

School Funding 2024-25:

Consultation document

September 2023

**Closing date for responses Friday 20
October 2023**

EALING COUNCIL



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Introduction

1. The local authority are required to consult annually with all maintained schools and academies in their area about any proposed changes to the local schools funding formula including the method, principles and rules adopted. The consultation responses will inform schools forum and local authority decision making.
2. Since the beginning of the financial year 2017-18, the government has been phasing in a national funding formula (NFF) for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Early Years (EY) and, since 2018-19, Schools Block (SB), High Needs (HN) and Central School Services Block (CSSB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant. In 2024-25 the phased implementation of these funding formulae will continue. This document seeks the views of schools, academies and free schools on several proposals in respect of the SB, CSSB and HN Blocks, specifically:
 - The value of the mainstream school minimum funding guarantee (MFG), which can be set between 0 per cent and 0.5 per cent in 2024-25
 - Growth fund rules and values, along with implications if the grant is insufficient to cover projected planned growth in primary and high schools in September 2024;
 - Whether to introduce a falling rolls fund;
 - De-delegation of funding for a small range of services run by the LA for maintained schools;
 - Funding for the LA's key duties and historical commitments including services for maintained schools (Education Functions) and the distribution of the central school services block and historic commitments funding;

- Maintaining the existing 0.5 per cent transfer from the schools to the high needs block, approximately £1.54m; and
 - Whether to amend the balance control mechanism used by the authority to clawback excess surplus balances with the support of schools forum.
3. Responses should be made using the on-line survey and should be completed by Friday 20 October 2023.

<https://www.research.net/r/schoolfunding2425>

4. Please note the consultation document and the financial impact of these changes were modelled based on 2023-24 data and provisional block grant announcements made in July 2023. Similarly, school level illustrations of the NFF, which are now available for schools to access in an online [tool](#), are based on 2023-24 data. Allocations for 2024-25 will use October 2023 census information.

Decision Making Timetable

5. To take account of the DfE and council democratic decision-making timetables, the intention is to report the findings of the consultation to the schools forum in November. We will ask the forum for decisions at that meeting, where possible, on the MFG, growth and falling roll funds, de-delegation, central budgets and the Schools Block to High Needs Block transfer. Any decisions not made in November will need to be agreed by schools forum in January, ahead of the APT submission, with formal political ratification in February.

Schools Block (SB)

6. In July the government published its proposals for school funding for 2024-25 as set out in the [ministerial announcement](#), [policy document](#) and [operational guidance](#) for Local Authorities (LAs).

7. The main points related to mainstream schools are:

- The 2023-24 Mainstream school additional grant (MSAG) has been rolled into the schools NFF by
 - adding an amount representing what schools receive through the grant into their baselines
 - adding the value of the lump sum, basic per pupil rates and free school meal ever 6 (FSM6) parts of the grant onto the respective factors in the NFF
 - uplifting the minimum per pupil values by the supplementary grant's basic per-pupil values, and an additional amount which represents the average amount of funding schools receive from the FSM6 and lump sum parts of the grants
- In addition, the core factors in the schools NFF (such as basic per-pupil funding, and the lump sum that all schools attract plus the low prior attainment, FSM6, Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), English as an Additional Language (EAL) and mobility factors) will increase by 2.4%.
- The minimum per pupil funding levels (MPPLs) will also increase by 2.4% compared to 2023-24.

- The Free School Meal (FSM) factor value in the NFF will increase by 1.6% in line with the [gross domestic product \(GDP\) deflator forecast for 2024 to 2025](#). Schools are reminded that the FSM factor, while non ringfenced, is intended to broadly fund the cost of providing free school meals to families entitled to benefit related, traditional, FSM.
 - There will be 0% increase on premises factors with the exception of:
 - (i) the PFI factor which will increase by the Retail Prices Index excluding mortgage interest payments (RPIX), which is 10.4% for the year to April 2023, and
 - (ii) split site funding which has been [formularised](#).
8. As announced in July, there will also be a separate pay grant for teachers' pay made to support schools with funding the pay increases in 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025. Further details on the TPAG can be found at [teachers' pay additional grant: 2023 to 2024](#).
9. Local authorities were required to bring their own formulae closer to the schools NFF from 2023 to 2024. This transition will continue in 2024 to 2025. In particular:
- local authorities must move their local formula factor values at least a further 10% closer to the NFF (building on the movement towards the NFF made in 2023 to 2024), except where local formulae are already mirroring the NFF. As Ealing's funding formula already substantially mirrored the NFF (factor values were within +/- 2.5% of the respective NFF values) in 2024-25 this requirement does not impact on Ealing.
 - local authorities whose formula mirrored the NFF in 2023 to 2024 will continue to be allowed to set their 2024 to 2025 factor values anywhere within +/- 2.5% of the 2024 to 2025 NFF values.
 - local authorities must use the new national formulaic approach to split sites, which includes a lump sum basic eligibility value (£54,300 + ACA) and additional distance funding for sites separated by more than 100m (up to £27,100 + ACA).
 - local authorities must follow the new local formula requirements for growth funding, whereby additional classes (driven by basic need) must be funded at least at the minimum funding level set out in the funding calculation.
 - local authorities with a falling rolls fund must also follow the new requirements for falling rolls funding, whereby local authorities can only provide falling rolls funding to schools where school capacity survey (SCAP) 2022 data shows that school places will be required in the subsequent 3 to 5 years. The restriction that schools were previously only eligible for falling rolls funding if they were judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted is being removed from 2024 to 2025

Funding Formula for pupils in R to Year 11 (mainstream schools)

10. The Ealing schools forum has agreed to adopt the structure of the NFF as far as possible for the past five years. Due to the funding floor, minimum funding guarantee (MFG), high needs transfer and substantial year on year increases in

free school meal entitlement, for affordability, the values of the deprivation (FSM6 and IDACI) and low prior attainment factors were set slightly below the NFF value (at the maximum allowable -2.5%) and there was a small adjustment to the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) rates (-0.25%) in 2023-24.

11. The structure of the NFF and the cash values proposed for Ealing are set out in **Table 1**. The values shown for the NFF have been increased by Ealing's schools block area cost adjustment (ACA) of 1.14748. This reflects the higher salary costs in schools and cost of living in the area. The percentage increases within the NFF are rounded to the nearest £5 before the ACA is applied. This explains why the per cent increases vary slightly from those set out above, and also why they vary between factors. In 2024-25 it is intended to continue to align our formula with the NFF rates as far as possible.

12. Should the NFF not be fully affordable in 2024-25, as in previous years, we would first make an adjustment to the FSM6, IDACI and/or low prior attainment factors and, if an affordability gap, remained either cap or scale back on gains in the formula, and/or make a small adjustment to the AWPU. Any adjustments made for affordability would need to be within the +/-2.5% range set by the government for local authorities already substantially mirroring the NFF in 2024-25.

Table 1: Current and proposed factor values before any adjustment for affordability, if required

	Ealing Values 2023-24 (including uplift to basic entitlement, FSM6 and lump sum to reflect MSAG values)		NFF Rates 2024-25 including ACA		Increase NFF Rates 24-25 minus Ealing Rates 23-24			
Factor	Primary per pupil	High per pupil	Primary per pupil	High per pupil	Primary	Percent	High	Percent
	A	B	C	D	C-A		D-B	
Primary (Years R-6)	£4,034.08		£4,127.49		£93.41	2.3%		
Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9)		£5,687.68		£5,820.02			£132.34	2.3%
Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11)		£6,411.13		£6,560.14			£149.01	2.3%
FSM	£552.53	£552.53	£562.27	£562.27	£9.74	1.8%	£9.74	1.8%
FSM6	£910.97	£1,330.98	£952.41	£1,388.45	£41.44	4.5%	£57.47	4.3%
IDACI Band A	£751.96	£1,043.77	£786.02	£1,090.11	£34.06	4.5%	£46.34	4.4%
IDACI Band B	£572.40	£819.31	£596.69	£860.61	£24.29	4.2%	£41.30	5.0%
IDACI Band C	£538.73	£763.20	£562.27	£797.50	£23.53	4.4%	£34.30	4.5%
IDACI Band D	£493.83	£695.85	£516.37	£728.65	£22.53	4.6%	£32.80	4.7%
IDACI Band E	£314.26	£499.45	£327.03	£522.10	£12.77	4.1%	£22.66	4.5%
IDACI Band F	£258.14	£375.99	£269.66	£395.88	£11.52	4.5%	£19.89	5.3%
4) English as an Additional Language (EAL)	£667.64	£1,801.49	£682.75	£1,841.71	£15.11	2.3%	£40.22	2.2%
Mobility	£1,087.80	£1,565.51	£1,113.06	£1,600.73	£25.26	2.3%	£35.22	2.3%
Low Prior Attainment (LPA)	£1,296.31	£1,964.10	£1,359.76	£2,053.99	£63.45	4.9%	£89.89	4.6%
	Per School	Per School	Per School	Per School				
Lump Sum	£152,533.59	£152,533.59	£155,713.04	£155,713.04	£3,179.45	2.1%	£3,179.45	2.1%

13. In 2024-25 the government has set the minimum funding per-pupil levels at £4,655 for primary schools; £5,824 for KS3 and £6,389 at KS4. In 2023-24, all schools were funded above minimum per pupil levels through the formula and we expect

only a very small number of schools, if any, to require their funding uplifting to meet these levels in 2024-25.

Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

14. The MFG is a national requirement to protect schools from major real time funding reductions to their per pupil funding between years. It is set by the council following consultation with schools and the schools forum, within a range set by the government.
15. For the current financial year, the forum agreed to set the MFG at 0 per cent (the lowest rate permissible within the 0 to +0.5 per cent per pupil range) which meant no school saw a reduction in their per pupil funding. One Ealing school was protected by the MFG in 2023-24. In 2024-25, Local Authorities will again be able to set an MFG between 0 and +0.5 per cent per pupil.
16. **Table 2** illustrates the impact of a +0 and 0.5 per cent MFG using 2023-24 pupil data and funding values. The actual schools and figures for 2024-25 will be affected by updates to factor values and pupil data. Had a 0.5 per cent MFG been applied in the current year, two additional schools would have received protection and it would have cost other schools £39.7k more than an MFG set at 0 per cent. We are not able to set a differential rate for the MFG.

Table 2: Illustration of the effects of MFG set at 0 and 0.5 per cent

School Name	NOR	23-24 MFG Unit Value	22-23 MFG Unit Value	Per cent MFG adjustment @0%	23-24 MFG adjustment @0%	Per cent MFG adjustment @ 0.5%	23-24 MFG adjustment @0.5%	Difference
Total					£37,271		£77,000	+£39,729
Drayton Green Primary	354	£5241.26	£5,346.55	1.97%	£37,270.88	2.47%	£46,734.27	+£9,463.39
Three Bridges Primary	401	£5,111.41	£5,099.34	0%	£0	0.24%	£5,383.89	+£5,383.89
Villiers High	1260	£7,477.35	£7,459.80	0%	£0	0.24%	£24,881.63	+£24,881.63

17. Consistent with our policy of keeping our formula as close to the NFF as possible, it is proposed to implement a +0 per cent MFG.

Question 1:

Do you agree that Ealing should remain as close as possible to the NFF by setting a minimum funding guarantee of +0 per cent in Ealing's funding formula?

Pros

Keeps the funding formula as close to the NFF as possible and is in line with the government's direction of travel, giving schools the most time to manage resources within NFF levels of funding.

Avoids other schools funded at or near the NFF, topping up funding of schools already funded above the NFF.

Reduces the impact on schools with high levels of deprivation and / or low prior attainment who would be most affected by any adjustment to the formula to fund a higher MFG.

Cons

Reduces the level of protection provided to the potential small number of schools who would not see a year on year increase in per pupil funding.

Does not provide any additional protection to the potential small number of schools with a year on year increase in per pupil funding of between 0 and 0.5%.

Growth Fund

18. The government introduced a formulaic approach to allocating funding for pupil growth four years ago, rather than using levels set by each LA. The growth fund grant allocation funds:

- Implicit Growth - the regulations require new schools building up their numbers to be funded through the formula for pupils forecasted to join such schools in the September of each financial year; and
- Explicit Growth – expansions of existing schools and bulge classes to meet basis need. This funds schools for additional classes that would not otherwise be funded in that financial year due to the lagged nature of the school funding formula.

19. Ealing's explicit growth fund rules for expansions of existing schools and bulge classes in 2023 to 2024 are:

Primary Schools

- AWPU multiplied by 30 multiplied by 7/12ths (to reflect the unfunded portion of the year) per additional 30 places for increases agreed by the LA for the September intake (pro-rated).

High Schools

- AWPU multiplied by 30 multiplied by 7/12ths (to reflect the unfunded portion of the year) per 30 additional places for increases agreed by the LA for the September intake (pro-rated), based on either KS3 AWPU rate for year 7 to 9 bulge classes and KS4 AWPU rate for year 10 to 11 bulge classes.

In both sectors,

- Where building works are required and agreed by the LA costing in excess of £2m, £15,000 a year for two financial years, the timing of the release of funding is following the approval of statutory proposals or the increase in the school's planned admission number where statutory proposals are not required. Funding may be released earlier at the discretion of the LA.
- In exceptional cases, for example where additional furniture, learning resources or support staff costs are required which cannot be charged to capital, a case may be made to the LA for additional revenue funding up to a maximum of £15,000 one-off payment.

20. **Table 3** sets out the per pupil AWPU rate for 2024-25 and an illustration of what this would equate to for a full 30 places funded September to March:

Table 3: Illustration of 2024-25 growth fund allocations based on existing growth fund rules

	Rate per pupil 2024-25 (NFF AWPU including area cost adjustment)	Illustration based on 1 additional form of entry (30 places funded Sept-Mar)
Primary	£4,127.49	£72,231
KS3	£5,820.02	£101,850
KS4	£6,560.14	£114,802

21. For the first time in 2024 to 2025 local authorities will be required to provide growth funding in all cases where a school or academy has agreed with the local authority to provide an extra class to meet basic need in the area (either as a bulge class or as an ongoing commitment). Funding, either through the growth fund, or by adjusting pupil numbers in the APT, will need to be provided regardless of whether the additional class is within or outside of the PAN.

22. As a minimum local authorities will have to provide funding to a level which is compliant with the following formula: primary growth factor value (£1,550) x number of pupils x ACA.

23. In Ealing for 2024-25 this would equal £53,358 for 1 additional form of entry. The primary growth factor value will be used for all school types, recognising there is one teacher pay scale and that this funding is a minimum value. Ealing's current criteria, which uses AWPU, would be above, and therefore compliant with, this minimum value.

24. Should the growth funding provided through the schools block be insufficient to fund the internal and external growth, our preferred option for external growth would be to maintain the existing rules of the explicit growth fund and continue to fund school bulge classes at a per pupil rate equivalent to the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU).

25. While any gap would be met as far as possible through reserves, as agreed by forum at the June 2023 meeting, maintaining the existing rules may also require an adjustment to the formula to fund any remaining gap.

Question 2:

Do you agree that, should the DfE allocation for in-year pupil growth be insufficient, to ensure sufficiency of places, we should maintain the current rules and continue to fund explicit growth at equivalent to the AWPU?

Pros

Existing growth fund rules have enabled sufficient funding to meet the cost of providing bulge classes. Without those schools with space putting on additional classes, there would not have been sufficient places for children and the LA would not have been able to meet our statutory duty.

While the growth fund continues to be used for both primary and high school bulges, current growth spend is concentrated in high schools. Primary expansion benefited from these levels of funding and it would not be consistent to reduce the funding and disadvantage the secondary sector.

Reducing the growth fund allocation would impact a small number of schools with physical capacity in the phases and areas of the borough where we are experiencing in year growth. The schools who currently receive the bulk of growth fund do not have substantial reserves and would not be able to absorb costs.

We do not anticipate a significant funding gap to enable the continuation of existing rules, therefore the impact on other schools of maintaining existing rules is likely to be comparatively small. As an illustration a gap of 100k equates to around £2 per pupil. Per pupil funding would continue to be protected by the MFG and schools will continue to be funded at or around the NFF.

Accurate forecasting is challenging due to national and global events and demand for places from new arrivals from overseas has been high in recent years. We need capacity to respond this. If we scaled back allocations to the minimum allowable value, we would still need to approach schools to put on bulge classes but the growth funding may not cover costs. This could put the financial sustainability of these schools at risk.

If we are unable to progress bulge classes and offer sufficient places within a reasonable distance, we would need to use Fair Access Panel (FAP) to place children over numbers.

Cons

As in year demand is increasing and existing capacity is not in the right areas and/or year groups to enable us to make reasonable offers, it is likely the DfE's growth fund allocation to the LA will be insufficient to maintain current rules without some adjustment to the formula.

Falling Rolls fund

26. For the first time in 2024-25 the government will allocate funding to local authorities based on falling rolls as well as growth. Funding will be allocated based on year on year reductions in pupil numbers at medium super output areas (MSOA) level. MSOAs are small geographical areas, within wards, which, in Ealing, contain between 1 and 5 schools. Allocations will be based on differences between the primary and secondary number on roll at schools located within each MSOA between the most recent October pupil census and the census in the previous October.
27. The falling rolls allocation for each local authority will be £140,000 + area cost adjustment (ACA) per MSOA which sees a 10% or greater reduction in the number of pupils on roll between the two census years.
28. While we do not yet know the number of children on roll at schools within each MSOA in October 2023, early modelling data suggest that it is unlikely that Ealing will have any MSOA's where we have experienced a 10% or greater reduction in the number of pupils on roll compared to the previous census year. Therefore, we consider it unlikely that we will receive a falling roll allocation in our schools block.
29. Local authorities will continue to have discretion over whether to set aside schools block funding to create a small fund to support schools with falling rolls.

30. Where local authorities operate a falling roll fund, they will only be able to use it to provide funding to schools where the 2022 school capacity survey (SCAP) shows that school places will be required in the subsequent 3 to 5 years. The previous restriction support could only be provided to schools judged 'good' or 'outstanding' at their last Ofsted inspection will be removed in 2024-25.

31. Criteria for allocating falling roll funding would need to contain clear objective trigger points for qualification and a clear formula for calculating allocations. The updated guidance states that compliant criteria would generally contain some of the features set out below:

- 2022 SCAP shows that school places will be required in the subsequent 3 to 5 years (this is a mandatory requirement)
- surplus capacity exceeds a minimum number of pupils, or a percentage of the published admission number
- formula funding available to the school will not support provision of an appropriate curriculum for the existing cohort
- the school will need to make redundancies in order to contain spending within its formula budget

32. Methodologies for distributing funding could include:

- a rate per vacant place, up to a specified maximum number of places (place value likely to be based on basic per pupil funding)
- a lump sum payment with clear parameters for calculation (for example, the estimated cost of providing an appropriate curriculum, or estimated salary costs equivalent to the number of staff who would otherwise be made redundant)

33. Ealing have previously chosen not to set aside a falling rolls fund and our preferred option it to continue not to do so. Many primary schools in the borough have already experienced or are forecasting falling rolls. Our area level forecasts continue to indicate that, while there are pockets of increased demand, the majority of surplus places in schools with falling rolls won't be needed within the 3 to 5 years.

Question 3:

Do you agree that the LA should not introduce a falling roll fund?

Pros

Based on initially modelling data we do not anticipate we will receive a falling roll allocation, therefore a falling roll fund would likely need to be fully funded through a top slice of the schools block. This would impact on funding levels for other schools, including those who have already experienced falling rolls, and those where rolls are falling but surplus places are not expected to be needed within 3-5 years.

Schools with falling rolls are already protected by the lagged nature of school funding and a falling roll fund may delay action and impact on longer term financial sustainability.

Accurate forecasting is currently very challenging due to national and global events. If we allocated falling roll funding and the numbers did not increase, there is currently no mechanism to recover that funding.

2022 SCAP forecasts do not show that additional school places will be required in the subsequent 3 to 5 years, therefore most (if not all) schools with falling rolls would not meet the mandatory requirement for us to allocate funding.

If local planning area forecasts showed that surplus places were needed within 3-5 years, it would be difficult to make a compelling case to fund one school over another where rolls were falling across a number of schools in an area.

Cons

If there were any schools with falling rolls where those places were forecasted to be needed within 3-5 years, they would not receive additional funding that could help them avoid redundancies.

Schools who have restructured following falling rolls may not be able to respond as quickly to any subsequent increases in demand.

Education functions in respect of maintained schools

34. [The Schools Operational Guidance Annex 3](#) sets out the responsibilities held by local authorities for maintained schools only that can be funded from maintained schools budgets, with agreement of the maintained schools members of schools forums. The agreed amount per pupil is deducted from school budget shares after the formula and MFG have been applied.

35. For the current financial year, the schools forum agreed at their November meeting to top-slice £34.93 per pupil for functions in respect of maintained schools. This includes £6.93 to fund the cost of delivering core school improvement functions that was previously met from the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokerage grant, as [consulted](#) on and agreed in 2023-24.

36. **Table 4** below provides a breakdown by area. We are proposing an increase in the per pupil rate of 5% (+£1.76) to £36.69 for 2024-25 to broadly meet the cost of the proposed local government staff pay award for 2023-24, based on current staff gradings. The per pupil amounts for the statutory and regulatory duties, education welfare and asset management functions were not increased in 2023-24 and were increased by less than 2% in 2022-23. The Education Functions hold back largely funds direct staffing costs and the cost of pay awards cannot continue to be contained without an increase in the per pupil rates.

Table 4: Education Functions in respect of maintained schools agreed for 2023-24 and proposed for 2024-25

Maintained Schools	Full Year Budget 2023-24	Per Pupil Rates 2023-24	Proposed Per Pupil 2024-25 Rates
Statutory and Regulatory duties	£0.731	£21.55	£22.25
Education Welfare, Inspection of Registers	£0.065	£1.90	£2.00
Central Support Services	£0	£0.00	£0.00
Asset Management	£0.154	£4.55	£4.78
Premature Retirement and Redundancy	£0	£0.00	£0.00

Maintained Schools	Full Year Budget 2023-24	Per Pupil Rates 2023-24	Proposed Per Pupil 2024-25 Rates
Monitoring National Curriculum Assessments	£0	£0.00	£0.38 *
Core School Improvement Functions	£0.235	£6.93	£7.28
Total Primary and High	£1.185	£34.93	£36.69

** Reallocation, previously included within statutory and regulatory duties*

37. The LA's statutory responsibilities to monitor national curriculum assessments have previously been met through the funding allocated to statutory and regulatory duties, with around £12k allocated to this function. For 2024-25, the proposed funding for this function has been split out and recorded separately against the monitoring national curriculum assessment funding line. This is in line with [the schools operational guide 2004 to 2025 annex 3](#) which sets out the requirement for this funding allocation to be set out separately and agreed by forum on a line by line basis. There has been a corresponding reduction in the Statutory and Regulatory Duties line (before applying the 5% increase) to reflect this.

38. Multi-academy trusts (MAT) make similar types of deductions for services provided by MATs in respect of schools in their trusts. While information is limited and we are not able to disaggregate or exclude functions maintained schools buy as traded services, available evidence suggests that Academy Trust holdbacks are usually in the region of 4 to 5% which is equivalent to around £250-£300 per child. This compares to an average of less than 1% for Ealing maintained schools across all Education Functions and De-Delegations combined in 2023-24.

39. Where academies are provided with support with functions maintained schools fund through Education Functions, for example core school improvement support such as through health checks and the securing good programme, they will be required to fund this separately from their budgets.

40. If the LA and schools forum are unable to reach a consensus on the amount to be retained by the LA, the matter can be referred to the Secretary of State.

Question 4: (Maintained schools only)

Do you support funding the Education Functions at the per pupil rates set out in the table 4, amounting to £36.69 per pupil?

If not, what items or adjustments do you consider should be met from school budgets?

Pros

Responsibilities the LA holds for maintained schools have to be funded. Reducing the rate would mean some of these functions would need to be met separately from school budgets. This may put additional financial pressure on schools already struggling with financial sustainability.

Local authority services funded from Education Functions also support schools with meeting their statutory duties.

Cons

Increasing Education Functions to cover staff pay awards will require a corresponding increase to the amount top sliced from maintained schools budgets.

All maintained primary and high schools pay the same rate per pupil for Education functions deducted from school budgets regardless of the level of service and support they require or use.

De-delegated services

41. In the case of maintained schools, the schools forum may agree to de-delegate from school budget shares funding for a range of services. The amount de-delegated is deducted from school budget shares before these are allocated to schools. In Ealing, only a small number of services are de-delegated. De-delegation totalled £471,797 for maintained primary schools and £77,521 for maintained high schools in 2023-24. The de-delegated services for the current year are shown in **Table 5** below.

Table 5: De-delegation in 2023-24 – Maintained Schools only

Pupil Numbers	Primary		High		Total
	Per Pupil	25,311 De-delegation	Per Pupil	8,623 De-delegation	
Contingencies	£3.90	£98,713	£3.90	£33,630	£132,343
Additional school improvement functions	£0.00	-	£0.00	-	-
Behaviour support services	£8.38	£212,106	£0.00	-	£212,106
Support to underperforming ethnic groups and bilingual learners	£0.00	-	£0.00	-	-
Free school meal eligibility	£2.07	£52,394	£2.07	£17,850	£70,243
Insurance	£0.00	-	£0.00	-	-
Licences and subscriptions; except those already paid for by the department	£0.00	-	£0.00	-	-
Museum and library services	£0.00	-	£0.00	-	-
RPA	£0.00	-	£0.00	-	-
Staff costs supply cover (Trade union facility time)	£4.29	£108,584	£3.02	£26,041	£134,626
Total De-delegation	£18.64	£471,797	£8.99	£77,521	£549,318

42. A summary of each service where forum have currently agreed de-delegation is set out below. De-delegation is not an option for special schools, nursery schools or PRUs. Where de-delegation has been agreed for maintained primary and secondary schools, local authorities may offer the service on a buy-back basis to those schools and academies in their area which are not covered by de-delegation. Decisions made to de-delegate must be made each year.

43. Schools forum members for primary and secondary maintained schools must decide separately for each phase whether the service should be provided centrally, and the decision will apply to all maintained mainstream schools in that phase.

44. De-Delegations fund the budget of the services provided, which are largely staffing costs. We propose that per pupil rates for these areas (other than 'contingency') are inflated to cover the respective pay awards for those employees in 2024-25.

45. Where there is a surplus remaining at the end of the financial year, it comes back to schools forum to make a decision on how to use the reserves.

46. For 2024-25, the forum will vote on de-delegation at its meeting in November 2023 or January 2024 and we would welcome maintained schools' views on de-delegation:

- The **contingency** is a small safety net to be applied in year where a school has exceptional cost pressures that cannot be met from the school's own budget share or balances brought forward. Examples include deficits of closing schools and exceptional support required for pupils without special needs placed through the fair access protocol. It is proposed to keep the contingency rate the same.
- The **primary behaviour support services** de-delegation funds the Ealing Primary Centre (EPC) outreach which works to prevent exclusion of Ealing's primary school children, providing assessment and intervention for children presenting with Emotional, Social and Mental Health Difficulties, their families and schools. It is proposed to increase the de-delegation rate to cover staff pay awards (teachers confirmed at 6.5%). The number and complexity of children with SEN in mainstream is increasing and the council is investing in outreach and working to find funding for this. The EPC outreach is a fundamental part of the outreach to primary schools and an increase to cover staff pay awards enables the service to be maintained at the current level.
- De-delegation of funding for **free school meals eligibility checking** offers the benefit of managing an on-line application system accessible by schools and parent and carers, that checks eligibility via the DfE's access to the benefits agency's database and confirms eligibility. The LA's bulk eligibility checking facility helps maximise identification of pupils eligible for free school meals and funding, saves schools time, and reduces the need for parents to directly apply. The value of the service to schools is demonstrated by the 100% buyback from academies in 2023-24. It is proposed to increase the 2024-25 de-delegation rate in line with the 2023-24 staff pay awards (currently proposed to be around 6%, based on current staff grades).

The de-delegation partly covers staffing and partly covers database costs. The database contract is being re-procured in April 2024 which may be an additional cost pressure but we are working to contain any cost increases. A higher rate of de-delegation may need to be considered in future years to enable a continuation of the existing service should the government's Household Support Fund (which currently provides a contribution to the service for school holiday voucher administration) end and / or annual database costs increase significantly.

- **Trade union facility time** covers recognised teaching and support staff union representatives in maintained schools. It is proposed to increase the

de-delegation rate to cover staff pay awards (teachers confirmed at 6.5%, support staff currently unknown). TU facility time is funded on the basis of income received from de-delegation and from those academies that agree to pay into the fund (at the same rate). If the staff pay awards were not funded sufficiently to continue at the current level of service and cover staff costs, there would be a need to scale back the provision of TU support to reduce the cost back to what is affordable within the allocation.

At this years forum meetings, the representative of staff nominated by recognised TUs raised the issue that the number of days paid by this facility time for NEU trade union representatives had reduced over the past ten years whereas membership and demand for the service had increased. The forum resolved that a decision about increasing the rate further to reflect this would be worked through in the autumn 2023 school funding consultation to inform forum's decision making regarding the 2024-25 rate.

Overall, there has been a small surplus on the account compared to income from de-delegation and academy buy back in recent years. This is partly because claims from some trade unions have been lower than historically. Therefore, it is proposed that the 2024-25 increase is contained at the level of the pay award. The issue of a redistribution of allocations to the respective trade unions in response to the concerns raised by the Representative of staff nominated by recognised TUs can then be considered at the annual allocation meeting between recognised teacher trade unions.

47. While the final values of some of the staff pay awards are still to be determined and October pupil numbers are currently unknown, we would welcome views on the principle of increasing the de-delegation rates to cover staff pay awards and enable continuity of service as set out above. The actual proposed increases will be set out in the November forum report and may differ between the different de-delegated areas depending on the make up of staffing and the impact of changes in overall pupil numbers.

48. We are not forecasting that pupil numbers will decrease this year so do not expect this to have a significant impact on proposed de-delegation rates.

Question 5: (Maintained Schools only)

Do you support de-delegation of?

- **School contingencies at the current rate** (£3.90 pp)
- **Primary behaviour support services with an increase in the per pupil rate to cover staff pay awards** (£8.38 pp + staff pay award)
- **Free school meals eligibility checking with an increase in the per pupil rate to cover staff pay awards** (£2.07 pp + staff pay award)
- **Trade union facilities time with an increase in the per pupil rate to cover staff pay awards** (Primary: £4.29 pp + staff pay award, Secondary: £3.02 + staff pay award)

Pros
Contingencies: maintaining a consistent contingency rate enables the local authority to continue to respond to exceptional cost pressures in schools that cannot be met from the school's own budget share or balances brought forward.
Primary behaviour support services: SEN in mainstream, in particular related to social, emotional and mental health needs continues to increase, and the EPC outreach service plays a vital role in supporting primary schools with this. An increase in the per pupil rate to cover staff pay awards enables the continuation of the current level of service.
Free school meals eligibility checking: The bulk eligibility checking facility is an efficient way to maximise identification of pupils eligible for Free school meals and funding, which saves schools time, and reduces the need for parents to directly apply. The current capacity in the team is required to manage the volume of individual and bulk checking requests and queries. Associated pupil premium and other deprivation led funding is equivalent to over £2,500 per child identified as eligible for free school meals. An increase in the per pupil rate to cover staff pay awards enables the continuation of the current level of service.
Trade Union facilities time: As pupil numbers reduce, demand for TU support continues to increase with additional support for staff experiencing restructures and facing redundancies. An increase in the per pupil rate to cover staff pay awards enables the continuation of the current level of service.
Cons
Increasing de-delegation to cover staff pay awards will require a corresponding increase to the amount top sliced from maintained schools budgets.

The central school services block

49. The central school services block (CSSB) was introduced in 2018 to fund local authorities for the statutory duties that they hold for both maintained schools and academies. The CSSB brings together:

- funding previously allocated through the retained duties element of the Education Services Grant (ESG)
- funding for ongoing central functions, such as admissions, previously top-sliced from the schools' block
- Residual funding for historic commitments, previously top-sliced from the schools' block

50. [The schools operational guidance Annex 3](#) provides further information on LA duties in respect of all schools. In 2016, the DfE transferred into the DSG funding for LA retained duties in respect of all maintained and free schools and academies. In the case of Ealing this amounted to £0.745m and the forum agreed to passport this funding to the LA.

51. **Table 6** below shows the proposed 2024-25 allocations for CSSB items. These services relate to all schools and academies. Schools forum will be asked to approve allocating the CSSB allocated by the DfE in 2024-25 on a line by line basis.

52. In 2024-25 Local authorities will continue to be protected so that the maximum per-pupil year-on-year funding for ongoing responsibilities is -2.5%, while the year-on-year gains cap will be set at the highest affordable rate of +5.51%. Ealing will see a +2.9% (£1.27) increase in the CSSB per pupil rate from £43.71 to £44.98. The increase is due to greater than average increases to free school meal entitlement which forms part of the CSSB funding formula.

53. Our CSSB formula allocation in 2024-25 (excluding historic commitments) has provisionally therefore increased by £0.058m to £2.077m, based on October 2022 pupil numbers, although may be slightly higher once updated based on October 2023 pupil numbers. As an illustration, an increase in pupil numbers of 100 would increase the allocation by £4,500.

Table 6: Proposed CSSB 2024-25 compared to 2023-24 allocations

Section 251 Statement Line Number	Allocated 2023-24 £m	Proposed 2024-25 £m	Comments
1.4.2 School admissions	0.655	0.667	Includes main round and in-year admissions
1.4.3 Servicing of schools forums	-	-	
1.4.4 Termination of employment costs	-	-	
1.4.5 Carbon reduction commitment allowances	-	-	
1.4.6 Capital expenditure from revenue (CERA)	-	-	
1.4.7 Prudential borrowing costs	-	-	
1.4.8 Fees to non-maintained independent schools (Education element of LAC Placements)	0.343	0.343	This covers the education element of any LAC placements at such schools agreed by placement panels
1.4.9 Equal pay - back pay	-	-	
1.4.12 Exceptions agreed by Secretary of State	-	-	
1.4.14 Other Items	0.240	0.274	Copyright licences paid centrally as calculated by DFE for all sectors. Schools forum approval is not required for central licences.
1.5.1 Other Specific Grants	-	-	
Total of items 1.4.2 to 1.5.1	1.238	1.284	
Retained Duties	0.781	0.793	The item covers funding for LA retained duties in respect of all maintained schools, academies and free schools.
Total CSSB (excluding historic commitments)	2.019	2.077	

54. We propose allocating £34k of the anticipated £58k increase to other items to fund copyright licences, in line with the actual increased charge in 2023-24. Copyright licences need to be funded in full and do not require schools forum approval.
55. We then propose dividing the remaining additional £24k evenly between school admissions and retained duties, to support with meeting the cost of staff pay awards. If the actual allocation is greater than the provisional allocation due to higher overall pupil numbers then we would revert to schools forum for a decision on where to allocate any additional funding.
56. Decisions on centrally retained funding will be made by the schools forum at its meeting in November. [The Schools Operation Guidance Annex 4](#) summarises sets out the decision-making powers of the forum.
57. If the line-by-line allocations are not agreed by the forum, the LA can appeal to the Secretary of State.

Question 6:

Do you support allocating the funding the LA receives from the government for the Central School Services Block as set out in table 6?

If not, what changes do you think should be made?

Pros

Funds the delivery of essential services

Agreeing the proposed split enables us to provides stability and continuation of existing services.

Historic Commitments

58. In addition to the funding for ongoing responsibilities, the LA receives funding from the DfE for historic commitments agreed by the schools forum in previous years. In line with previous years, the government will reduce funding for historic commitments by a further 20 per cent in 2024-25. This is a further reduction of £95,846 and means that historic commitment funding will have reduced in total by £0.787m since 2016/17 from £1.170m to £383,386.
59. For 2024-25, it is proposed to follow the same method used in 2023-24 and apply the 20% reduction equally to each area. The figures agreed for the current year and proposed figures for 2024-25 after the 20% reduction has been applied are shown below in **Table 7**.

Table 7: Historic Commitments 2023-24 and proposed 2024-25

Service	2023-24 £m	Proposed 2024-25 £m	Comments
SAFE Supportive Action for Families in Ealing	0.175	0.140	2016-17 value £0.437m. A considerable proportion of the children and young people supported through the service have High Needs. It was agreed to transfer £0.2185m to High Needs from 2017-18. SAFE offers a service below the threshold

Service	2023-24 £m	Proposed 2024-25 £m	Comments
			of social care to 1,500 children in a year with a proportionately high number of referrals made to ECIRS by schools being referred to the service. Outcomes for the service are good with very low number of re-referrals and families and young people feeding back two years after intervention positively around the impact the service has had on their lives.
Parenting Service - Interventions in families with children who have challenging behaviour.	0.059	0.047	2016-17 value £0.148m. Again, a sizeable proportion of the children of these families do have high needs and it was agreed to transfer £0.074m to the High Needs Block.
LAC teaching service	0.029	0.023	2016-17 value £0.290m. At GCSE LAC pupils in Ealing usually do better than nationally, though they are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Ealing. The purpose of the LAC teaching service is to work with children to raise attainment further.
Historic Commitment savings transferred to High Needs	0.216	0.173	DfE guidance allows savings in other areas of the historic commitments to be applied to High Needs pressures.
Total	0.479	0.383	

60. Schools forum approval is required on a line-by-line basis. The budget for any one area cannot exceed the value agreed in the previous funding period, and no new commitments can be entered into.

Question 7:

Do you support applying the 20% reduction in the historic commitments funding provided by the government proportionately to each area?

If not, where do you think the reduction should be made?

Pros

The government continue to reduce the historic commitment funding year on year so it is necessary for all services funded by this grant to begin to identify how they can be delivered without this funding.

Applying the 20% reduction proportionately rather than applying the full 95k reduction to the high needs block reduces the magnitude of the impact on the high needs budget at a time when this budget is under significant pressure and overall high needs block funding increases are not keeping pace with increases in demand or complexity.

Cons

SAFE, the parenting service and the LAC teaching service all provide vital support to vulnerable children and therefore any reduction in funding from historic commitments will be a funding pressure at a time when the local authority budget is under significant pressure.

High Needs Block

61. In August the government published its [high needs operational guidance](#) for Local Authorities (LAs).
62. In 2018-19, the government began to phase in a national funding formula for High Needs. Ealing loses under the formula if implemented in full. For 2024-25 the government have set a funding floor of 3 per cent per head of 2 to 18 population, which means every LA will receive at least 3 per cent per head more than they received in 2023-24. This has been reduced from 5 per cent in 2022-23. The limit on gains has been set at 5 per cent.
63. In July, the DfE published provisional High Needs Block allocations for 2024-25 and Ealing continues to be funded at the funding floor, so will receive an increase of 3 per cent per head of 2 to 18 population. The provisional allocation is £79.46m, 2.0% higher than the £77.90m received in total in 2023-24 (prior to reductions for direct funded places). This increase is less than the 3% floor because the protection only applies to the per pupil elements of the grant and is calculated per head of population.
64. The provisional allocation has been adjusted for imports and exports at £6,000 per place based on the number of children and young people educated in other LA areas in the current year. The final allocation for 2024-25 will be adjusted for updated imports and exports, and the basic entitlement factor will also be updated for the latest numbers of children in special schools. The 2023-24 comparison includes the £3.23m additional pressures funding which has been rolled into the main high needs allocation in 2024-25.
65. The estimated cash growth is £2.06m, when compared to the total high needs allocation (including additional pressures funding) in 2023-24.
66. There will be a 0% minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for special schools based on combined place and top-up funding in 2023-24 on a per pupil basis, assuming the number and type of places remains the same. Local authorities are, however, expected to respond appropriately to special schools' cost pressures in 2024 to 2025 to secure the provision required for the pupils they place there, taking account of any inescapable cost increases such as those caused by energy prices or staff pay awards and any consequent risks to the schools' financial viability. Special schools will receive additional allocations in 2024 to 2025 to cover the 3.4% additional pressures funding (which continues to be a separate allocation on top of baseline and top up funding), the historic teachers pay and pension allocation and the new teacher pay additional grant (TPAG).
67. High needs funding continues to be a significant challenge, but Ealing is performing well compared to many other local authorities in terms of our high needs deficit, particularly given our comparatively high number of plans, due to strong

collaboration and financial commitments from the LA and schools. Despite experiencing the same pressures of increasing demand and complexity, schools and the local authority have continued to work collaboratively together to secure funding, develop existing and create new SEND provision and support services.

68. Schools forum has, over recent years, approved the continuation of 0.5% transfer to high needs from the school's block.

69. Since 2020-21 the local authority has also committed £4.650m annually to manage SEND pressures and secure its SEN statutory services. From 2023 onwards the local authority has also funded an additional £500k to support the SEN assessment service to deliver its statutory duties.

70. In 2022-23, the high needs block was under spent by £0.564m following targeted work to ensure effective use of resources. After also applying one off reserves, the cumulative deficit was reduced from £1.147m to £0.570m. Deficits in the DSG are carried forward to the following financial year and the LA is responsible for working with schools and other stakeholders to manage spending and reduce the deficit, known as a deficit recovery plan.

71. The additional funding allocated to High Needs will help reduce the overspend but does not consider future growth pressures. The growth in EHC plans and budget pressure is a national and local issue. Table 8 shows that the number of EHC plans and requests for assessment continued to increase during 2022-23 academic year.

Table 8: Increase in EHC plans and assessments

EHC plans			Requests for assessment	
SEN2 - population as a January	Total	% of 3-24 population	SEN 2 - Calendar year	Total
2019	2,551	2.7%	2018	401
2020	2,679	2.8%	2019	485
2021	2,956	3.1%	2020	497
2022	3,119	3.4%	2021	609
2023	3,445	3.7%	2022	691
Change (2022-2023)		10%	Change (2021-2022)	13%
Change (2019-2023)		35%	Change (2018-2023)	72%

72. The number of plans of primary age (5-10) increased by a further 8% between January 2022 and January 2023 despite a now falling mainstream population, while the number of plans of secondary age (11-15) increased by 9%. If the trend in prevalence continues to increase at the current rate, the number of plans could rise by a further 20% to around 4,150 in the next three years, which taken together with the increasing complexity will continue to place considerable pressure on the high needs block.

73. For these reasons, the schools forum will be asked to continue to agree a transfer from the schools block for 2024-2025. The transfer requested is 0.5 per cent, which is the maximum block transfer allowable without a disapplication request to the

Secretary of State. In 2023-24 the value of this was £1,456,468, equivalent to £31.46 per pupil. The overall increase in schools block funding in 2024-25 (including the wrapping in of the mainstream schools additional grant) will increase this to around £1.54m, approximately £33 per pupil.

74. Should the schools forum not approve a transfer, approval can be sought from the Secretary of State via a disapplication request.

Question 8:

Do you support retaining the transfer of 0.5 per cent of the schools' budget into High Needs, equivalent to approximately £33.00 per pupil across schools and academies?

If not, what other actions would you suggest helping manage pressures in 2024-25

Pros

Supports schools and the local authority to manage the increasing number and complexity of EHC plans and increasing spend on high needs placements both within mainstream and specialist provision.

If the 0.5% transfer was not agreed, the forecasted deficit in the high needs block would increase significantly. Schools and the LA have worked together to contain the deficit and avoid more severe spend control measures, which work their way through to school budgets, and the block transfer is a key element to this.

Retaining the current position on block transfers until we are clearer about the government's plans under a direct NFF may help avoid any loss of funding.

Cons

Moves 0.5% of the funding (approximately £1.54m) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, reducing the rate of funding allocated directly to schools by approximately £33 per pupil.

Balance Control Mechanism

75. A Balance Control Mechanism (BCM) allows an authority to clawback excess surplus balances. Ealing's current balance control mechanism is focused on only those schools which have built up significant excessive uncommitted balances and where a redistribution of the balance would support improved provision within Ealing schools. The mechanism is included within the [Scheme for Financing Schools](#) which is agreed by schools forum annually.

76. Ealing's current mechanism is set out below. Schools forum vote annually on whether to implement the mechanism at the June meeting of the forum, based on provisional school balance positions.

- a) The Authority shall calculate by 31 May each year the surplus balance, if any, held by each school as at the preceding 31 March. For this purpose the balance will be the recurrent balance as defined in the Consistent Financial Reporting Framework, including creditor and debtor provisions.
- b) If the result of step a is a sum is the greater of 5% for secondary schools, 8% for primary and special schools and nurseries, of the maintained schools original budget submitted to the LA. then the authority shall apply the clawback mechanism set out in section 6.2.d and deduct resulting amount from the current year's budget as appropriate. The LA will seek agreement to implement the BCM from schools forum following the confirmation of maintained school balances for the year.
- c) At year end every school with balances over 5% for secondary schools, 8% for primary will need to complete a School Balances form. Should schools forum agree to implement the BCM the LA will Review the School Balance Forms ensuring:
- Projects on the form if capital in nature are using the school's devolved capital balances before applying the revenue balance
 - Schools earmarked revenue contributions to capital schemes lead on by the council are deducted from balances subject to clawback, and these contributions are held in a central reserve
 - Spend under the accrual limit and accruals with committed orders have been spent.
- d) Schools with an increasing excessive surplus for 2 consecutive years will be considered for clawback at the following incremental levels:
- Nursery, Primary and Special Schools:
- 5% on surpluses between 9% to 12%
 - 10% on surpluses between 12% to 20%
 - 15% on surpluses more than 20%
- Secondary Schools:
- 5% on surpluses between 6% to 9%
 - 10% on surpluses between 9% to 17%
 - 15% on surpluses of more than 17%

77. Forum members expressed a range of views about the current mechanism at the June meeting and requested that officers consult on possible changes to the mechanism. Options could include:

- removing the condition that balances have to be increasing and excessive and instead applying the mechanism to all schools with balances above the balance control limit (8% for primary, nursery and special schools, 5% for secondary schools) in any given year. This would have increased the number of school potentially in scope for clawback from 5 to 30 based on balances at the end of 2022-23.
- retaining a condition for balances to be increasing and excessive but reducing the period from the current two consecutive years to one years. This would have increased the number of schools potentially in scope for clawback from 5 to 15 based on balances at the end of 2022-23 ; and /or
- increasing the incremental values upon which clawback is applied to clawback a greater proportion of surplus balances.

78. Our recommendation would be to maintain the current mechanism and continue with our approach to focus only on those schools which have built up excessive

and increasing balances over two consecutive years at the current incremental levels.

79. If schools were minded to make any changes to the Balance Control Mechanism methodology, schools forum would vote on whether to agree these at the April 2024 forum meeting as part of agreeing the 2024-25 Scheme for Financing Schools. The decision about whether to implement the mechanism in any given year would continue to be made by the schools forum at their June meeting.

Question 9

Do you believe Ealing's balance control mechanism should continue to:

- a) focus only on those schools which have built up excessive and increasing balances over two consecutive years**
- b) be applied at the current incremental levels**

If not, what changes would you like to see to the mechanism?

Pros

Maintaining the current mechanism focusses only on those schools who have remained consistently above the balance control limit so protects those schools where excessive surplus has arisen in a single year and enables them to respond to reduce balances without being subject to clawback.

Maintaining the current incremental levels ensures the amount of surplus potentially clawed back is relatively small as a proportion of the overall school balances, therefore acting as a deterrent while enabling those schools to still retain most of their allocated funding to spend on their children.

Cons

A mechanism that applied to more schools and / or at a greater incremental rate would act as a greater deterrent and would encourage more schools to spend their funding on the children attending their school during the financial year for which it is intended.

A mechanism that applied to more schools and / or at a greater incremental rate would clawback a larger proportion of school balances and enable a greater redistribution of balances to support improved provision across all maintained schools, including those currently in or forecasting deficits. Maintained school balances at the end of 2022-23, while reducing by £2.3m in year, continued to total more than £18 million.

Responses and queries

80. We value a range of views and encourage as many schools as possible to respond via <https://www.research.net/r/schoolfunding2425> to help inform schools forum and local authority decision making.

81. We are holding a series of consultation information meetings in person at the EEC and via MS Teams where we will summarise the changes and provide an

opportunity for governors and / or school leaders to seek clarification on the proposals. To attend, book via Ealing CPD online on one of the following dates:

- Wednesday 4 October 2023 11am – 12pm - in person (EEC)
- Wednesday 4 October 2023 4pm – 5pm - in person (EEC)
- Thursday 5 October 2023 11am – 12pm - via MS Teams

82. We look forward to receiving your responses. If you have any queries, please contact Kim Price on kprice@ealing.gov.uk.