

8.4 Proposal to increase de-delegation due to the removal of School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMB) in 2023-24

Meeting/Date	Schools Forum 1 December 2022	Agenda Item No.	8.4
Report Title	Proposal to increase de-delegation due to removal of School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMB) in 2023-24		
Decision/ Discussion/ Information	Decision		
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Appendices	Appendix A – School Improvement Service Appendix B – Options for De-Delegation of School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant		

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide members of Schools Forum who are eligible to vote with information regarding the request for additional de-delegation of funding for school Improvement support for maintained schools.

1.2 To help members to understand the impact of the removal of the DfE School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMB).

1.3 To set out how de-delegated funding would be used to support school improvement in Barnet maintained schools

2. Proposal

The proposal has two objectives.

2.1 To continue with the historic additional school improvement de-delegation (£118,908) which is used to support the Learning Network Inspector Team to carry out the following core statutory functions:

- Monitoring maintained schools to identify those that may require intervention
- Intervening in underperforming-maintained schools
- Commissioning of support for schools subject to intervention

2.2 To request that Schools Forum agree to de-delegate from the DSG Schools Block the additional sum of £361,416 (the level of funding from the SIMB grant in 2021-22) to support the work of the school improvement team (see Appendix A). This involves the monitoring, challenge and support functions to schools including intervening in underperforming schools.

The Council proposes to ask the maintained schools' representatives on the Schools Forum to agree to increase the amount of de-delegated funding for the school improvement service from £118,908 to £ 480,324.

The request for additional de-delegation is to cover the complete loss of the SIMB Grant and enable the school improvement service (inc. Co-Heads of School Improvement, LNIs and School and Safeguarding Lead) to continue in its current form, operating at the same capacity.

Benefit of the proposal: The proposal is designed to ensure the continuation of the current non-traded school improvement (inc. LNI) service (described in Appendix A), due to the ceasing of the DfE SIMB grant in April 2023.

Disadvantage of the proposal: The proposal will mean additional money is deducted from the budget shares of maintained schools.

What happens if this is not agreed? If the proposal is not agreed, it will be necessary to reduce the budget of the non-traded school improvement service and reduce the council funding for the Learning Network Inspector team to a single post, tasked with carrying out the core statutory functions envisaged by the DfE, with significant reliance on the use of data and other information, as the resource is unlikely to be sufficient to allow for regular visits to schools.

3. Background / Consultation Proposals:

- 3.1 In December 2017, Schools Forum agreed to the Council request that £101,000 be de-delegated from the DSG schools block to cover the cost of school improvement services over and above what is paid for from the 'School Intervention and Improvement Grant'
- 3.2 The de-delegation has been approved in subsequent years and over time has been re-priced to £118,908 for 2023-24
- 3.3 The School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMB) was announced in 2017 to allow local authorities core funding to continue to monitor the performance of maintained schools, which includes providing preventative early challenge and support, issuing notices or warnings, and formally intervening in under-performing schools and brokering school improvement provision.
- 3.4 In November 2018 the Schools Forum were asked to approve a proposal (Proposal 2) which asked the maintained schools' representatives to agree to increase the amount of De-delegated funding for the school improvement service from £101,000 to £310,000. The request was to cover the expected loss of the 'school improvement grant' and enable the school improvement (LNI) service to continue in its existing form. A consultation about this, and two other proposals, was sent out to LA maintained schools and the Schools Forum took into account

these responses when they voted 9 'for' and 2 'against'. Therefore, the proposal was agreed and the additional De-delegation taken. Subsequently the DfE decided to continue with the 'school improvement grant' for the time being and therefore these additional De-delegated funds were not required in 2019/20 and were kept in DSG reserves. When 50% of the grant was removed in 2022/23 the £209,000 in reserve was used to fund this 50% decrease.

3.5 The role of the local authority in terms of school improvement is increasingly focussed on helping schools to access support they need from the school system in a timely manner. However, in Barnet, the Local Authority has played a crucial role in supporting, monitoring, and challenging all schools, particularly during the pandemic and this is evidenced through the current percentage of schools who are Good or Outstanding (over 98% and ranked third highest LA in the country on this measure) as well as formal feedback on the School Improvement Service (non-traded) in our annual satisfaction surveys. The below figures show the percentage of schools who were Satisfied or Extremely Satisfied with the non-traded element of the School Improvement Service:

2017 – 100%
2018 – 100%
2019 – 94.4%
2020 – 100%
2021 – 100%
2022 – 100%

3.3 Comments Received in the Satisfaction Survey (2021)

“High quality guidance and support” (secondary school)

“The LNIs are excellent and deserve good feedback” (primary school)

“Great support and always quick to respond to queries” (secondary school)

“Excellent support and guidance from highly skilled LNI. Strong LNI team supporting all schools strategically through the year. Responsive and open to suggestions. Great listeners. Our school has benefitted hugely from our LNI this year.” (primary school)

“The LNIs are a strength of Barnet, and I am mindful that this is not the case in other London LAs that are local to Barnet.” (primary school)

“This is an excellent service. I couldn't do without my LNI.” (primary school)

“Safeguarding Lead has been a huge support to me” (primary school)

3.6 Comments Received in the Satisfaction Survey (2022)

“Support is on the end of a phone which is fantastic.” (primary school)

“Having our LNI into school gives us the advice and reassurance we need to move school forward” (primary school)

“The LNI service is just the best. My LNI is amazing - very supportive and I trust and value her opinion. The safeguarding and prevent support is also amazing. They do a fantastic job.” (primary school)

“Very hard working, knowledgeable, supportive team who help all schools steer through the constantly changing picture of education requirements, best practice and challenges with great skill. You keep me sane and positive thank you!” (primary school)

“Safeguarding support has always been brilliant and she makes herself available.” (primary school)

“Excellent value for money. Knowledgeable - helpful, supportive staff. Invaluable service. Important for keeping up to date with current information. I would find it hard to be a HT without this service.” (primary school)

“10/10” (secondary school)

“Supportive process with the opportunity to enter into professional dialogue. Availability of staff is very good and there are clear processes in place.” (PRU)

“The network meetings are very useful and having own special school SIP partner has been really useful” (Special School)

4. DFE Consultation

4.1 In October 2021, the DFE launched a consultation centred on two main proposals:

- Remove the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant (SIMB)*, which is currently allocated to local authorities to support school improvement activities; and
- Make provisions within the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for the financial year (FY) 2022-23 to allow local authorities to fund all their school improvement activity (including all core school improvement activities) via de-delegation from schools’ budget shares.

*The plan is that the SIMB grant would cease from 2023-24 (financial year), phased so that it would be reduced to 50% of the current amount on a per school basis in 2022-23

4.2 The current SIMB grant is ring-fenced for ‘core school activities’, with Local Authorities being given permission to fund additional activities through de-delegating schools funding (with school’s forum agreement), or to offer services to schools on a traded basis. The rationale included in the consultation document referred to the presumption in the current funding arrangements that there is a clear distinction between core school improvement activities and additional activity. The DfE believe this distinction no longer reflects the reality of how effective councils operate, and that in practice, activity connected to their core school improvement activities forms part of a continuum of wider school improvement activity that councils may choose to undertake. The DfE proposes that local authorities will have the power to fund all improvement activities, including the core improvement activities previously funded by the SIMB grant, via de-delegation of funds from maintained schools’ budget shares, with the

agreement of their Schools Forum or with the agreement of the Secretary of State, in instances where the Schools Forum does not agree.

4.3 Consultation Results on 11th January 2022 - the DfE confirmed their intention to implement the consultation proposals. The consultation document and government response are published here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1045633/Government_response_-_Reforming_how_LA_SI_functions_are_funded.pdf

5. Barnet Context and Financial Information

Table 1 SIMB Grant Received

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23*
SIMB Grant	£376,436	£386,446	£361,416	£166,990

*2022-23 Final allocation has now been published. Proposal by DFE was a 50% reduction

Table 2 Breakdown of Cost to Council versus allocation against SIMB Grant

	Number of Eligible Schools	April 2021 to August 2021	September 2021 to March 2022	Total	Notional Allocation against SIMB Grant	Comments
2021-22 Allocation	86	£161,028	£200,388	£361,416		
Breakdown of Cost to Council (Actual Spend 22/23)						
School Improvement Team Staff						
Co-Heads of School Improvement and Learning Network Inspectors (FTE 3.8)				£389,216	£268,603	
Barnet School Improvement Partners (BSIPs)				£26,500	£18,288	Any differences between actual spend and notional spend is a charge to the General Fund
School Safeguarding and Exclusions Lead				£79,789	£55,063	
Data support (FTE 0.2)				£16,771	£11,574	
Governor Services - statutory work (FTE 0.2)				£11,430	£7,888	
TOTAL				£523,706	£361,416	

6. Options for de-delegation

There are three options that the local authority would like Schools Forum to consider for de-delegation. Appendix B summarises the financial implications of all three options.

Option 1

A flat rate per school of £5,930

Please note the local authority have asked the DfE if this is permissible under National Formula funding and are still awaiting a response. In the event of a negative response, options 2 and 3 will need to be considered.

Option 2

A flat rate of £16.37 applying to all pupils.

Option 3

A weighted rate of £18.57 applying to primary aged children and a weighted rate of £6.67 applying to secondary aged children.

To be Noted

All options will be subject to confirmation of pupil numbers used in the Authority Pro-form Tool (APT) for 2023-24 school budget shares.

7. Recommendation

As outlined in Section 3.4 the Schools Forum has previously agreed (in November 2018) to an increase in De-delegation in order to cover the removal of the school improvement grant. This recommendation updates that decision with current figures.

7.1 School's Forum members representing maintained schools (primary and secondary phases) are requested to agree to the de-delegation of school improvement funding in 2023-24, at a flat rate per school of £5,930

Or

7.2 In the event the DfE ruling that a flat rate cannot be de-delegated, option 3 applies

Summary

De-delegation	£ per pupil / £ Per School*	Estimated Total**	Primary	Secondary
Option 1	£5,930 per school	£480,324	yes/no/abstain	yes/no/abstain
Option 3	£18.57 per Primary aged pupil £6.67 per Secondary aged pupil	£480,324	yes/no/abstain	yes/no/abstain