

REPORT TO:	Schools Forum 3 October 2022
AGENDA ITEM:	
SUBJECT:	School Improvement & Support
LEAD OFFICER:	Julie Ralphs – Head of Education Services
DIRECTOR:	Shelley Davies – Director of Education
PURPOSE:	Request to Schools Forum to de-delegate DSG funding to the Council’s Education Services Team for continuance of school improvement and relationship management (‘Link Adviser’) functions for a period of 2 years (2023/24 and 2024/25 FY)
FINANCIAL IMPACT	
Six options are presented in section 3 of this report for the Forum’s consideration and decision.	
These range from £73,652 to £296,772 per annum	

1. CONTEXT

1.1 DfE School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant

1.1.1 The DfE ‘School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant’ has been paid annually to local authorities to monitor performance of maintained schools, broker school improvement provision and intervene as appropriate.

1.1.2 Following consultation during November 2021, the DfE has announced:

- a) removal of the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokerage Grant, with a 50% reduction in 2022/23 and total removal from 2023/24 onwards
- b) that to ensure that councils remain adequately funded to exercise their statutory intervention powers to give councils the power in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations to fund all school improvement activities, including core school improvement activities, via de-delegation of funds from maintained schools’ budget shares, with the agreement of their local schools forum or the Secretary of State
- c) that the value of the School Improvement Grant is not being rolled into the DSG but there is an expectation that the school improvement function (specifically for LA maintained schools) will be covered by DSG funding growth.

1.2 How we use the grant

1.2.1 In addition to fulfillment of school improvement functions for LA maintained schools, the Council has continued to provide a range of support, advice and challenge (where necessary) to all schools in Croydon, irrespective of the schools status’ – e.g. LA maintained, diocesan, stand alone academy and multi academy trust schools and nurseries.

1.2.2 The extent of the core (non charged) service to individual schools is currently determined by an internal categorisation system which takes into account a number of factors, including: pupil outcomes, Ofsted rating, financial, complaints, staffing, type of school and other vulnerabilities. All schools currently have access to our 'Universal' level of support, at no charge – see Annex A for a summary of our current offer for the 2022/23 academic year.

1.2.3 Please note that in both 2021/22 and 2022/23, 15 schools are receipt of our highest level of support ('Targeted') - 3 maintained and 12 academy schools (see Annex B).

1.3 Impact of removal of the grant

1.3.1 A substantial amount of our core school improvement/link adviser service has been funded by the DfE 'School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant'. This funding has been supplemented by delivery of traded school improvement services plus the Council's General Fund (GF) and Public Health contributions.

1.3.2 Whilst we have strengthened our traded school improvement offer over recent years, the removal of this grant has significant implications on our ability to continue to resource our offer to all schools at the current level. We also recognise that school budgets are stretched impacting on their capacity to buy-in support.

1.3.3 Loss of the grant means that we cannot continue to provide this level of support for 'free' to all schools unless we find an alternative funding stream.

1.3.4 Charging schools would add additional pressure to school budgets (to either purchase these services from the LA or elsewhere) or to cover the cost of building in-house capacity. This could have an impact on the benefit of putting in place early intervention support and, in the worse case scenario, escalation of the number of schools causing concern and falling standards/pupil outcomes.

1.3.5 The current model also provides a named 'link adviser' for every school, ensuring that strong relationships are maintained between the LA and schools for a wide range of purposes. This was particularly invaluable for sharing national/local policy and guidance, for example during the pandemic and in other emergency situations.

1.4 Proposal

1.4.1 This paper provides a number of options for consideration for de-delegation of DSG to enable the continuance of core school improvement support. All options will be delivered by a core team of experienced LA officers with knowledge of local context and individual schools, plus additional experts brought in on an ad-hoc basis to provide specialist advice and training to meet local needs.

1.4.2 The options in this paper are predominantly built around our current levels of support (Annex A). Some of the options also include some 'traded' elements, e.g. forum membership and training, which will reduce this financial burden on schools and reduce administrative costs/burdens (e.g. reduction in time and cost to process financial transactions) for both the LA and schools.

2.0 School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant Values and Staffing

2.1 Grant values:

Table 1:

2020/21 (Actual)	2021/22 (Actual)	2022/23 (Estimated)	2023/24	2024/25
£189,453	£167,149	£80,000	£nil	£nil

2.1.1 This grant has partially funded our core school improvement functions as outlined in Annex A, plus various intervention functions at individual school level (including emergencies) and universal reactive support (for example during the pandemic). All schools have a 'link adviser' – a named person for each school to contact with questions, advice or share information. The grant is a major contribution to our ability to be able to provide this resource.

2.2 Staffing:

2.2.1 As a rough guide, the grant of £167k in 2021/22 pays for c3 days of adviser time per school per annum. In practice, the amount of adviser time utilised per school varies greatly. The funding also contributes to delivery of headteacher briefings and induction, the weekly newsletter and other ad-hoc advice, including that provided by the Council's Education Senior Leadership Team (Director and Heads of Service).

2.2.2 In our new service structure (effective 1st July 2022) we have the following roles in our Education Development (School Improvement) Team:

Table 2:

ROLE	FTES	COMMENTS
Education Development Strategic Lead*	1.0	Partially funded by DfE School Improvement Grant plus General Fund and traded income
Education Development Adviser – Primary, Secondary & SEN*	2.7	Partially funded by DfE School Improvement Grant plus General Fund and traded income
Education Adviser Alternative Provision*	1.0	Partially funded by PPG plus General Fund and traded income
Education Adviser Food & Activity	1.0	Fully funded by Public Health & General Fund
Education Adviser Health & Wellbeing	1.0	Fully Funded by Public Health & General Fund
SACRE Consultant	0.22	Fully Funded by General Fund
Early Years Wellbeing Coordinator	0.65	Fully Funded by DfE Wellbeing Grant
Totals	7.57	Total cost = £587,000

*Holds school 'link adviser' responsibilities

2.3 Schools (correct as at 1st September 2022):

Table 3:

Type of School	Maintained	Academy	Total
Nursery	5	0	5
Primary	26	61	87
Secondary	4	20	24
Special/PRU	6	4	10
Totals	41	85	126

3. Options

Costing assumptions:

- a. Calculated on the number of schools as per section 2.3/Table 3
- b. All values £ are per annum
- c. Represent a saving compared to our traded costs listed in Annex C (based on actual cost)
- d. Do not include any costs for Director/Head of Service support

All Option 1 variations maintain the current (2022/23) support levels

Option 1a: Maintain current support levels (no change) – Total £126,772

- ✓ Continue to offer the current levels of support at Universal, Universal+ and Targeted levels as described in Annex A (£126,772)
- X Does not include any additional services, e.g. places on forums, training courses or an adviser consultancy day (which will be charged as an additional cost)
- X Does not include access to whistleblowing service (available at an additional cost)

Option 1b: Maintain current support levels plus forum/training package – Total £227,472

- ✓ Continue to offer the current levels of support at Universal, Universal+ and Targeted levels as described in Annex A (£126,772)
- ✓ Up to 12 attendances on forums of the school's choice across the year (£75,500 total/£600 per school)
- ✓ Each school receives 1 place on the DSL refresher (virtual) training course (£6,300/£50)
- ✓ Each school receives 1 place on the Safer Recruitment refresher training course (£18,900/£150)
- X Does not include additional adviser consultancy days (available at additional cost)
- X Does not include access to whistleblowing service (available at additional cost)

Option 1c: Maintain current support levels plus forum/training package and an adviser consultancy day – Total £296,772

- ✓ Continue to offer the current levels of support at Universal, Universal+ and Targeted levels as described in Annex A (£126,772)
- ✓ Up to 12 attendances (total) on forums of the school's choice across the year (£75,500 total/£600 per school)
- ✓ Each school receives 1 place on the DSL refresher (virtual) training course (£6,300/£50)
- ✓ Each school receives 1 place on the Safer Recruitment refresher training course (£18,900/£150)
- ✓ Each school receives one adviser consultancy day to meet their needs – for example (not exhaustive): head teacher performance management, learning walks, curriculum focussed (£69,300/£550)
- ✓ Includes access to whistleblowing service (Free)

All Option 2 variations maintain the current (2022/23) support level to all LA maintained schools but apply the 'Universal' level to all academies

Option 2a: Academies receive Universal support level only/No change for maintained schools – Total £73,652

- ✓ All academies receive the Universal support level only (£23,756)
- ✓ LA maintained schools continue to receive the Universal+ or Targeted levels of support (£49,896)
- X Does not include any additional services, e.g. places on forums, training courses or an adviser consultancy day (which will be charged as an additional cost)
- X Does not include access to whistleblowing service (available at additional cost)

Option 2b: Academies receive Universal support level only/No change for maintained schools plus forum/DSL membership package – Total £174,352

- ✓ All academies receive the Universal support level only (£23,756)
- ✓ LA maintained schools continue to receive the Universal+ or Targeted levels of support (£49,896)
- ✓ Up to 12 attendances (total) on forums of the school's choice across the year (£75,500 total/£600 per school)
- ✓ Each school receives 1 place on the DSL refresher (virtual) training course (£6,300/£50)
- ✓ Each school receives 1 place on the Safer Recruitment refresher training course (£18,900/£150)
- X Does not include additional adviser consultancy days (available at additional cost)
- X Does not include access to whistleblowing service (available at additional cost)

Option 2c: Academies receive Universal support level only/No change for maintained schools plus forum/DSL membership package and an adviser consultancy day – Total £243,652

- ✓ All academies receive the Universal support level only (£23,756)
- ✓ LA maintained schools continue to receive the Universal+ or Targeted levels of support (£49,896)
- ✓ Up to 12 attendances (total) on forums of the school's choice across the year (£75,500 total/£600 per school)
- ✓ Each school receives 1 place on the DSL refresher (virtual) training course (£6,300/£50)
- ✓ Each school receives 1 place on the Safer Recruitment refresher training course (£18,900/£150)
- ✓ Each school receives one adviser consultancy day to meet their needs – for example (not exhaustive): head teacher performance management, learning walks, curriculum focussed (£69,300/£550)
- ✓ Includes access to whistleblowing service (Free)

Other combinations of the above can be provided/calculated

ANNEX A: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT/LINK ADVISER SUPPORT PACKAGE 2022/23 ACADEMIC YEAR

A. Universal

Criteria: Academies judged as good or outstanding (no concerns)

Outline of support:

- 1) A named link adviser as a point of contact
- 2) Head teacher meetings and schools' newsletters
- 3) New head teacher induction
- 4) No routine visits or attendance at Ofsted inspection interviews.

Estimated cost per school £232 (c ½ day of officer per time per annum)

B. Universal plus

Criteria: Maintained schools and stand-alone academies judged good or better, or academies judged good or better where there are LA concerns.

Outline of support:

- 1) A named link adviser as a point of contact.
- 2) Half termly head teacher meetings and schools' newsletters.
- 3) New headteacher induction
- 4) An initial half day visit with a follow up letter outlining key findings and any action points.
- 5) Further contact with named link adviser through the year according to need
- 6) Attendance at any Ofsted inspection interview and feedback
- 7) For **maintained schools**, attendance as the Director of Education's representative at Head teacher short-listing and interviews.

Estimated cost per school £972 (c 2 days of officer time per annum)

C. Targeted

Criteria: Schools currently in an Ofsted category of concern (requires improvement or below) to support them to the point of inspection as a good or better school.

Outline of support:

- 1) A named link adviser as a point of contact.
- 2) Head teacher meetings and schools' newsletters.
- 3) New headteacher induction.
- 4) Termly link adviser half day visits with a follow up letter outlining key findings and action points.
- 5) Attendance at any Ofsted interview and feedback.
- 6) For **maintained schools**, attendance as the Director of Education's representative at Head teacher short-listing and interviews.
- 7) Progress towards being judged as good or better at the next inspection will be monitored through the School Progress Review Meeting (SPRM) process, where agreed.

Estimated cost per school £3672 (x 8 days of officer time per annum)

All costs are calculated on our actual gross costs and not our traded rates

ANNEX B: NUMBER OF SCHOOLS BY CATEGORY & ESTIMATED STAFF COST/FTES 2021/22

Table 4:

	Maintained	Academy	Total	Estimated total cost	Estimated total no of officer days
Universal	0	55	55	£12,760	27.5
Universal+	40	16	56	£54,432	120
Targeted	3	12	15	£55,080	122
Sub-Total	43	83	126	£122,272	269.5
Desk analysis & categorisation process for all schools				£4,500	10
TOTALS	43	83	126	£126,772	279.5

Updated school categorisation for 2022/23 academic year

Table 5:

	Maintained	Academy	Total
Universal	0	56	56
Universal+	38	17	55
Targeted	3	12	15
TOTAL	41	85	126

ANNEX C: TRADED RATES 2022/23

Table 6:

DESCRIPTION	FEE
DSL refresher training (virtual) per delegate	£95
Consultancy day to meet individual school needs, e.g. HTPM, learning walks, Ofsted preparation, curriculum specific	£695
Whistle blowing service annual fee	£113
Forums – curriculum (e.g. English, assessment, maths), SEND, safeguarding or phase (e.g. post-16 or early years) specific Per delegate per forum (variable)	£52 - £103
Annual fee for 2 delegates on one forum	£365
Safer recruitment refresher training (virtual) per delegate	£152