

Schools Forum – 5th December 2013

2013/14 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) – Forecast Outturn

The DfE confirmed that the 2012/13 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is £86m of which an estimated £40m is deducted to fund Academy Schools leaving £46m for maintained schools and education services.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funded activities are forecast to underspend by £1.1m. This is mainly due to further DSG funding received after April 13. The 2012/13 outturn was an underspend of £126k which Schools Forum agreed to add to reserves.

At the October Forum meeting the following position was reported.

'The overall forecast is an underspend of £1.1m. This includes further allocations to Torbay for post 16 SEN pupils totalling £600k. Independent special school costs are a volatile area and the current forecast underspend could quite easily turn into a significant overspend. Any DSG underspend can be carried forward to 14/15.'

*In-Year Adjustments (NNDR, planned pupil growth) underspend £100k
DSG – additional DfE funding underspend £500k
Post 16 funding from EFA underspend £400k
Interim Tuition (incl hospital) overspend £100k
Special School places overspend £50k
Independent School Fees underspend £100k
Joint funded placements breakeven
Delegated Statementing breakeven'*

The position has changed slightly with the underspend on Post 16 SEN falling to £300k and the EFA have recognised that they had the wrong figures for Combe Pafford and so are seeking £120k to be returned. The EOTAS overspend has fallen and there have been other minor movements such that the projected end of year position has fallen from a £1.1m underspend to a £900,000 underspend.

There are a range of options on which the Director of Children's Services is seeking the views and advice of School Forum.

Option 1.

Note the level of underspend and carry this forward into 2014/15 and allocate this funding with the 2014/15 allocations.

This has the advantage of allowing for further volatility in the budget and a final definite figure will be known for 2014/15. The treatment of this funding will have to be carefully considered as inclusion in the schools base funding may cause a problem in MFG calculations.

Option 2

Allocate a proportion of the underspend mid year to schools.

This is poor practice as outlined by the EFA but is distributing DSG to schools where approaching 50% would have been allocated, excluding the High Needs block element, if the current budget position had been clear in February 2013.

Option 3

Allocate £400,000 to schools on pupil numbers and the £500,000 from the High Needs Block being used to develop services for supporting vulnerable children specifically with emotional and mental health difficulties.

There is increasing concern amongst head teachers and GPs regarding the mental health of young people in our schools.

The issues range from self-harming, eating disorders through to extremely complex mental health issues. We are also encountering more families where mental health issues within the family are having an impact on school age children.

The current CAMHS provision is not meeting the needs of many young people. There is much frustration in schools who are finding that children who are referred to CAMHS do not yet meet the criteria or there is an unacceptably long waiting list.

The proposal is that we use the projected underspend in the High Needs Block to address this mental health issue and we set up a project accessible by all schools, academies and maintained.

The project would use that money over 3 years. There would be an evaluation after Year 1 and if the project is not proving to be effective with good outcomes it will cease at the end of Year 1 and the finance either distributed to schools or on agreement used in another way.

The set up would be similar to the one we have in place for Family Support Workers and Educational Psychologists, which is working well across the Bay.

The project would provide:

1. Primary mental health workers who would be based in schools and have an allocated time slot in each school
2. Schools would refer their pupils and their families to their worker
3. These workers would have a better opportunity to access the full CAMHS service
4. Provision of supervision for staff undertaking Thrive in our schools
5. Training of peer mentors to provide emotional resilience for pupils

As schools would be funding the development of the service we would be better placed influence the service model and hold the service to account for the outcomes it delivers. There are also early indications from health that they would be prepared to remodel the existing service to reflect this delivery model and add additional capacity.

The proposal would also enable schools to work more closely with GPs. As they now have a key role in commissioning health services this would serve to increase understanding of the health needs schools have identified among their children and young people.

There has been some consultation with schools regarding this proposal as follows;

- a) A meeting of Secondary Heads was hosted by Jane English on Tuesday 26th November. The proposal was put to them and their views sought. This resulted in all those present (6) agreeing unanimously that this proposal would represent the best way forward in meeting the needs of schools and children and young people across the Bay and would provide best value for money. It has their full support.
- b) Richard Williams outlined the principle of the proposal to Primary Heads at the last TAPS meeting. There was a consensus among those present that this was a much needed service and general support for the principle. Funding was not discussed in detail.

Recommendation

School Forum is requested for its recommendations to the Director of Children's Services.