

Schools Forum – 10 December 2024

Title of paper:	School Improvement, monitoring and brokerage grant – request for approval for de-delegation 2025/26
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<p>The Department for Education confirmed in January 2022 that the grant payment to local authorities that funds the provision of school improvement services to local authority maintained schools would reduce by 50% in 2022/23 and be removed entirely in 2023/24. In Nottingham this grant forms part of the overall grant payment agreed with the Nottingham Schools Trust, who are commissioned by Nottingham City Council to deliver school improvement services to the remaining local authority maintained schools. To mitigate the adverse impact on the provision of school improvement services to maintained schools, the Department for Education has indicated it approves local authorities seeking de-delegation approval, via Schools Forum decision, for the equivalent funding from maintained schools budget share. This report sets out the background, rationale for seeking the approval and financial contribution required by maintained primary schools to fund the grant removal in the financial year 2025/26</p>	
Recommendation(s):	
1	For maintained mainstream primary schools to approve the de-delegation of funding to mitigate the reduction in the School Improvement, monitoring and brokerage grant received by Nottingham City Council at a rate of £11.12 per pupil. This will ensure that Nottingham Schools Trust can maintain an appropriate level of school improvement support in line with member school expectations.
2	Maintained mainstream primary schools to note that the total funding requested to be de-delegated by maintained mainstream primary schools is £0.121m.

1. Reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 The Nottingham Schools Trust (NST) has established a strong school improvement offer based upon a combination of peer led school to school improvement, a full range of curriculum subject network groups, comprehensive CPD opportunities for all levels of staff, leadership development programmes and induction support for new leaders, and the allocation to all member schools of a highly skilled and experienced School Improvement Advisor. The outcomes for Nottingham maintained primary schools in terms of Key Stage performance metrics and Ofsted grade judgements since the establishment of the NST has fully demonstrated the positive impact of this model. Maintaining the financial

security that underpins this model is of benefit to all maintained primary schools. The removal of a significant element of the grant funding available to the NST to deliver this model would severely weaken the offer available to member schools, particularly in terms of the ability to deploy high quality school improvement advisors

2. Background (including outcomes of consultation)

- 2.1 In October 2021 the Department for Education (DfE) announced a consultation on the proposal to remove the Local Authority School Improvement, Brokerage and Monitoring Grant (LAMB) over a two year timetable. Nottingham City Council and the Nottingham Schools Trust both formally responded to the consultation. In total 565 responses were received.
- 2.2 Since 2017, the LAMB had been allocated to local authorities to support them in fulfilling their statutory school improvement functions under Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and their additional school improvement expectations as set out in the Schools Causing Concern (SCC) guidance. In summary, these activities require councils to monitor performance of maintained schools, broker school improvement provision, and intervene as appropriate.
- 2.3 The Department for Education noted that formal use of SCC powers held by Local Authorities in relation to under performing schools was uncommon. The rationale therefore in proposing to remove the grant was that given the low level of recorded instances of formal interventions the grant was being utilised for other school improvement activity that could be either offered on a traded basis or de-delegated to Local Authorities via Schools Forum decision making.
- 2.4 In their published response to the proposals (Annex1) the Department for Education note that: “we recognise the majority of respondents, in particular those from the maintained sector (councils and local authority-maintained schools), raised concerns”
- 2.5 Despite the recognition by the DfE of the majority of respondents raising significant concerns about the impact of the proposal, the grant reduction in 2022/23 was implemented. With the full removal of this grant effective from 2023/24.
- 2.6 What many respondents (including Nottingham City Council and Nottingham Schools Trust) made clear was that the successful application of the grant enabled the provision of early interventions, support and challenge that enabled schools to avoid failing in such a manner that formal use of SCC powers become required. In the case of Nottingham City maintained schools this has been demonstrated as there has been no requirement to invoke any SCC warnings or measures for maintained primary schools since the inception of the LAMB, and its delivery through the Nottingham Schools Trust.
- 2.7 The grant agreement in place between Nottingham City Council and Nottingham Schools Trust incorporates the transfer of the LAMB grant to

Nottingham Schools Trust to ensure that school improvement activity, monitoring of individual school performance and brokerage of support required is delivered to maintain and improve the performance of all LA maintained schools.

- 2.8 The current grant agreement between Nottingham City Council and the NST expires at the end of the 2024/25 financial year. A new grant agreement is currently being prepared. It should be noted that any new agreement would be predicted upon the transfer of the funding referenced in this report being incorporated.
- 2.9 The removal of the grant in 2025/26 would have a significant detrimental impact on the ability of the Nottingham Schools Trust to deploy the school improvement advisory offer it currently provides to maintained schools. As a ring fenced grant it has provided security for maintained schools of access to this professional support.

3. Other options considered in making recommendations

The only other option would be to not make the request but this outcome would result in the inability of the NST to provide the level of school improvement support to maintained primary schools that they have received to date.

4. Outcomes/deliverables

- 4.1 The main outcome of the de-delegation proposal is to ensure the financial viability of the arrangements in place to deliver high quality, timely school improvement support, challenge and advice to ensure Nottingham City maintained primary schools continue to offer high quality teaching and learning opportunities for their pupils.

5. Consideration of Risk

- 5.1 The key risk should the de-delegation recommendation not being approved lies with the inability of the City Council to adequately monitor and intervene in a timely fashion any schools where performance may lead to poor outcomes, including adverse Ofsted judgements. This in turn may lead to schools becoming subject to formal intervention by the Secretary of State for Education, including direction to covert to academy status against the will of local governing bodies.

6. Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money/VAT)

- 6.1 In the financial year 2024/25, maintained primary schools approved de delegation to support the school improvement function at a rate of £10.69 per pupil. This provided a total budget of £116,000
- 6.2 Approval from schools' forum for any de delegation has to be gained on an annual basis. In line with regulations, this report is seeking approval from

maintained primary schools to de-delegate funding in the financial year 2025/26 at a rate of £11.12 per pupil. This proposal would generate income of £121,800, an uplift of 5% on the previous year, and would ensure that the same level of funding is available for the Local Authority to pass onto the NST to enable them to undertake the responsibilities outlined in 2.7.

- 6.3 The rate per pupil has been calculated based on the number of pupils in maintained primary schools on the October 2023 school census (10,952). Once we have the pupil data from the October 2024 census the allocation will be updated to reflect any changes. As pupil numbers may differ from the ones used in the modelling and the final Oct 2024 census, we seek approval to make slight adjustments to the rate to ensure the pot is sufficient to meet the needs of the service. It is not anticipated that any changes in either pupil numbers or the rate will be significant. **Appendix A** shows the impact on each school using the current data available.
- 6.4 If approved, the charge attributable to each maintained primary school will be deducted from each schools 2025/26 Post Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) budget.

Susan Woodland, Senior Commercial Business Partner
14 November 2024

7. **Legal colleague comments**

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8. **HR Comments**

9. **Crime and Disorder Implications (If Applicable)**

9.1 N/A

10. **Social value considerations (If Applicable)**

10.1 N/A

11. **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

11.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No
An EIA is not required because:
(Please explain why an EIA is not necessary)

Not a change of policy or direct citizen impact

Yes

Attached as Appendix x, and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

12. Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

12.1 Has the data protection impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No

A DPIA is not required because:

(Please explain why a DPIA is not necessary)

There is no requirement for data to be shared with a third party

Yes

Attached as Appendix x, and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

13. Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)

13.1 Has the Carbon impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No

A DPIA is not required because:

(Please explain why a DPIA is not necessary)

No carbon impact as a result of the proposal

Yes

Attached as Appendix x, and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

14. List of background papers relied upon in writing this report (not including published documents or confidential or exempt information)

14.1

15. Published documents referred to in this report

Appendix A

School Name	Phase	NOR	2025/26
Rate per pupil		October 2023 Census	£11.12
Total		10,952	£121,800
Berridge Primary and Nursery School	Primary	571	£6,350
Seely Primary School	Primary	498	£5,538
Fernwood Primary School	Primary	1,038	£11,543
Cantrell Primary and Nursery School	Primary	394	£4,381
Carrington Primary and Nursery School	Primary	200	£2,224
Dunkirk Primary and Nursery School	Primary	359	£3,992
Melbury Primary School	Primary	204	£2,268
Middleton Primary and Nursery School	Primary	594	£6,605
Heathfield Primary and Nursery School	Primary	636	£7,072
Walter Halls Primary and Early Years School	Primary	404	£4,492
Southwold Primary School and Early Years' Centre	Primary	194	£2,157
Rise Park Primary and Nursery School	Primary	408	£4,537
Crabtree Farm Primary School	Primary	338	£3,759
Welbeck Primary School	Primary	314	£3,492
Mellers Primary School	Primary	411	£4,570

Haydn Primary School	Primary	414	£4,604
Hempshill Hall Primary School	Primary	386	£4,292
Glade Hill Primary & Nursery School	Primary	390	£4,337
Claremont Primary and Nursery School	Primary	392	£4,359
Snape Wood Primary and Nursery School	Primary	130	£1,446
Forest Fields Primary and Nursery School	Primary	568	£6,316
Dovecote Primary and Nursery School	Primary	320	£3,558
Greenfields Community School	Primary	206	£2,291
Southglade Primary and Nursery School	Primary	401	£4,459
Westglade Primary School	Primary	205	£2,280
Henry Whipple Primary School	Primary	191	£2,124
Robin Hood Primary School	Primary	418	£4,648
Rufford Primary and Nursery School	Primary	368	£4,092
Totals		10,952	£121,786