block and to seek if this should be included in the Schools Consultation Document.

3. Report Details

- 3.1 At the September Schools Forum meeting, a question was raised regarding the Attendance & Safeguarding funding in the de-delegated part of the Schools Block (Educations Functions) and to find out if this was used for the maintained sector only.
- 3.2 After investigation it was discovered that the service can NOT identify this separately and that Safeguarding and Attendance was indeed a matter for all schools and that ALL schools should pay for this service and not just the maintained sector.

- 3.3 The Central School Services Block (CSSB) provides funding for LA's to carry out central functions on behalf of ALL schools.
- 3.4 The CSSB are for LA statutory functions and the Schools Operational Guide¹ stipulates that the Attendance service is a legitimate function that should be funded from the CSSB.
- 3.5 Failure to agree to this change would have a significant impact on the Council's capacity to support schools to effectively maintain high levels of school attendance.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Schools Forum members are asked to;
- approve in-principle the question to include this top-slice of the Schools Block to the CSSB in the Schools Consultation document.
 - that a further question be asked as part of the Consultation document that this top slice be under the 3 options depending on the level of service required, as detailed in Appendix A.

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Date: 01/11/2022
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¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2023-to-2024/schools-operational-guide-2023-to-2024>

Options for the Schools Attendance Service

OPTION 1 - Annual allocation of £375,00

The Schools Attendance Support Service, core offer, as from April 2023, would include 1 allocated attendance support officer per town plus continuing support from, the existing, duty practitioner and, court practitioner posts that have been in place since September 2022.

The Service would ensure:

- Piloted targeted schools' meetings for those with greatest need this academic year.
- Locality based "attendance solutions panel" meetings with Strengthening Families.
- Cohort focused interventions e.g., persistent absence plus educational neglect.
- Attendance campaign: "Attend School for Best Start in Life" (launched September 2022).
- Permanent duty practitioner providing consistent support & guidance to schools.
- Permanent Court practitioner to focus on prosecutions and evidential reliability.

OPTION 2 – Annual allocation of £455,000

The White paper² requires all schools to receive termly "targeted support meetings as from September 2023.

An additional £80,000 next fiscal year will fund a further 3 attendance support officers as from September 2023 increasing capacity to 1.5 officers per town.

The initial impact however, of inexperienced staff starting in September 2023, is likely, whilst they complete their induction and training, to be limited pre- January 2024.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

OPTION 3 - Annual allocation of £512,000

An annual contribution of £512,000 from the central schools' budget, would enable the Service, as from April 2023, to recruit and embed proposals in readiness for the 2023/24 academic year.

We could complete recruitment during half-terms 2 and 3 with a view to making necessary new appointments in April 2023, immediately following the Easter holidays. During the summer term we would complete the induction and training of new staff plus ensure their readiness, as from September 2023, to deliver the following:

- Schools support increased to 1.5 officers per town, with immediate impact in 2023/24.
- Targeted support meetings (as per the White Paper) delivered by trained staff.
- Increased pro-active cohort-focused interventions e.g., persistent absence, educational neglect plus development of an illness strategy with school nursing colleagues.
- Immediate capacity, at the right time of year, to manage annual increase in removals from roll ahead of census.
- Immediate capacity at the right time of year to manage annual increase in leave of absence referrals and resulting Court work etc.
- Further preventative persistent absence work based on year end data.
- Continuation of the “Attend School for the Best Start in Life” campaign