

10 February 2022

TITLE OF REPORT: School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant

Purpose of the Report

1. To bring to Schools Forum's attention the outcome of the Department for Education (DfE) latest consultation on the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant.

Background

2. The School Improvement and Brokering Grant was introduced to replace the Education Services Grant (ESG) which was introduced in 2013 to replace Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) for academies.
3. Originally ESG was made up of 2 elements: the retained duties rate and the General funding rate. The general funding rate was phased out and replaced by the School Improvement and Brokering grant and the retained duties element was mainstreamed into the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) at the rate of £15 per pupil.
4. Since 2017, the School Improvement and Brokering Grant has been provided to support councils to fulfil their core school improvement activities, with the amount received by each council proportionate to the number of maintained schools in their area.
5. The Department for Education (DfE) released a consultation to seek views on either:
 - Removing the grant entirely or
 - Making provisions to allow local authorities to fund their school improvement activity via de-delegation of maintained mainstream school's budget shares.
6. The premise behind the change is as follows:

The local authority role in school improvement has changed significantly in recent years, with the growth of school-led approaches, such as Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). In turn, the council's role in school improvement in maintained

schools is increasingly focused on helping those of their schools that need it, to access the support they need from the school system. Given these changes in the respective roles and responsibilities of different parties in the school system, we believe now is the right time to revisit councils' school improvement functions and how they are funded and consider what this means for the future of the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant.

7. The grant was also subject to a consultation from 28 April to 26 May 2021 with the outcome being that the grant would now be subject to conditions, as previously it was non-ringfenced.
8. The conditions applied are:
 - Use for statutory school improvement functions
 - Place clear obligation on LA's for the sustained return of pupils to school following Covid-19, and addressing the educational impacts of the pandemics
 - Enable the Secretary of State to enforce compliance, including clawback or reduction of funding going forward.
9. The full results of the most recent consultation were published 11 January 2022 which Gateshead's January Schools Forum. The outcome can be found 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
10. Whilst 71% of respondents disagreed that the proposals would enable councils to ensure they are sufficiently funded to exercise all their core school improvement activities, the DfE have concluded that they will proceed with reducing the local authority school improvement monitoring and brokering grant by 50% for financial year 2022 to 2023, prior to full removal in financial year 2023 to 2024. The DfE suggested that these services should be provided to maintained schools as part of a traded service or de-delegated with the approval of Schools Forum.

Proposal

11. That Schools Forum notes the contents of the report, and that the outcome of the consultation was too late for Gateshead's Schools Forum to be consulted with on any potential de-delegation options for 2022/23. However de-delegation maybe explored for future years.

Recommendations

12. That Schools Forum notes the contents of the report.

For the following reasons:-

- To be informed of the outcome of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant and that the option for de-delegation has been missed due to the timing of the consultation response.

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