

School Management Forum

Subject: Results of Consultation Request a Transfer of 0.5% of the DSG Schools Block to the High Needs Block 2024/25

Date: 8th November 2023

Responses

12 school responded, made up of five academy trusts.

Questions Results

The following responses were received to the following questions. Percentage figures are given as a total of the responses received to individual questions.

*Where a response was not received to a question, these are not included within the percentage figures, however where the answer to question 1 was YES, question 2 is not applicable.

1. ***Does your school support a 0.5 % transfer from the schools' block to the high needs block in 2024-25, to assist with high needs pressures?***

YES 1

NO 11

2. ***If your school do not support 0.5% transfer in question 1, do you support a transfer in 2024-25 from the Schools' Block to the High Needs Block? If so, at what level would your school be willing to support?***

YES 1 possible

NO 10

Comments.

Comments to question 1

- We are not happy to lose ***any*** money, but when looking at the bigger picture, this funding may come back via a different funding method i.e. high needs funding.
- It is clear that the Local Authority is attempting to address the major funding pressures in their SEND budgets, and some may argue that schools who are already facing major budget pressures should not have to pick up the bill. However, it is also clear that they are under some scrutiny from the DfE and ESFA to manage their budgets better so this does give some reassurance that this request is reasonable in the circumstances.
- Some will argue this is about ***all*** Middlesbrough children and less so individual schools
- Based on the above, we would support the 0.5% move into the HNB. Of course, Middlesbrough absolutely ***must*** be able to demonstrate a prudent and fair distribution of this funding and report to the schools forum on the impact this has. Schools do not have the ability to repeatedly bail out inadequate government funding, but in the end it will be SEND children who will potentially suffer as

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a result of a decision not to agree this. The deficit cannot keep growing in the centre, as that will undoubtedly lead to harsher cuts and more stringent scrutiny in the future – another scenario that needs to be avoided.

- Bottom line, if it's not agreed the LA can apply for a disapplication of up to 1% anyway, and in that scenario it wouldn't make any difference what schools thought... if it was approved the schools would just have to accept it.
- We would request that Middlesbrough Council formally lobbies the DfE for additional funding rather than them having to resort to this approach.
- We would also ask for demonstration of the impact of retaining these additional funds.

We have supported these transfers in the past. We recognise that there is a significant increased need however we do not have confidence in how the money will be spent to make a difference and feel that the more impact could be made with these funds if they are provided to the schools direct.

The funds raised through taking 0.5% from schools' budgets is a significant amount of money for a school (for us £20,000) and will support us in meeting the current needs of children with EHCP and undiagnosed higher needs. My question is around the funding being used to reduce HNF debts. If this is the case, this cannot be right for today's children.

In SBS we have budgeted inflation and pay increases at 2%. If either of these factors are higher, as they have been this year, then this will put further strain on our budget. The DfE has presented the NFF formula and rates as the level of funding required for schools to be able to run at the same levels as 23/24 so by transferring any of this funding, ** ** Primary Academy will naturally be put under further pressure to produce a balanced budget.

This will have a significant impact on an already strained budget.

The impact of the overall transfer on the high needs deficit recovery will be minimal in my opinion. The transfer was done last year but the bottom line position continues to get worse. The impact of taking this money from school budgets across all schools in the town is significant and will have a negative impact on the provision we supply for our students already. Need is increasing massively in schools and we are now being asked to take and provide education for more complex students than ever before with our current stretched budgets and little specialist provision and the funding for schools is not reflective or keeping pace with the need. We have students who can not get a place in specialist provision because they can not meet their need yet these students are staying in mainstream!

Given the significant pressures on the current budgets to cater for the complexities within our own schools the contribution would be better used in school to support the changing SEND profile. The 0.5% (C £0.700m) will have negligible impact on the existing/continued deficit and perhaps it is time to draw a line and schools utilise the funding to support needs.

Comments to question 2

At present, we do not feel that we can support any contribution due to the pressures on our own budget. We are supporting a significant number of children with complex needs in our mainstream setting as special or base provision is not available. This is impacting hugely on our staffing budget.

I don't support any transfer of funds. It appears HN is an issue for us all and therefore we all should be using our funds to support children with HN as there are few options for parents to support their children to be educated in a specialist provision.

No, we would not support a transfer in 2024 - 25. It is worth noting that as our pupil numbers were lower than forecasted on census day, at 252, the funding for 24/25 will be, in real terms, be around £70k so our budget is already going to be a challenge to balance without the added reduction of transferring any funds to the High Needs Block.

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It is worth noting that as my pupil numbers were lower than forecasted on census day (194) my funding for 24/25 will be in real terms lower than the reduction stated above at around £40k so my budget is already going to be a challenge to balance without the added reduction of transferring any funds to the High Needs Block

A conversation would need to be held in relation to 'what level' schools have the capacity to support given the differing school contexts and their capacity to contribute.