

Agenda Item 4

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

SCHOOLS' FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools' Forum on Wednesday, 27 September 2023 at 9.30 a.m. held virtually.

PRESENT

Alan Hardie (Chair, in the Chair)
NCEA

Headteacher Representatives

A. Brown, Corbridge Middle School
M. Dean-Hall, Wooler and Glendale Middle School

A.Mead, Hillcrest School

Governor Representatives

K. Faulkner, Collingwood School
B. Watson, St Robert's RC First School

G. Wilkins, St Wilfrid's RC Primary School

Academies Representatives

G Atkins, Hadrian Learning Trust

B. Reed, Gilbert Ward Academy

Roman Catholic Diocese – Vacant Post

Church of England Diocese – N. Threlfall

Pupil Referral Unit Representative – R. Carr

19-19 Provider of Education Representative – W. Stephenson

Trades Union Representative – Vacant Post

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ch.'s Initials.....

M. Finlay	Head of Inclusive Education Services
R. Greally	Assistant Democratic Service Officer
A. Kingham	Executive Director - Children, Young People and Education
B. Parvin	Education and Skills Business Manager
C. Ponting	Senior Manager - Schools HR
A. Russell	Principal Accountant – Non-Team Leader
D. Street	Deputy Director of Education

12. MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP DETAIL

- 12.1 The committee welcomed Alan Hardie to the Forum who succeeded Colin Pearson as the new Chair. It was acknowledged that Graeme Wilkins would remain as Vice Chair of the Forum and Chair of the High Needs committee.
- 12.2 Ben Watson had agreed to continue as Chair of the Funding Formula Committee.
- 12.3 The committee were informed that Andrew Thirlwell from Bede's Academy had resigned from the forum due to other commitments.

13. APOLOGIES

- 13.1 Apologies were received from Sue Aviston, Dave Cookson, Dionne Illingworth and Barbara Mansfield.

14. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

- 14.1 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on Wednesday, 19 July 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

15. COMMUNICATIONS

- 15.1 Bruce Parvin, Education and Skills Business Manager introduced the F40 presentation to the forum. The F40 group originated from a group of the lowest funded per head Local Authorities. Northumberland is one of the 42 authorities in the F40 group. The F40 suggested that there was a £4.6 billion deficit or gap in respect of SEND funding.
- 15.2 The communication from F40 highlighted a £4,000 difference per pupil in Schools funding paid across different local authorities and suggested this was unfair. A similar pattern was evident in respect of SEND funding.
- 15.3 It was confirmed that the specialist capacity within the Authority had been increased including spaces within three special schools. Although capacity had been increased

Ch.'s Initials.....

there had been no indication of how the extra spaces would be funded. It was included in the 2023/24 budget but further growth would have been difficult.

- 15.4 It was acknowledged that there was a High Needs committee meeting scheduled for 25th October 2023. The profile of High Needs had increased nationally and was expected to be high on the education agenda. An increase in funds was expected but it was unclear how much the increase would be.
- 15.5 It was discussed that schools and Local Authorities were feeling the pressures of the funding, but it was suggested there was a lack of public awareness. Concerns were raised over public perception and how to raise the issue to a wider profile.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

16. MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

- 16.1 Bruce Parvin, Education and Skills Business Manager introduced the report to the Forum. There had been no further guidance regarding governance from the ESFA since March 2021. It was acknowledged that report was shared at late notice and members were assured that they would have the opportunity to raise any issues at a future Schools' Forum meeting.
- 16.2 In recommendation 2b) it was asked that members actively promoted the existing vacancies within the forum to interested parties through their networks. When promoting the vacancies members were reminded to share that the Forum was a public meeting with prospective members.
- 16.3 It was confirmed that members were happy with the current arrangements and still felt that meeting once a year face-to-face in the July meeting should be continued. It was acknowledged in paragraph 4.2 it states that School Forum representatives should be involved with schools located in Northumberland.

RESOLVED that the information be noted

17. USE OF 2022/23 DEDICATED SCHOOL GRANT (DSG) FUNDING BALANCES

- 17.1 Abigail Russell, Principle Accountant, introduced the report to the Forum. There was a requirement for the Local Authority to consult with the Schools' Forum where the DSG had not been fully spent. The report outlined the intended £2.1 million carry forward for 2024-2025 and the intended use of the £2.5 million carry forward for 2023-2024. The intention was to continue ring fence the blocks of the DSG.
- 17.2 There was a requirement to use the growth fund created to meet demand for new places at St Benet Biscop and Cramlington Learning Village. It was proposed that the Schools Block reserve be used. Information would be brought to NASH to explain why those schools were chosen.
- 17.3 There was an estimated growth resulting in significant pressure within the Higher Needs block and it was presumed that the whole reserve would be needed to be

Ch.'s Initials.....

drawn down. There was a discussion that the using the DSG as a whole to support the Higher Needs block may have been unfair as High Needs covered all areas whereas the Schools Block was largely drawn from maintained schools contingency de-delegated payments. It was confirmed that the Authority could not subsidise the High Needs block.

- 17.4 It was expected that the 2023-24 DSG would be in a surplus however it could not be confirmed whether the 2024-25 DSG would end with a surplus. There were many pressures that would contribute to the DSG such as the pay award, school reorganisations and inflationary pressures.

RESOLVED that the forum:-

- a) Noted the intended use of £2,434,353 in 2023-24 of the overall carry forward from 2022-23 of £4,501,309 in line with the request at Appendix A.
- b) Noted the carry forward to 2024-25 in advance of £2,066,956 from the overall surplus in 2022-23 of £4,501,309.
- c) Noted the intention to carry forward the respective DSG blocks (Central Services Schools Early Years, High Needs and Schools Block) on a ringfenced basis into 2023-24.
- d) Approved the proposal to use the Schools Block reserve to create a growth fund to meet demand for new places at St Benet Biscop (£83,738) and Cramlington Learning Village (£108,859) covering the period September 2023 – March 2024.
- e) Approved the proposal to use the Central Schools Block reserve to fund the additional pressures on the cost of Independent Special School places at £77,390.

18. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) BUDGET PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2023-24

- 18.1 Abigail Russell, Principal Accountant, introduced the report to the Forum. The report showed the financial performance of the DSG against the budget 2023-24 to the end of August 2023.
- 18.2 The DSG allocation had decreased by approximately £2 million due to a number of schools transferring to academies and a decrease in the Early Years funding. There was an expected overspend of £619,000 which was largely due to the High Needs block. It was noted that the High Need block expenditure was in line with the predicted deficit. It highlighted the importance of the work going into the High Need block.
- 18.3 It was difficult to identify future funding as it was often awarded on an ad hoc basis. It was expected that the DSG would be in a deficit within the next few years, due to High Needs pressures.

RESOLVED that the information be noted

19. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA AND SCHOOL FUNDING UPDATE

Ch.'s Initials.....

- 19.1 Bruce Parvin, Education and Skills Business Manager introduced the briefing note to the Forum. It provided an update regarding the implementation of the National Funding Formula and the initial information provided by EFSA in relation to School Funding for 2024/25.
- 19.2 The Department for Education had confirmed its intention to move to the National Funding Formula. This would mean that Local Authorities would have no discretion in the values of the individual factors used to distribute funding to schools. It was confirmed that Northumberland “mirrors” the National Funding Formula from the financial year 2023/24.
- 19.3 The new policy published by EFSA gave an explicit warning that increases in overall funds available for 2024/25 would be less than those in 2023/24. Final Local Authority level allocations were based on October 2023 School census data and were published in late December 2023. Funding was often provided last minute, on a single year basis, which made medium term financial planning difficult.
- 19.4 There had been no indications from the Government regarding the funding. Members were given an assurance that the team had been clear with the Department for Education about the challenges that Northumberland Schools are facing. They were assured that the Authority was acting as an advocate on their behalf.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

20. 2023/24 WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING DATES

- 20.1 The schedule of dates had been circulated with the agenda papers and a copy filed with the signed minutes.
- 20.2 It was highlighted that the next scheduled meeting on 22nd November 2023 was the same date as Chancellor’s Autumn Statement.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 21.1 There was an assurance that although SATs data held was unvalidated it could be shared with members.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

22. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next scheduled meeting of the Schools’ Forum will be Wednesday, 22 November 2023. Meetings would continue to be held virtually apart from the July meeting which would be in person.

Ch.’s Initials.....

CHAIR _____

DATE _____

Ch.'s Initials.....



Northumberland County Council

Wellbeing and Community Health Services Group

Education and Skills Service

Meeting: High Needs Sub Committee of the Schools Forum

Date: Wednesday 25th October 2023 Time: 9.30am

Venue: Virtual Teams Meeting

<p>Present: Graham Wilkins Chair and Governor at St Wilfrid's RC Primary School Graeme Atkins Headteacher, Hadrian Learning Trust Adele Brown Headteacher, Corbridge Middle Andrea Mead Headteacher Hillcrest Alan Hardie Nicola Threllfall Headteacher, Embleton Vincent Edwards Primary Barry Reed</p>	<p>Keith Faulkner V Chair and Governor of Collingwood Vickie Morton Cllr Richard Wearmouth Elected Member David Street Deputy Director of Education Sue Aviston Head of Schools Organisation and Resources Bruce Parvin Education & Skills Business Manager Amanda Gilchrist SEN Finance Officer Mike Finlay Head of SEND Abigail Russell Principal Accountant Neil Rodgers</p>
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Notes Lisa Headington

Start time:		Action:
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
2.	In Attendance See above	
3.	Apologies: Richard Carr, Graham Reiter, Ben Watson	
4.	Declaration of personal or pecuniary Interest in any agenda item. No declaration of pecuniary interest declared by members.	
5.	Minutes of last meeting/Matters Arising from meeting held on 29 March 2023 Alternative Provision:- GAs confirmed that the alternative provision is going well and was implemented in June. They have had interest from one or two other local schools coming to have a look and see if they can get a place. To be reviewed later in the year. Schools Forum to be updated. All agreed previous minutes as a True record	
6.	TERMS OF REFERENCE All agreed for Graham Wilkins to continue as Chair of the Committee All accepted the Terms of Reference on an ongoing basis.	
7.	Notional SEN Update The ESFA have produced specific guidance suggesting that authorities consider introducing additional school level notional funding. Northumberland extended its	

<p>scheme in, estimating that a further 34 schools would benefit. They'd be an overall cost of £340,000,</p> <p>The ESFA link was circulated as part of the report. It's not an additional budget or additional grant, it's a calculation based on existing elements of the national funding formula. Authorities have some self-determination in terms of how they set that and the approach we're taking in Northumberland at the moment is based on FSM6, IDACI and Low Prior Attainment.</p> <p>While FSM is part of those deprivation range of formula factors, we taken the decision that it is to fund free school meals. It's good to know that the ESFA are on board in relation to that, and clearly where we set our northern threshold is key to this, whether we set it too high or too low.</p> <p>In Appendix A, information from the 23/24 formula Funding published by the ESFA was highlighted for the North East authorities. Of the 12 authorities listed, 9 are either part of a Safety Valve agreement or the Delivering Better Value and Send programme.</p> <p>In terms of the calculated notional SEN levels as a % of Schools Block DSG, it would seem this had been set by Northumberland at an appropriate level. The North East figures ranged from 8.3% to 15.7%, the average was 12%. Northumberland's figure was 12.5%.</p> <p>It was felt it was important to highlight that despite the effective targeting of this initiative, figures were increasing. The 2023 Summer term figure was £71,000 (59%) higher than the previous year. While the number of qualifying schools(45) was very similar the number of students receiving support within those schools had increased.</p> <p>DS commented that the same Notional model was being used to support specialist support bases within mainstream school provision.</p> <p>GA supported the paper and didn't see any need to amend or withdraw this at the present time, but would look for guidance from BP.</p> <p>The conclusion is that in the light of the ESFA guidance, we're doing the right thing, but this needs to remain under scrutiny in light of HN pressures. but in the context of the overall pressures on high needs, does it remain the right thing, continue to do?</p> <p>The HN Committee noted the report.</p>	
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<p>8.</p>	<p>SEN Update</p> <p>Mike Finlay presented his report to members and highlighted the growth of young people with send identified as at send support and particularly those identified as requesting an assessment and subsequently with an EHC plan.</p> <p>Over the last four years there's been 73% increase in the number of EHC plans since 2020. In this year to date as well, we're only a couple of months in, but the growth rate is continuing and there is a 45% increase year on year in requests. The two part legal test for assessment is dictated by The Children and Families Act. The case workers currently have roughly 200% of the average NE caseload, and this impacts on other services (e.g Educational Psychology) as well. This has also led to a decline in the number of EHCPS issued within the 20 week limit.</p> <p>VM queried the average time frame for a EHCP to be processed.</p> <p>MF indicated there are roughly 50% currently in time scale but this could deteriorate both locally and nationally.</p> <p>VM suggested managing expectations around that.</p> <p>DS supported this re the 73% growth in in plans issued and the ongoing COSAa application growth means that the team have now dealing with 400 cases each when they were dealing with 200 cases each that has to have a knock on effect in terms of timeliness.</p> <p>MF confirmed we was speaking to parent groups in relation to this.</p> <p>GA stated he found the figures interesting and reflected the situation of the NE as an outlier. If there was to be a deeper analysis of that, then it'd be interesting to understand what is it look like by primary and secondary phase, what does it look like across schools?</p> <p>NT echoed GA's comments re caution with NE and National comparisons and suggested we may have a lower threshold.</p> <p>BR said he was interested to see how this changes over time, because that is very much a fixed point, but this might give more context.</p> <p>BP recommended the Send Commissioning Strategy as a source of historic information on the growth of special school places in Northumberland over the last five years. This has very much been demand driven to avoid amongst other reasons to avoid other external out of county placements in line with the idea that we were looking to educate children as close to home as appropriate.</p> <p>MF said there are new and more effective ways of writing EHC plans that are starting to be used now. Mental health is a major factor that our colleagues in schools will recognize as one of the biggest factors within the presenting needs of young people.</p> <p>AH : It's interesting looking at this in association with the strategic planning document and the seems to be that the problem is only going to get worse because of the massively rapid increase in the number of pupils coming into the system, particularly with the ASD and SEMH I know it's beyond the remit of this</p>	
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	<p>group in schools forum, but does there need to be a kind of a more multi agency approach to whether early intervention could actually reduce that?</p> <p>I don't want to sound like I'm being political, but obviously like the impact of the cutting of Sure Start for example and family support, is there anything we can actually do to reduce the number of children who get to the point where they needs an education healthcare plan?</p> <p>GW : I chair school appeals across 10 local authorities and the North East and one of the things that we noticed in the last 12 months is the number of young people with mental health issues in school appeals, especially in primary setting - is this an issue in Northumberland.</p> <p>MF : This is the case, a post is being created as well to provide that capacity and at the moment we're working with the NHS on bids for a piece of work that looks at those young people who are struggling at the moment to attend schools and in actuality, a high proportion of young people who are struggling to even leave their house. We are also seeking that reassurance for schools when they're doing the right thing but might feel that those risk of being penalised by someone like Ofsted.</p> <p>DS said we are exploring opportunities for further resources from social care and the health service. the guidance is really clear that it's a joint responsibility between education, health and social care. But at the same time, we do know that we are holding most of the responsibility and that will be continuing for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>GA welcomed the strategic thinking on this. There is a definite sense of shift in approach. These are the pockets of best practice that you know this is working as it should work. They're doing what's expected of them under the Code of Practice etc, but actually these schools that that are not and therefore there needs to be more accountability - is there any scope for this ?</p> <p>MF Schools need to provide the right environment and the right kind of sense of collaboration, schools want to engage and we are able to really positively engage with schools. Part of the shift is to as publicly as possible, celebrate those schools that are doing a good job in whatever way it might be. There are just over 150 schools signed up to a SEND framework where they're identifying their strengths and areas for development and action planning against that.</p> <p>GA said it's important that Northumberland Local Authority, alongside F-40, lobbies extremely hard nationally around high needs funding</p> <p>BR suggested mainstream provisions which are doing best are moving more towards behaviour support rather than behaviour management. This is evident with some students who join special schools.</p> <p>GW thanked Mike for his report and his efforts for young people who have special educational needs.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Projected DSG Position 2023/24 And 2024/25</p> <p>BP presented a paper which highlighted the impact of the revised Schools Block DSG allocations announced by the ESFA in October 2023, and how that could</p>	

	<p>influence the request for a request for a transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs Block. This together with the other papers to this meeting are with the intention of generating discussion ahead of the formal consultation around the budget setting that goes to the next schools forum meeting.</p> <p>The original figures was £ 231.7 million, and the revised figures have reduced that by approximately £2 million to £229.7 million. GW said it had been his intention to reduce the transfer but this report concerned him in light of the service and financial pressures.</p> <p>BP reference AR’s previous report to Schools Forum highlighting forecast deficits of £0.7 million at March 2024 and £6.1 million at March 2025.</p> <p>SA stressed the importance of seeking schools views and getting them engaged in the funding consultation.</p> <p>David Street shared a presentation with members and a summary of the information heard so far, and the suggested next steps.</p> <p>BR highlighted work already done on expanding current provisions and creating spaces which will reduce the costs of having to educate pupils out of county.</p> <p>KF suggested that to make the necessary savings you will need to employ quite a few of the proposals in DS’s presentation.</p> <p>AH said it's really important that DS's presentation is shared with as wide an audience as possible, because there are some tough decisions to be made and unfortunately the tough decisions can't be made in isolation.</p> <p>VM shared her experience re longer term strategy and seeing every teacher is a teacher of send as there are significant number of young people now in a classroom that will have some sort of additional need.</p> <p>SA said the consultation could be prepared to go out immediately after the next School Forum. While acknowledging we don’t know what Chancellors Autumn Statement contained, the challenges faced by Northumberland were more deep rooted and wouldn’t be addressed by that.</p> <p>GW and AH agreed with SA.</p> <p>GW thanked those in attendance for their contributions and said it had been a very productive meeting despite the challenges faced.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>AOB No other business discussed</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>Date of Next meeting HN Committee to be confirmed - Schools Forum Wednesday 22 November 2023</p>	



Northumberland County Council

Wellbeing and Community Health Services Group
Education and Skills Service

Agenda Item 6

SCHOOLS' FORUM

22 November 2023

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget performance update 2023-24

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Schools Forum is informed of the current financial position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) against the Budget for 2023-24.

2. Recommendations

Schools Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the financial performance to the end of September 2023 and the projected year end position on the DSG at the present time.

3. Current DSG allocation

- a) The budget for the DSG was agreed by Schools Forum in February 2023 based upon the initial allocation for 2023-24 that was released in December 2022. Since that time there has been two further updated allocations in March 2023 and July 2023. These account for changes in the following areas:

- Recoupment of funding for Maintained schools converting to academies.
- Updated Early Years Block allocations following January 2023 census.
- Updated commissioned place numbers and import/export adjustments for Special School places in Northumberland.

4. DSG Budget performance: September 2023 update

The DSG projected revenue position at the end of September within each service area is shown below. The forecast position overall is a £0.550 million overspend.

	Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Projected (Surplus)/Deficit
	£m	£m	£m
Central Schools block	2.346	2.276	(0.070)

Early Years block	18.760	18.738	(0.022)
High Needs block	50.671	51.462	0.791
Schools block	88.872	88.723	(0.149)
Overall	160.649	161.199	0.550

The main factors contributing to the overall position are identified below:

a) Central Schools Block – forecast underspend £0.070 million

- i) There is an underspend of £0.050 million on the cost of independent school placements for young people without an EHCP. This is a combination of Looked after young people in an independent residential care placement and those who reside on Holy Island and attend an independent school.

b) Early Years Block – forecast underspend £0.022 million

- i) There is an underspend on the Early years central team of £0.022 million due to a staff vacancy within the team.

c) High Needs Block – forecast overspend £0.791 million

- i) The forecast overspend on top-ups is £1.005 million which represents overall growth of around 17% compared to the previous year. This is based on the summer term payment and adjusted for further growth in numbers of around 9% for the remainder of the 2023-24 academic year plus the impact of the increase of the average banding.
- ii) There is an overspend of £0.110 million on the cost of placements at Independent Special Schools. Whilst there has been a slight reduction in the number of placements, the costs are increasing due to the impact of inflation and the complexity of needs of the children.
- iii) The Inclusion service is anticipating an overspend of £0.166 million on pupil transport to alternative provision with a 50% uplift in costs compared to 2022-23. This is due to the ongoing impact of the increase in Permanent and Fixed Term exclusions.
- iv) There is a projected underspend of £0.253 million on staffing and travel across SEN Support services due to vacancies across the service, with several teaching posts due to be filled from January 2024.
- v) There is an underspend of £0.280 million on the budget for Primary Support Bases (PSB's). The budget was originally planned for 5 PSB's around the County, but as of September 2023 there are currently only 2 operating on an ongoing basis. Some of the original PSB's are now operating as Specialist Support bases which are funded through additional notional SEND funding, and we have built in growth which is expected to cover the additional cost.

d) Schools Block – forecast underspend £0.149 million

- i) There is an underspend of £0.152 million on the Trade Union Facility time budget. This relates to the surplus carried forward from 2022-23 which the service has no plan to spend in the current year.

5. In-year budget position

The table below demonstrates how the forecast financial performance compares against the annual DSG allocations, as issued in July 2023.

This removes the impact of the transfer between the Schools Block and High Needs block and the drawdown of funding from the reserve.

DSG annual grant	Forecast expenditure	Projected
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	2023-24		(surplus)/deficit	
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Central Schools Block	2.269		2.276	0.007
Early Years Block	18.760		18.738	(0.022)
High Needs Block	48.310		51.462	3.152
Schools Block	88.876		88.723	(0.153)
Total	158.215		161.199	2.984

- a) The table above demonstrates that the High Needs Block is expected to incur expenditure that exceeds the annual allocation by £3.152 million (by comparison expenditure exceeded the annual allocation by £0.443 million in 2022-23).
- b) Year on year expenditure is expected to rise by £7.351 million or 16.7% whilst funding has only risen by £4.641 million or 10.6%. The gap between funding levels and expenditure has widened significantly during 2023-24 causing additional pressure on the High Needs Block which is not sustainable on a long-term basis.
- c) All other blocks are expected to spend within the limits of the annual grant funding.

6. Summary

The current financial forecast demonstrates the extreme pressure the High Needs Block is now facing and the potential impact on the DSG reserve is shown below.

	Opening reserve 2023-24	Planned use in 2023-24	Surplus/(deficit) in year	Forecast Closing reserve 2023-24
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Central Schools Block	0.307	(0.077)	0.070	0.300
Early Years Block	0.690	-	0.022	0.712
High Needs Block	1.876	(1.876)	(0.791)	(0.791)
Schools Block	1.628	(0.482)	0.149	1.295
Total	4.501	(2.435)	(0.550)	1.516

- a) Based upon the latest information, the DSG reserve is expected to reduce from £4.501 million at the beginning of 2023-24 to £1.516 million at the end of the year as all balances are transferred to or from the reserve.
- b) The impact of the position above is that there will be no High Needs reserve available to support pressures on the budget in 2024-25 unless funds are re-directed from other blocks.
- c) The 2024-25 financial year will see a further increase in expenditure with the full year impact of creating additional special school places and associated top-ups from September 2023 along with inflationary pressures linked to pay awards for centrally employed staff and for those services commissioned from other providers.
- d) If the High Needs block moves into a deficit, then current regulations state that the deficit must be rolled forward and can be offset fully or partially against the overall DSG reserve in the next year or it can be rolled forward to future years. It is prohibited for Council reserves to be used to meet the High needs block deficit until the end of the 2025-26 financial year when the regulations will be reviewed.



Northumberland County Council

Agenda Item 7 School Forum : 22 November 2023 Special Education Needs Update

1. Purpose of Briefing Note

To provide Schools Forum with an update on SEND for the academic year 2022-23, including challenges faced and action taken to date or planned.

2. Recommendations

That the Schools' Forum notes the report and is invited to:

- Consider implication of information presented in relation to relevant financial reports
- Make comment on data and activity detailed within it.

3. Background

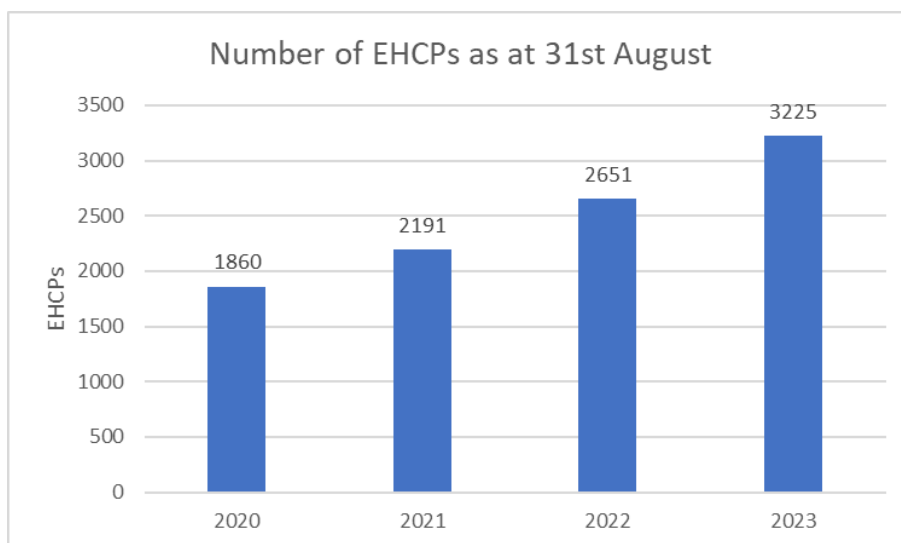
Since introduction of the 'free on demand' delivery model by the SEND Service in September 2020, referrals have continued to increase year on year. In order to ensure demand can be met without requiring increased funding, the service has undergone delivery transformation throughout 22-24. The SEND Service are confident that these models are sustainable for projected demand over the next two academic years (to August 2025).

Increases in EHCP numbers witnessed locally, and nationally, continue to put pressure on the High Needs Block through top up and associated demand for special school places.

4. Quantitative Data

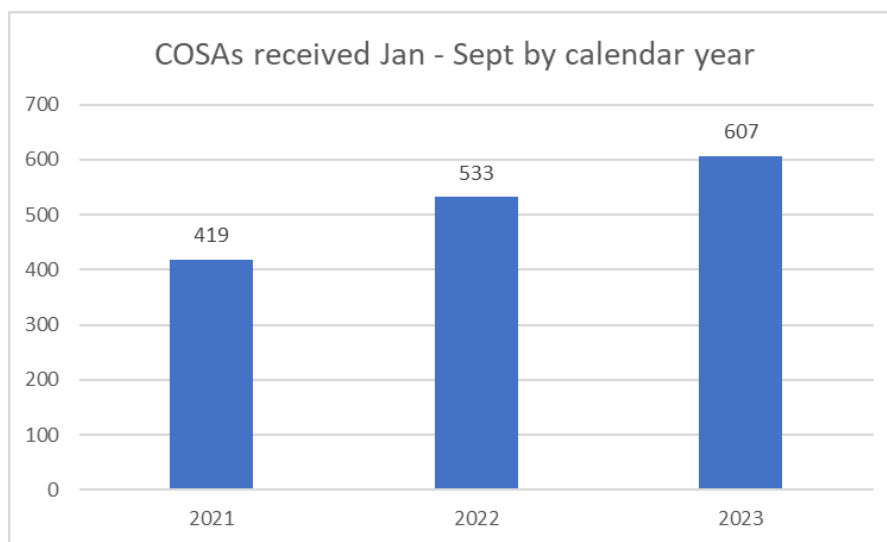
SEND support and EHCP data

Over the last 4 years, the number of EHCPs has increased at a similar rate in Northumberland as across England. In Northumberland there has been a 73% increase in the number of EHCPs since 2020.



Requests for EHC Needs Assessment (Consideration of Statutory Assessment, or 'COSA)

There has been a 45% increase in the requests for EHC needs assessment made January to September between 2021 and 2023. Approximately 10% of requests were declined during 2022-23, in line with the legal test detailed within the Children and Families' Act 2014. This puts increasing pressure on special school places, top up funding from the High Needs Block and the rapidly increasing need for mainstream settings to consistently offer high quality ordinarily available provision.



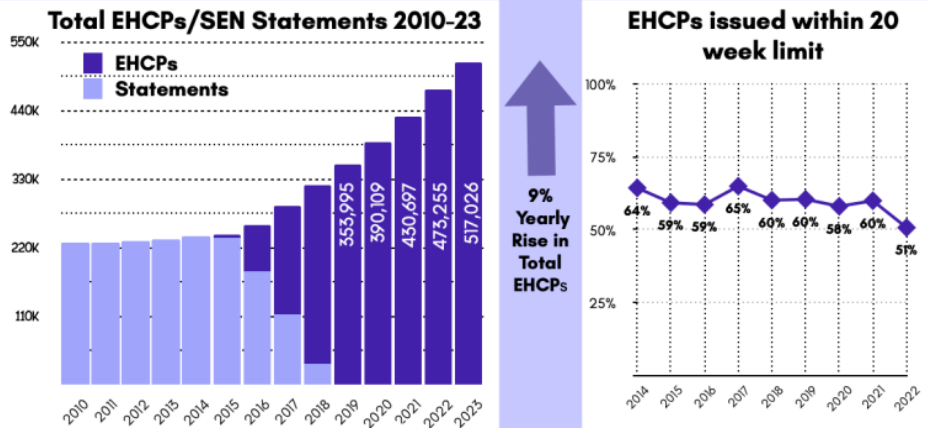
Statutory EHCP assessment and review team caseload:

- In the North East, EHCP caseworkers have an average caseload of 201 EHCPs per officer at Spring SEN2. The average caseload of a Northumberland officer is twice that of the North East average.
- Northumberland sits just above the North East average for EHCNA per 10,000 CYP
- In 2019, an EHCP Officer had approximately 240 EHCPs in their caseload. In July 2023, an officer had approximately 380 EHCPs in their caseload.
- In 2019, an EHCP Coordinator had approximately 40 new EHC needs assessments on going. As at July 2023, an EHCP Coordinator had, on average, 90.

Educational Psychology Service statutory caseload:

- 699 requests for an EHCP led to a request for educational advice to be completed by an Educational Psychologist in 2022-23. There has been a 39% increase in the number of educational advices per Educational Psychologist.
- The EP team attended 302 visits to schools as part of their SLA offer during 2022-23, on top of statutory work completed.

National and regional comparatives:

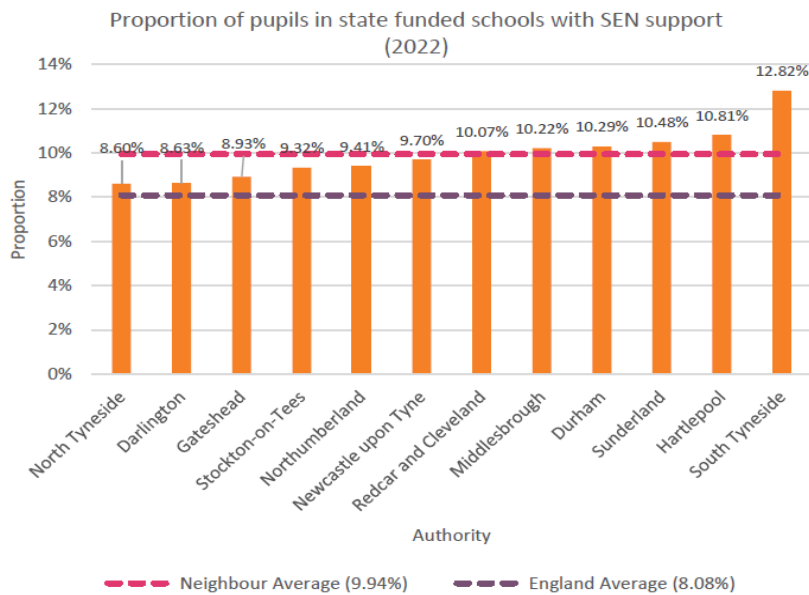


Since 2014, Section 36 (8) of the Children and Families Act 2014 states “the LA must secure an EHC needs assessment if after having regard to views expressed within the evidence submitted that:

- A) the child or young person has, or may have, SEN, and
- B) It may be necessary for special educational provision to be made”.

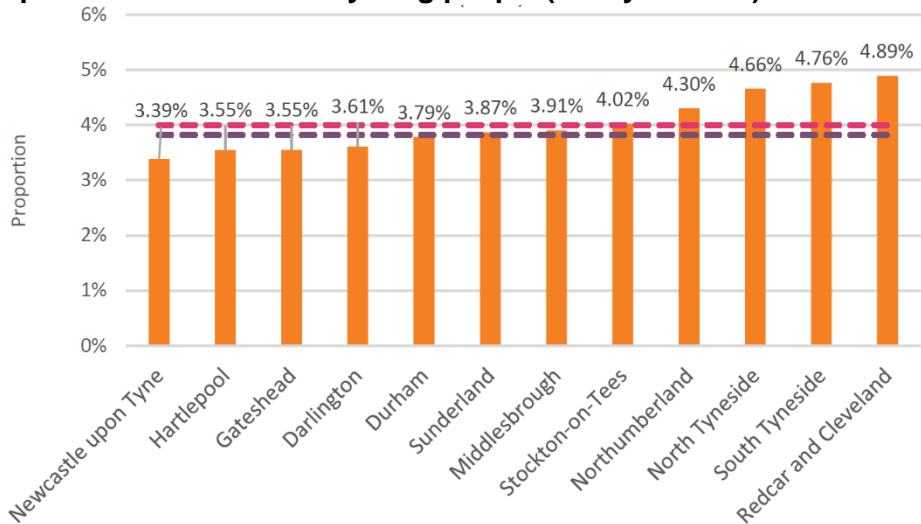
This low threshold leaves need for alternative approaches to supporting young people, and settings, in making provision within budgetary constraints.

48.3% of EHCPs were issued within the statutory 20 week timescale during the academic year 2022-23. This compares to 71.2% in timescale 2021-22, with the reduced compliance with statutory timescales being the result of increased volume of requests, reduced number of Educational Psychologists and a static EHCP caseworker capacity.

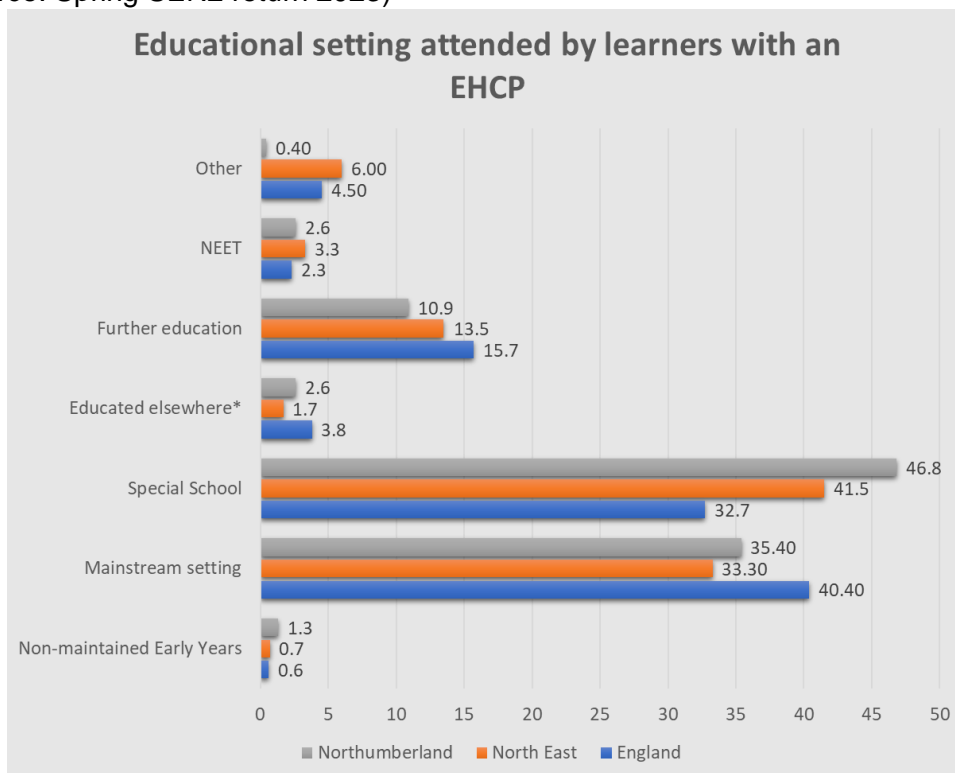


A lower proportion of pupils attending maintained schools were recorded as being in receipt of SEN support than the regional average as at end of 2022. However, there were a higher proportion of pupils with an EHCP.

Proportion of children and young people (0-25 years old) with an EHCP



Mainstream settings cater for fewer learners with an EHCP in Northumberland than across England as a whole (data source: Spring SEN2 return 2023)



More robust panel meetings and NCC staff training have been designed to ensure that placement more closely aligns with the Children and Families’ Act 2014, supporting Northumberland in more positively shaping the picture moving forwards. A greater proportion of learners with an EHCP will be catered for by ‘mainstream’ settings moving forwards.

SEND Service data 2022-23: Number of referrals made by schools

	High Incidence Needs Team				Low Incidence Needs Team	
	Autism Support	Emotional Wellbeing & Behaviour Support	Specific Learning Difficulties Support	Speech, Language and Communication Support	Sensory Support	Portage
Staff no.	11.5	9.8	3.8	11.4	16	7
Whole school activity	66	154	10	140	491	N/A
Individual child/ young person support	1630				6230	3771

HINT have witnessed an increase in referrals for individual child level support of 14.3%, and for whole school support of 208% between 2021-22 and 2022-23.

LINT have witnessed an increase in referrals of 19% between 2021-22 and 2022-23.

There was an overall increase of 32% 2021-22 to 2022-23 for input into EHC needs assessments.

Workforce Development (Training Delivered into Schools)

During 2022-23, HINT offered 123 school-based courses – a 30% increase from the previous academic year. 2,304 delegates attended sessions, representing 103 schools. A further 47 courses were created and made available through Learning Together’s online platform. 12 Cygnet and 15 Safety Intervention training courses were also delivered.

During the same period, LINT delivered 148 training sessions with almost 16,000 individual forms of engagement across all teams.

5. Challenges and actions

Challenge	Action taken / planned
Compliance with statutory EHCP timescales resulting from high and increasing number of requests for EHC needs assessment.	Review of banding model to support more pupils more effectively at SEND Support. Improved paperwork with peer support and challenge in place. Use of locum work to support more timely EP advice. Development of improved EHCP content and more effective EP educational advice, reducing time required and increasing quality of EHCPs. Consultation on restructure of statutory teams to maximise capacity of those with statutory function.
Impact of increasing EHCP numbers on High Needs Block.	See separate report.
Collaborative working with schools to consistently deliver Ordinarily Available Provision, meeting the needs of today’s pupil population.	Clear and regular SENCo communication. Development of OAP, to be review 2023-24. Stronger focus on whole school support, over individual referral, and reasonable adjustments from central services. Introduction of standardised SEND evaluation tool with development of SEND review during 2023-24, promoting a consistent benchmark for best practice. Development of new ways of working from 2023-24 by the HINT team to meet demand without increased funding.

Suspensions of young people with SEND, or not recognised as having SEND, resulting from unmet need.	Joint Inclusion, Virtual School and SEND work to support and challenge settings, identified through Inclusion Panel (led by SORT) where appropriate. Inclusion Summit 2023 (SORT) and follow up work.
Number of young people with SEND who are NEET.	Improved ways of working for the PfA/career team. Work with North East LEP, Whole School SEND and partners across the region and county. Skills and other provider development to make provision for those most at risk of being NEET.
Complaints resulting from capacity challenge.	Creation of a new post to support timely annual review administration. New post created to support client relations and mediation. New mailbox dedicated to enquiries, FOI, SAR and complaint. Recruitment review to increase EP capacity.
Impact of poor mental health on school engagement for an increasing number of children and young people.	Joint Senior Mental Health Lead, CARE, trauma informed practice and mental health support team projects launched and continued development underway. Project bid to specifically target those not currently attending education through person-centred and consistent approaches.

6. Conclusion

Local and regional pictures broadly align to those nationally in relation to high and increasing levels of additional need within the population. Impact of these trends also align with the unsustainable demand on both statutory functions and on funding and services supported by the High Needs Block. Teams providing preventative and training-based services, as well as reactive support, have been adapted further, since changes made in September 2020, to maximise their positive impact whilst remaining static with regards to workforce size.

Whilst well received by families and schools to date, with survey results supporting positive feedback, it is important to forecast and prepare for future demand, particularly in relation to top up funding linked to EHCPs.

Mike Finlay
October 2023



Northumberland County Council

Agenda Item 8

Schools Forum: 22 November 2023

2024/25 National Funding Formula & School Funding Consultation

1. Purpose of the Report

To provide further additional information in respect of the continuing implementation of the National Funding Formula, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and associated 2023/24 Schools Funding information. This includes formal consultation with Schools Forum in relation to funding for 2023/24.

2. Recommendations

Schools Forum is asked to:

- a. Agree to a transfer of up to 0.5% (approximately £1.148 million) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2024/25.
- b. Agree that the funding values for 2024/25 be set in line with the principles outlined in the report; and agree for these to be the basis for the wider consultation with schools.
- c. Support the disapplication request arising from the requirements of the Coquet schools in relation to their reorganisation with effect from September 2024.
- d. Note the delegation of final decisions on the values to the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the lead member for Children's Services once final funding becomes known in December 2023, in order to enable the required Cabinet report to be prepared and submitted to the 16 January 2024 meeting, and the submission of the necessary return to the ESFA by 22 January 2024.
- e. Receive a further report to the Schools Forum meeting on 17 January 2024 on the outcome of the consultation with schools and final funding values to be used for 2024/25.

3. Background

Schools Forum has previously received reports outlining developments in relation to the National Funding Formula (NFF). The latest report to Schools Forum in September 2023 confirmed Northumberland's progress as a local authority "that mirrors the NFF in all factors".

It should also be noted that overall funding is not increasing by the same amounts, after the additional funding grants are taken into consideration in 2023/24 for both Schools and High Needs, with no indication of any further support at the time of writing this report. The Chancellors Autumn Statement is scheduled for the same day as Schools Forum (22 November 2023). Schools are advised to budget accordingly when preparing 2024/25 figures.

4. Latest Information

The provisional 2024/25 allocations based on October 2022 data are shown in the table below:

	2023-24 (as per Dec 21)	Provisional 2024/25 (based on Oct 22 Data)	Potential Change	
			£	%
Schools Block #	226,441,908	229,722,222	3,280,314	1.45%
High Needs Block	51,072,682	53,325,176	2,252,494	4.41%
Central School Services Block	2,268,989	2,167,198	- 101,791	-4.49%
TOTAL	279,783,579	285,214,596	5,431,017	1.94%
Early Years Block - not yet available for 24/25	19,157,114	n/a	-	-
# The 2024/25 figure does not include the LA Growth Fund element - which is not yet available - if in line with last year £896k this would add 0.39% to the % increase				

It should be noted that, subsequent to the last Schools Forum meeting held on 27 September 2023, the ESFA issued an apology, revised NFF figures and provisional allocations for 2024/25 again based on October 2022 data. The estimated reduction in funding to Northumberland is approximately £2 million (0.9%). The original and revised National Funding Formula values are provided at Appendix A.

As in previous years, it is stressed that these figures will be updated with reference to the October 2023 School Census data when the final figures are released in late December.

5. Minimum Per Pupil Funding (MPPF)

The MPPF Levels have also been reduced in line with the above ESFA announcement, and revised figures are provided in the table below :

Phase	2023/24 MPPF Level	Revised Increase	2024/25 Original MPPF Level	2024/25 Revised MPPF Level
Primary	£4,405	£143 (2.8%) MSAG + £62 (1.4%) inc	£4,665	£4,610
KS3	£5,503	£186 (2.9%) MSAG + £82 (1.5%) inc	£5,824	£5,771 #
KS4	£6,033	£208 (3.0%) MSAG + £90 (1.5%) inc	£6,389	£6,331 #

the secondary value of £5,995 is a weighted average of the KS3 (3/5) and KS4 (2/5) figures

6. Transfer from Schools Block

In November 2022, the local authority consulted with both the Schools Forum and wider schools and requested agreement to up to a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2023/24. Subsequently, after the final settlement was received in December 2022 it was decided that a 0.25% transfer would be taken, enabling the NFF values to be met in full for all schools for 2023/24. It should be noted however that the transfer was only possible through use of the growth element with the NFF which is allocated to the local authority and not individual schools.

The High Needs Committee (HNC) meeting on 25 October was briefed on the increasing pressures arising from a significant escalation of plan numbers in 2023, as featured in the report of the Head of SEN earlier on the agenda.

The HNC was also informed of the reduction in the Schools Block funding and received initial indicative figures, (*reproduced in figure 1 below*) of the potential impact of a transfer from the Schools Block.

	£	Potential Transfer	%	Sum Remaining for Schools in 2024/25	Increase in Funding to Schools	
					£	%
Total 2023/24 Schools Block including MSAG (included Growth Fund of £896k)	226,441,908					
Original 2024/25 Provisional Figure	231,712,509					
Revised 24/25 Provisional Figure following ESFA error (Reduction £1,964,613)	229,722,222	2,297,222	1%	227,424,999	983,091	0.43%
Increase on 2023/24 (£)	3,280,314	1,148,611	0.50%	228,573,611	2,131,703	0.94%
Increase on 2023/24 (%)	1.45%	574,306	0.25%	229,147,916	2,706,008	1.20%

Given the escalating in the number of plans, and the projected year end deficit on the High Needs Block, Schools Forum is requested to support a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs block for 2024/25.

7. The Funding Floor and Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

The Funding Floor ensures that a school's funding is protected year on year (on a "funding per pupil" basis) and that all schools attract a minimum uplift to their pupil-led funding, even if the core formula factors indicate funding should be lower. This is more likely to be a factor where a local authority formula has been significantly different to the NFF and is not considered to be a factor for Northumberland. The level is set nationally by the ESFA and is 0.5% for 2024/25.

While the MFG has an element of local determination in that an individual local authority can determine the specific level of MFG between the ESFA parameters of 0% and 0.5%. Figure prepared on the basis of last year are shown below, and this is not expected to change significantly for 2024/25.

MFG Level	No Of Schools	Total MFG Increase
0.5%	13	£ 152,794
0.25%	6	£ 131,350
0%	6	£ 120,412

In line with previous Schools Forum decisions, it is felt that, subject to the resources available, the MFG should be set at 0.5% in order to maximise the number of schools supported.

8. Central Services Block

The ongoing 20% reduction in the historic commitment element has previously been highlighted and should continue to cover Northumberland's costs in relation to ongoing prudential borrowing costs and termination of employment costs for which the historic

element is intended. While the 4.5% increase is larger than last year's 2% increase for the ongoing responsibilities element, this still does not meet pay and price pressures arising from the NJC award.

	2023/24 (actual)	2024/25 (provisional)	Change	
			£	%
Ongoing Responsibilities	£1,433,789	£1,499,038	+£65,249	+4.5%
Historic Commitments	£835,200	£668,160	-£167,040	-20.0%
TOTAL CSSB	£ 2,268,989	£ 2,167,198	-£180,616	-7.4%

9. Early Years Block

No information for Northumberland is available yet in relation to Early Years funding, in line with previous years. Details of the 2024/25 EY funding will be received in December together with the rest of the DSG information for 2024/25.

10. De-delegation

De-delegation is the process by which the relevant maintained school members of Schools Forum can agree to have funding deducted at source from maintained schools for certain services as specified by the DfE. For academies to access these services, they will need to agree to buy in, either on an individual or a multi academy trust level.

For 2023/24, de-delegation was agreed in respect of the following services:

- Contingency for costs arising from reorganisation or restructuring;
- Free School Meal eligibility checking;
- Trade union facility time; and
- Support to underperforming ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners;

It is anticipated that de-delegation will again be sought in respect of these services.

11. Disapplication Request in respect of Coquet Partnership Reorganisation

As you are all aware, in September 2024, James Calvert Spence College will not have a Year 5 intake, but the 5 feeder First Schools will retain their Year 4 students into Year 5 as part of the 2 year transition to becoming Primary Schools. This process will be repeated in September 2026, when the Year 5 students will continue into Year 6 in the Primary School, Year 4 retained into Year 5 in the Primary Schools, at which point James Calvert Spence College will operate in line with a more traditional secondary Year 7 to Year 13 model.

To reflect this, rather than the standard funding formula lagged model, James Calvert Spence College will be funded for April to August 2024 (5/12 of the year) in respect of the Year 6

students for 2024/25, and from September 2024 to March 2025 (7/12 of the year), the First Schools will receive further funding in 2024/25 for their current Year 4 students, as measured at the October 2023 school census, to reflect the fact they will be retained those students from September 2024. It is estimated that £232,172 will be redistributed from James Calvert Spence College to the Feeder Primary schools in respect of this adjustment.

This required a disapplication request to be made to the ESFA, and the deadline for the submission of these requests was Friday 17 November. A disapplication request has been made on that basis (copy attached at Appendix B), on the understanding that we will subsequently report the Schools Forum position to the ESFA.

Schools Forum's support of the Disapplication Request is requested on that basis.

12. Other Information

In November 2022, Schools Forum was briefed as to the proposed introduction of a standardised formulaic report for the **split site factor**, affecting 4 Northumberland Schools. Schools receive a £53,700 lump sum payment for each of their additional eligible sites – up to a maximum of three additional sites. On top of that, schools whose sites are separated by more than 100 meters receive distance funding. The distance funding varies depending on how far apart the sites are, up to a maximum of £26,900 for sites which are at least 500 metres away from the main site. This approach is mandatory for 2024/25

Capping and Scaling continues to be an option for 2024/25, but we should seek to limit it's impact where possible, thereby allowing Schools to retain as much funding formula gains as possible. However, given the uncertainty it is proposed that we continue to consider this as a potential option. This is also consistent with the response to the School Consultation exercise last December where 7 of the 8 responses were in favour of retaining the potential use of capping and scaling as part of the 2023/24 School Budget setting process.

13. Next Steps:

Following any comments received today, the intention is also to consult with schools ahead of the final budget setting report to Cabinet. The consultation is proposed to run from Thursday 23 November to 12.00 noon on Monday 12 December. A copy of the draft consultation paper is attached for your consideration in Appendix C. The results of the consultation and final recommendations to Cabinet will be reported back to the January 2023 Schools Forum meeting.

Because of the short timescales between receiving the final 2024/25 DSG settlement in December, the preparation of a report to the Cabinet meeting on 16 January 2024 and the submission of the final figures to the ESFA by 22 January 2024, delegated powers are sought for the Executive Director for Childrens Services and Lead Member for Children's Services to set the final figures, in line with the principles and illustrative figures outlined in this report.

As reflected in the recommendations the Cabinet report will seek delegated powers to agree the final values, there will be reported to the Schools Forum meeting on 17 January 2024 prior to submission to the ESFA by 22 January 2024.

14. Summary and Conclusions:

The support of Schools Forum in relation to 2024/25 School Funding is requested in line with the recommendations in section 2 of this report, with regard to the principles to be adopted for the setting of the DSG for 2024/25. Further information will be provided to the January and February 2024 meetings once the final 2023/24 DSG settlement has been received in December 2023, but the views of School Forum are required at this stage to enable the appropriate report seeking approval to go to Cabinet in January 2024, as has been the case in previous years.

Bruce Parvin

Education and Skills Funding Manager

16 November 2023

Factor values and total spend in 2024-25

Original July 2023

	Unit Values	Total Funding (incl. ACA)	Proportion of core total
Basic per pupil Funding		£33,696m	75.7%
Basic entitlement		£33,505m	75.3%
Primary basic entitlement	£3,597	£16,419m	36.9%
KS3 basic entitlement	£5,072	£9,904m	22.2%
KS4 basic entitlement	£5,717	£7,183m	16.1%
Minimum per pupil		£191m	0.4%
Primary Minimum Per Pupil funding	£4,655	£150m	0.3%
Secondary Minimum Per Pupil funding	£6,050	£40m	0.1%
Additional Needs Funding		£7,917m	17.8%
Deprivation		£4,511m	10.1%
Primary FSM	£490	£540m	1.2%
Secondary FSM	£490	£376m	0.8%
Primary FSM6	£830	£951m	2.1%
Secondary FSM6	£1,210	£1,067m	2.4%
Primary IDACI A	£685	£104m	0.2%
Primary IDACI B	£520	£152m	0.3%
Primary IDACI C	£490	£140m	0.3%
Primary IDACI D	£450	£124m	0.3%
Primary IDACI E	£285	£147m	0.3%
Primary IDACI F	£235	£115m	0.3%
Secondary IDACI A	£950	£97m	0.2%
Secondary IDACI B	£750	£151m	0.3%
Secondary IDACI C	£695	£140m	0.3%
Secondary IDACI D	£635	£122m	0.3%
Secondary IDACI E	£455	£165m	0.4%
Secondary IDACI F	£345	£117m	0.3%
Low Prior Attainment		£2,857m	6.4%
Primary LPA	£1,185	£1,617m	3.6%
Secondary LPA	£1,790	£1,240m	2.8%
English as an Additional Language		£488m	1.1%
Primary EAL	£595	£346m	0.8%
Secondary EAL	£1,605	£142m	0.3%
Mobility		£61m	0.1%
Primary Mobility	£970	£48m	0.1%
Secondary Mobility	£1,395	£13m	0.0%
School-Led Funding		£2,900m	6.5%
Lump Sum		£2,801m	6.3%
Primary lump sum	£135,700	£2,339m	5.3%
Secondary lump sum	£135,700	£462m	1.0%
Sparsity		£99m	0.2%
Primary sparsity	£57,700	£94m	0.2%
Secondary sparsity	£83,900	£5m	0.0%
Area Cost Adjustment: Multiplier applied to basic entitlement, additional needs and school-led funding (It is included in the factor subtotals)		£1,123m	
Core total (excl. funding floor and premises)		£44,513m	
Floor		£223m	
Primary floor funding		£109m	
Secondary floor funding		£114m	
Premises		£595m	
Split sites	£81,400	£33m	
Total		£45,331m.	

Factor values and total spend in 2024-25

(revised Oct 2023)

	Unit Values	Total Funding (incl. ACA)	Proportion of core total
Basic per pupil Funding		£33,368m	75.7%
Basic entitlement		£33,177m	75.3%
Primary basic entitlement	£3,562	£16,259m	36.9%
KS3 basic entitlement	£5,022	£9,806m	22.2%
KS4 basic entitlement	£5,661	£7,112m	16.1%
Minimum per pupil		£190m	0.4%
Primary Minimum Per Pupil funding	£4,610	£149m	0.3%
Secondary Minimum Per Pupil funding	£5,995	£41m	0.1%
Additional Needs Funding		£7,848m	17.8%
Deprivation		£4,477m	10.2%
Primary FSM	£490	£541m	1.2%
Secondary FSM	£490	£376m	0.9%
Primary FSM6	£820	£940m	2.1%
Secondary FSM6	£1,200	£1,058m	2.4%
Primary IDACI A	£680	£104m	0.2%
Primary IDACI B	£515	£151m	0.3%
Primary IDACI C	£485	£139m	0.3%
Primary IDACI D	£445	£122m	0.3%
Primary IDACI E	£285	£147m	0.3%
Primary IDACI F	£235	£115m	0.3%
Secondary IDACI A	£945	£97m	0.2%
Secondary IDACI B	£740	£150m	0.3%
Secondary IDACI C	£690	£139m	0.3%
Secondary IDACI D	£630	£121m	0.3%
Secondary IDACI E	£450	£163m	0.4%
Secondary IDACI F	£340	£115m	0.3%
Low Prior Attainment		£2,826m	6.4%
Primary LPA	£1,170	£1,596m	3.6%
Secondary LPA	£1,775	£1,230m	2.8%
English as an Additional Language		£484m	1.1%
Primary EAL	£590	£343m	0.8%
Secondary EAL	£1,585	£141m	0.3%
Mobility		£61m	0.1%
Primary Mobility	£960	£47m	0.1%
Secondary Mobility	£1,380	£13m	0.0%
School-Led Funding		£2,872m	6.5%
Lump Sum		£2,774m	6.3%
Primary lump sum	£134,400	£2,316m	5.3%
Secondary lump sum	£134,400	£458m	1.0%
Sparsity		£98m	0.2%
Primary sparsity	£57,100	£93m	0.2%
Secondary sparsity	£83,000	£5m	0.0%
Area Cost Adjustment: Multiplier applied to basic entitlement, additional needs and school-led funding (It is included in the factor subtotals)		£1,112m	
Core total (excl. funding floor and premises)		£44,088m	
Floor		£277m	
Primary floor funding		£138m	
Secondary floor funding		£138m	
Premises		£597m	
Split sites	£80,600	£33m	
Total		£44,961m.	

Local authority disapplication request - supporting information

Submission Id : **U76ROIpZJb**

2023-11-15, 11:10 PM

Submission Status : **NOT SUBMITTED**

 You must submit your online form before closing your browser window.

Disapplication request - supporting information

UKPRN	Not supplied
What does your disapplication request relate to?	General (schools and central school services)
Have any other options been considered?	Yes, we have considered other options
Explain briefly what other options were considered?	If no application to disapply was made, that would mean that James Calvert Spence funding would retain Year 5 funding, and there would be no funding to distribute between the First schools retaining their Year 5 students as the first phase of their transition to Primary.
Why were these other options you considered discounted?	It is anticipated there will not be sufficient funding in the Schools Block to "double fund" the students at both James Calvert Spence College and the Primaries, therefore the principle of the "funding following the pupil" has been applied, as the fairest approach, despite this requiring a disapplication

Why is this request the local authority's preferred option?	The request will support the overall re-organisation in the Coquet partnership area, as it moves to a standard Primary Secondary Model, as decided through a wider School Consultation exercise and reported to NCC Cabinet.
What will be the impact on schools if the disapplication is approved?	There will be a transfer of funds from James Calvert Spence College, to the feeder First / Primary Schools to reflect the fact the feeder Schools will retain Year 5 pupils from September 2024.
Will there be any negative financial impact on schools?	Yes, there will be a negative impact on school funding
What steps have you taken to protect pupil educational outcomes?	A wider Education consultation was undertaken with all Schools in the Partnership to determine their views as to the best model for the area. The move to a standard two tier model was agreed to be the best way forward both in terms of educational outcomes and for the medium term financial sustainability of the Schools involved.
What steps have you taken to protect the school(s) education provision?	As well as the consultation exercise, a staffing protocol in in place to minimise redundancies from the reorganisation provide some stability and continuity.

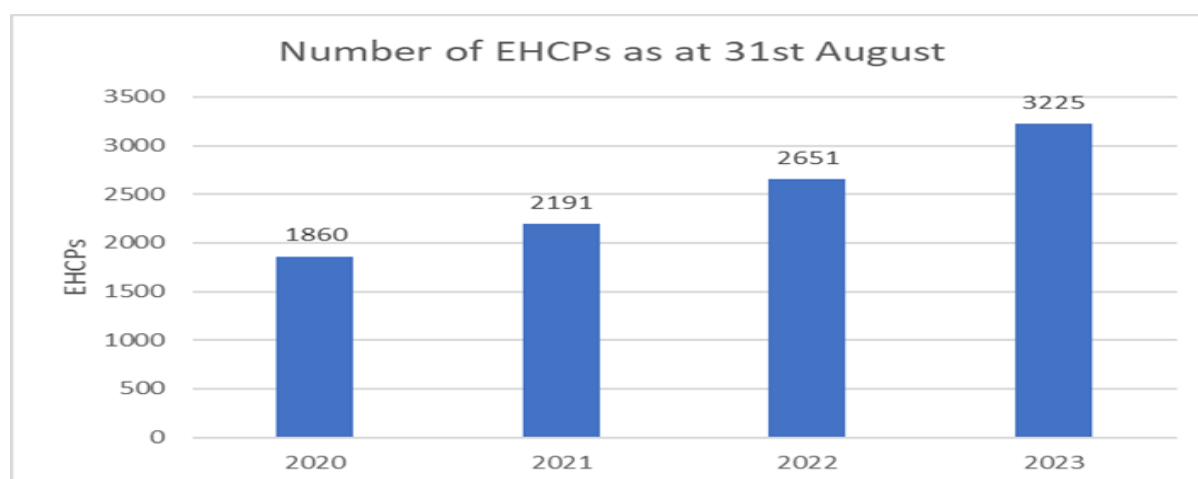
What will be the impact on the local authority if the disapplication is approved?	It is estimated that funding to James Calvert Spence College will be reduced by £232,172 for 2024/23 and this funding will be redistributed to the feeder primary schools retaining their pupils into Year 5. There will be no net impact to the LA.
Has an up to date financial modelling been completed?	Yes
Upload financial modelling copy	JCSC_modelling_24-25.xlsx
What considerations and local factors have informed your request?	All foreseeable wider impacts were considered as part of the wider School Consultation.
UK business telephone number	01670 623431
Second business email address	abigail.russell@northumberland.gov.uk
Declaration 1	The details I have provided are correct to the best of my knowledge
Declaration 2	I have the authority to submit this request on behalf of the local authority

National Funding Formula (NFF) : Update and 2024/25 School Funding Consultation

Previously Northumberland County Council consulted on its approach to the introduction of the National Funding Formula (NFF) in Northumberland, following discussions at Schools Forum. The results of these discussions have consistently been to move in a phased or gradual approach to NFF values, reflecting the fact that historically Northumberland has maintained some values that were different to the NFF values. For 2023/24 Northumberland was in line with National Funding Formula figures for all values, though this was only achievable due to a contribution from the growth element of the Schools Block which is paid directly to the Council to manage the needs for additional school places.

The results of the December 2022 consultation were reported to Schools Forum in January 2023 and are available on the Schools forum page [HERE](#) as part of the 18 January 2023 Paper *Agenda Item 7 Setting the DSG 2023-24 FINAL*.

Following the move to National Funding Formula, the biggest challenge facing Education in Northumberland are service and financial pressures arising from SEND. This is funded via the High Needs Block funding allocated by the ESFA. We have seen large rises in the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) (73 % since 2020) :



This has escalated give the 574 (22%) rise in EHCPs in the year to 31 August 2023. Given that there is an average of £7,000 in support provided for every EHCP, this has resulted in an estimated £4m increase in annual costs.

These pressures mean it is imperative that the SEN system and resources is considered as a whole, it is no longer possible to continue to operate as we are currently as this is unsustainable given the current demands. For 2023/24 Northumberland is spending £3 million more than it will receive in relation to SEND. Your views are therefore sought in relation to which areas should be considered to achieve a more balanced position.

Please provide your responses in relation to the following 6 areas. There is also a free text box at the end of the consultation, and we would welcome any thoughts or comments you are able to provide.

Please contact Bruce Parvin, Education and Skills Business Manager
bruce.parvin@northumberland.gov.uk if you have any further queries in relation to this consultation.

The Closing Date is **12.00 noon on Monday 11 December 2023**.

1. TRANSFER FROM THE SCHOOLS BLOCK TO THE HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

It is the intention to seek a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of 0.5% for 2024/25. This was supported by Schools Forum at the meeting on 22 November 2023. This is considered the minimum required give the pressures outlined above.

QUESTION

1.1 Do you support the Schools Forum Decision to seek a 0.5% transfer (approx. £1.130million) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for the financial year 2024/25 ?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

1.2 Would you be supportive of a larger transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in subsequent years to help address the current £3million gap in resources :

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

2. SEN TOP UPS TO MAINTAINED AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS.

At around £19 million a year, Top Up payments to mainstream and special schools represent the single largest commitment from the High Needs Block. The current pressures from increasing numbers mean that it is not financially viable to consider an increase in the banded rates at the current time. While it is acknowledged that the rates themselves have not increased for a number of years, the average per plan paid has increased (From £6,800 in 2020 to £7.520 in 2023). In addition, in 2022/23 a lump sum was introduced for Special Schools, and the additional Notional SEN payments extended for mainstream schools.

2.1 Do you support a freeze or reduction in SEN banding rates at the present time, subject to review on an annual basis?

- Yes – Freeze
- Yes – Reduction
- No
- Don't Know

2.2 Should Northumberland consider a fundamental review of the banding rates paid ?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

2.3 Should any review of the banding rates paid be done on a “cost neutral” basis, ie a redistribution of existing funds, or seek to deliver financial savings ?

- Cost Neutral
- Deliver Savings
- Don't Know

2.4 Northumberland does not currently consider any information in relation to the School Balances held by a school in relation to a request for Top Up funding, or an increase in Top Up funding. Should we ?

- Yes – for all schools holding positive School Balances
- Yes – but only for School holding balances in excess of the 16% (Primary, Special Schools) or 10% (Secondary/High/Middle Schools) of their DSG figure as laid out in the Scheme for Financing Schools.
- No
- Don't Know

3. NOTIONAL SEN

Mainstream maintained schools and academies (“schools”) are notified each year of a clearly identified but notional budget, within their overall budget allocation, towards the costs of fulfilling their duty to use their ‘best endeavours’ to secure that special educational provision for their pupils with SEN. The ESFA updated their guidance in relation to Notional SEN in August 2023, further information in relation to this is available at the link [HERE](#). However, it is possible that this area is not fully understood by all schools.

Northumberland SEN Calculation is based on the Free School Meals Forever 6 (FSM 6), IDACI and Low Prior Attainment elements of the School Funding Formula. Additional payments are then made to the most inclusive schools if they pass a threshold dictated by their Notional SEN figure. For the 2023/24 financial year we are estimating we will pay schools £575,000, compared with £150,000 in 2021/22.

3.1 Do you feel you understand Notional SEN and your Schools Notional SEN figure?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

3.2 Do you support the use of a schools Notional SEN figure as a mechanism for distributing additional SEN Funding ?

- Yes – the Notional SEN payment represents a cost effective method of supporting our most inclusive schools
- No – Notional SEN payments cannot be afforded in the light of the pressures on High Needs
- Don't Know

3.3 Should we require schools to demonstrate how they are using their allocated Notional SEN total across the School before considering requests for Top Up payments.

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

3.4 Would it help Schools if additional School Level Notional SEN payments were made at the beginning of each term rather than the end as is currently the case ?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

4. TOP UP FUNDING FOR SEN SUPPORT PUPILS WITHOUT AN EHCP

Currently Northumberland supports 100 pupils with Top Up funding. The annual cost of this is estimated to be £500,000. This is intended to provide time limited targeted support with the intention of preventing the need for a subsequent Consideration Of Statutory Assessment (COSA) and potentially an EHCP. This is allowable within the School Funding Regulations and sometime cited as a way of reducing the risk of higher needs later. Previously this has been referred to in Northumberland as Short Term Assisted Review or STAR payments.

4.1 Should Northumberland continue to make Top Up payments to learners without EHCPs?

- Yes
 No
 Don't Know

4.2 Should Northumberland review the scope of Top Up payments to learners without EHCPs ?

- Yes – it should broaden the scope of payments to prevent later additional needs.
 Yes – it should narrow the scope of payments in light of funding pressures.
 No
 Don't Know

QUESTION 5: Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

The MFG is a way of giving schools a guaranteed minimum increase in funding per pupil each year. It works by comparing a school's level of funding per pupil from one year to the next on a like for like basis, and in such a way as to exclude funding that could distort the per pupil value that is the basis for the guarantee. The baseline for the calculation is intended to cover as much of a school's budget as possible but does not include rates (because they are funded in the formula on actuals) and lump sum allocations because they do not relate to pupil numbers. Since 2023/24 the ESFA have restricted the range at which MFG can be set to between 0 to 0.5%. Schools and the Schools Forum agreed for 2023/24 to set the MFG at 0.5% but we need to consider the position again for 2024/25

5.1 At what level do you believe Northumberland's MFG should be set for 2024/25

- 0.0% *(using 21/22 data 6 schools would benefit sharing £120,412)*
 0.25% *(using 21/22 data 6 schools would benefit sharing £131,350)*
 0.5% *(using 21/22 data 13 schools would benefit sharing £152,794)*

QUESTION 6: CAPPING AND SCALING INCREASES

The use of capping and scaling is a mechanism by which different increases under new formula values are averaged out to limit some gains and provide more funding for general distribution to schools via the formula values. Northumberland has previously used capping and scaling for the School Block DSG, but for 2023/24, Capping and Scaling was not used. As Northumberland moves in line with NFF values, the need to use Capping and Scaling should reduce, however it remains a useful tool to ensure the distribution of a general level of increase via the funding formula.

6.1 Do you support the potential use of capping and scaling as part of the 2024/25 School Budget setting process?

- Yes
 No

Schools' Forum agendas, minutes and reports are available on the Council website at:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Professionals/Forum.aspx> .

The Schools: Forum is currently looking for new members, if you are a Headteacher or a School Governor, and are interested in representing schools by joining the Forum please get in touch with Bruce Parvin, Education and Skills Business Manager via bruce.parvin@northumberland.gov.uk .

FURTHER COMMENTS

Please use the box below for any other comments that you have in relation to School Funding or SEN Finance:



Responses need to be received no later than **12.00 noon on Monday 11 December 2023**. Due to reporting deadlines in line with Department for Education requirements for the submission of information, responses received after this closing date will not be considered.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Bruce Parvin Education and Skills Business Manager bruce.parvin@northumberland.gov.uk



Northumberland
County Council
SCHOOLS' FORUM

Agenda Item 9

22 November 2023

2023/24 WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING DATES

Wednesday 22 November 2023 : 9.30-12.00 (Virtual Meeting)

National Funding Formula Update & Consultation for 2023/24
SEN Update

Wednesday 17 January 2024: 9.30-12.00 (Virtual Meeting)

Setting the DSG for 2022/23 – overall allocations
De-delegation decisions for 2022/23

Wednesday 14 February 2024: 9.30-12.00 (Virtual Meeting)

Setting the DSG budget for 2022/23 – individual budgets

Wednesday 17 July 2023: 9.30-12.00 (Face to Face Meeting, Council Chamber, County Hall Morpeth)

DSG Provisional Outturn
Scheme for Financing Schools
Analysis of School Balances