



SCHOOLS FORUM
05 December 2024

ITEM XX

Report sponsor: Sharon Buckby, Service Director – Learning Skills and Inclusion.

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Allocation of the 2024/25 Core School Budget Grant for Special Schools and Alternative Provision

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The ESFA have announced almost £1.1billion through the CSBG to support schools with overall costs in 2024/25 financial year, in particular following confirmation of the 2024 teacher pay award - Derby's allocation is £0.632m. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the pros and cons of continuing with existing methodology of distribution versus that of other methods of gathering data to be used as the base of distribution.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To consider the options for distributing the grant the Core School Budget Grant for Maintained special schools, special academies, and special free schools, and recommend the preferred option of distribution.
- 2.2 The preferred option of the LA is option 1 given timeliness and robustness of validation and consideration of cash flow for those schools not part of Derby City's bank account

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The ESFA have announced almost £1.1billion through the CSBG to support schools with overall costs in 2024/25 financial year, in particular following confirmation of the 2024 teacher pay award.

In 2024/2025 the LA will receive funding through the Core School Budget Grant to cover the 7-month period from September 2024 to March 2025.

The impact of the teachers' pay award spans across financial years 2024 to 2025 and 2025 to 2026 and the grant funding announced is for the 2024 to 2025 financial year therefore only covers the first seven twelfths of the full year cost of the award.

The allocation for Derby is £0.632m, this is a fixed amount and does not increase if numbers increase in year.

Local authorities must:

- *pass on 100% of the CSBG funding that is allocated, in total, in respect of the eligible school types to eligible schools.*
- *ensure that all eligible schools receive a funding allocation of CSBG in the period September 2024 to March 2025*
- *have transparent criteria to distribute funding to individual schools, treating academies and mainstream schools the same. This includes using the same 2024 to 2025 academic year place numbers as the basis for the allocations, even though those numbers for maintained schools will not be used until the updated allocations to local authorities in March 2025 consult with eligible schools before deciding the methodology for allocating CSBG funding.*

The CSBG will provide additional funding for the following special schools and AP schools:

- maintained special schools.
- special academies and free schools
- pupil referral units
- alternative provision academies and free schools
- hospital schools and other maintained schools, and academies and free schools providing hospital education

- 3.2 Options for allocation to be devolved to schools remains at LA discretion, however at the School Forum meeting on 22 October 2024 the decision was taken to consider other options to those previously used. The following option analysis explains the way that data is gathered and its reliability.

Option 1

To use the current method of places agreed for budget setting purposes – based on the 24-25 budget. This method was the initial suggestion of distribution by the DfE when the grant was made available. The published place numbers are both defensible and transparent. This option does ensure that single registration has been considered, numbers are known in advance and through verification no risk of double funding error. This option would ensure a swift passport of funding to schools once the final allocation is known in November, as a result there would be no delay to cashflow for those not part of the Derby's bank account.

Option 2

To use October 24 census data as defined by those Schools eligible for the grant. Option 2 would involve October 24 census data being collected and processed by official bodies. (DfE for Academies and the LA for any maintained provision). Placements recorded through census would be verified for single registration to ensure there is no double funding. Such data is collected using a standardised method ensuring consistency across the different schools. The difference between option 1 and option 2 is that data collected through an Oct census would be more up to date than the budget setting data, however, the various checks actioned by those official bodies do take time and this will result in the LA waiting for that verification to be complete before funds can be passported. The likelihood is the verified data won't be available until late December or early January, impacting on cashflow for those not part of the Derby's bank account.

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