



## SCHOOLS FORUM

23 FEBRUARY 2026

### Proposal for De-delegation: School Improvement for Maintained Schools (2026–27)

Content Applicable to;		School Phase;	
Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools	X	Pre School	
Academies		Foundation Stage	
PVI Settings		Primary	X
Special Schools / Academies		Secondary	X
Local Authority	X	Post 16	
		High Needs	

Content Requires;		By;	
Noting	X	Maintained Primary School Members	x
Decision	X	Maintained Secondary School Members	x
		Maintained Special School Members	
		Academy Members	
		All Schools Forum	

### 1. Purpose

To seek approval from maintained school representatives on de-delegating £18 per pupil from maintained school budget shares to fund local authority-led school improvement functions for the financial year 2026–27.

### Recommendations for approval

- a) Maintained school representatives are recommended to approve de-delegation of £18 per pupil in 2026–27 to fund the Local Authority’s core school improvement functions.
- b) Maintained school representatives are recommended to approve the retention of any surplus within de-delegated funds for school improvement 2025-26 to the Schools Block and earmark it for school improvement activities in the next financial year (8. Treatment of Unspent De-Delegated Funds; 9. Options for Treatment of Unspent De-Delegated Funds, Option 1)
- c) Maintained school representatives are recommended to approve that any deficit arising within de-delegated school improvement funds be carried forward to the next funding period as part of the DSG outturn process, ensuring compliance with the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2025 and transparency through reporting to Schools Forum. (10. Treatment of Overspend or Deficit in De Delegated Funds).

## **2. Background**

Under the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2025 and the Schools Operational Guide 2025–26, local authorities cannot de-delegate funding from maintained school budget shares without Schools Forum approval. Maintained school representatives on the Forum hold exclusive voting rights for these decisions; academy representatives do not vote on de-delegation for maintained schools.

Approval is required as de-delegation changes the distribution of formula funding, which is subject to statutory governance and transparency requirements. The Forum ensures that decisions reflect the collective interests of maintained schools and comply with national funding regulations.

If approval is withheld, the local authority must either discontinue the proposed centrally delivered service or apply for a disapplication to the Secretary of State, providing evidence of exceptional circumstances. Without approval or disapplication, the LA cannot legally deduct funds from maintained school budgets for school improvement or any other purpose.

This process safeguards fairness, accountability, and compliance with funding regulations.

## **3. Proposal and Rate**

It is proposed that £18 per pupil is de-delegated in 2026–27 to sustain the Local Authority’s core and additional school improvement functions for maintained schools.

## **4. What the funds will be used for**

- Strategic monitoring, risk assessment and proportionate intervention for maintained schools.
- Brokerage of school-to-school support and targeted capacity-building for leadership and governance.
- A rolling programme of independent health-checks and audits (e.g., safeguarding, curriculum, Pupil Premium, SEND, governance).

- Follow-up support and implementation planning following audits and reviews.
- Professional learning and centrally commissioned Continuous Professional Development of teaching staff aligned to local priorities.
- Preparation for, and support around, Ofsted inspections.

#### **5. Role of the Local Authority (Education Effectiveness team)**

- Coordinate and quality assure the school improvement offer, reporting impact to Schools Forum.
- Commission specialist providers and manage brokerage to ensure timely, needs-led support.
- Ensure statutory compliance and transparency through consultation and modelling of implications. (Reference: Schools Operational Guide 2025–26; Support and Intervention in Schools).

#### **6. Consultation with maintained schools (2025 Survey)**

Consultation fieldwork ran from 18 Nov 2025 to 14 Dec 2025. Total responses: 37 of 65 maintained schools.

#### **Support for the proposal (Q8):**

- Yes: 31 (83.8%)
- Don't know: 5 (13.5%)
- No: 1 (2.7%)

#### **Understanding of final decision-making (Q9):**

- Yes: 36 (97.3%)
- Don't know: 1 (2.7%)

#### **Most valued elements of the offer (likelihood to use):**

- Partnership working with a dedicated Education Effectiveness Partner (EEP): 94.6% 'Very likely' (100.0% Very/Fairly likely)
- Fully funded centralised CPD opportunities (recent examples include: Coaching Conference, Oracy Project, Pupil Premium Network, SEND Review Training, Writing Training: Sequencing writing for success & Greater Depth Writing, Subscription to external resources. Preparing for Ofsted and SEF/ SDP Best Practice, Inspection Skills training as well as accessing other external funded CPD opportunities, e.g. Curriculum training): 89.2% 'Very likely' (97.3% Very/Fairly likely)
- The rolling programme of independent checks and audits to provide external validation, confirmation and feedback (including health-checks and evaluation, safeguarding audit, Pupil

Premium review, SEND review, External Review of Governance and Website Audit): 86.5% 'Very likely' (100.0% Very/Fairly likely)

- A range of regular communications, including the headteacher bulletin: 78.4% 'Very likely' (91.9% Very/Fairly likely)
- Next steps support with recommendations from the check and audits, from support commissioned in partnership between school leaders and their EEP and brokered by the LA: 73.0% 'Very likely' (100.0% Very/Fairly likely)
- Support for the development of local collaborative families of schools: 72.2% 'Very likely' (94.4% Very/Fairly likely)
- Regular meetings, seminars and webinars provided by the LA and associated partners: 64.9% 'Very likely' (94.6% Very/Fairly likely)
- Support in advance of, during and after OFSTED inspection.: 63.9% 'Very likely' (83.3% Very/Fairly likely)

### **Survey sentiment summary (Free-text responses)**

Most comments strongly endorse the core and additional improvement offer, particularly the quality and responsiveness of EEP support, CPD opportunities, and assurance/audit functions. Positive remarks highlight the comprehensive nature and practical benefits of the service. Critical feedback focuses on affordability concerns (budget pressures, cost of supply cover) and operational barriers (time and cover for staff to attend training), which reflect practical constraints rather than opposition to the principle of de-delegation.

Representative anonymised comments:

- It is a comprehensive offer. The support of SIL to deliver elements has been very successful.
- I have found the support and signposting ... invaluable.
- I appreciate the fact the contribution amount has been frozen and value the service provided.
- As finances become more constrained it is more difficult to send staff out for training due to the cost of supply.
- There can be a lot of focus on Headteacher attendance ... time and cover are issues.

## **7. Governance and Designated Schools Grant (DSG) treatment**

### **Role of Schools Forum in De-Delegated Funding Decisions**

Schools Forum plays a statutory role in determining whether local authorities may de-delegate funding from maintained school budget shares for specific purposes, including school improvement. Maintained school representatives on the Forum hold the voting rights for these decisions; academy representatives cannot vote on de-delegation for maintained schools. The Forum must consider the local authority's proposal, review consultation outcomes, and ensure transparency and compliance with the *School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations* and the *Schools Operational Guide*. While the local authority administers the funds, the

Forum's approval is essential to authorise the initial de-delegation and to agree any subsequent changes in use, such as carrying forward unspent balances or applying them to the DSG deficit.

## **8. Treatment of Unspent De-Delegated Funds**

Under the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2025, local authorities have discretion over how to manage unspent central deductions, including funds de-delegated for school improvement. Regulation 8(9) states that where expenditure falls within the schools budget, the authority may:

- “(a) deduct all of that expenditure from its schools budget;
- (b) deduct such part of that expenditure as it may determine and carry forward the remaining part to the next funding period; or
- (c) carry forward all of that expenditure to the next funding period.”

(School and Early Years Finance Regulations 2025, Regulation 8(9))

This means that any surplus from de-delegated school improvement funding:

- Must remain within the Schools Block of the DSG and cannot be reallocated to other blocks without Schools Forum approval (and, if above 0.5%, Secretary of State disapplication).
- Can legally be carried forward into the next financial year for the same purpose (school improvement) or applied to offset a DSG deficit, as both options fall within the scope of Regulation 8(9).
- Requires transparency: The local authority should report any underspend and its proposed treatment to Schools Forum as part of the DSG outturn process.

Part 8 of Schedule 2 specifically covers “deficit from previous funding period”, which confirms that such amounts (including potential overspends) can be carried forward.

Although it does not explicitly mention “de-delegation”, the principle extends to central deductions: if not used, those funds can be carried forward into the next year's budget.

## **9. Options for Treatment of Unspent De-Delegated Funds**

### **Option 1: Carry Forward for School Improvement**

- Retain the surplus within the Schools Block and earmark it for school improvement activities in the next financial year.
- Pros: Aligns with original purpose; supports continuity without increasing future contributions.

- Cons: Does not reduce the DSG deficit.

### **Option 2: Apply to DSG Deficit**

- Use the surplus to offset the cumulative DSG deficit, permitted under Regulation 8(9)(b)/(c).
- Pros: Helps reduce the DSG deficit.
- Cons: Redirects funds from their intended purpose; may limit improvement activity unless future rates are increased.

## **10. Treatment of Overspend or Deficit in De-Delegated Funds**

**Where expenditure exceeds the amount de-delegated (resulting in a deficit), the shortfall must be managed within the Schools Block of the DSG in accordance with the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2025. The local authority may:**

- Offset the deficit against any future surplus within the same de-delegated service;
- Carry forward the deficit to the next funding period as part of the DSG outturn; or
- Apply to the Secretary of State for a disapplication if recovery requires adjustments beyond permitted thresholds.

The local authority will report any overspend and proposed treatment to Schools Forum to ensure transparency and compliance.

### **Recommendation for Managing a Deficit in De-Delegated Funds**

Maintained school representatives are recommended to approve that any deficit arising within de-delegated school improvement funds be carried forward to the next funding period as part of the DSG outturn process. This approach ensures compliance with the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2025 and maintains transparency by reporting the treatment of any overspend to Schools Forum.

## **10. Risk of non-approval**

- Loss of coordinated improvement capacity and inequity in access to support among maintained schools.
- Increased cost and administrative burden for individual schools procuring support ad hoc.

## Appendix A: Anonymised free-text comments grouped by theme

### Affordability concerns / tight budgets

- As finances are becoming more constrained it is more difficult to send staff out to training due to the cost of supply
- I'd like it to be less to have lesser impact on my budget!
- I would support this - however it is a cost of nearly £8,000 and we are running at a deficit of £500k
- I think schools need this support. The cost is hard to justify when schools are in deficit and in conflict with the SEND investment fund who are suggesting £20 per pupil.
- I understand that smaller schools have smaller budgets but as a larger school, it is a substantial cost and whilst we have a larger budget we also have a larger staffing cost. This year, it has been value for money but in a year when we aren't accessing the health check, financial audit, safeguarding training CPD etc it would be less cost effective.
- It is both appropriate and necessary for these functions to be resourced through the delegation of funds from the maintained school budget share. This approach ensures that vital support, oversight, and intervention services can continue without interruption.
- It takes into account that we are a small school as it is a price per pupil
- The cost to school is proportionate with it being a per pupil cost. As a school with a small roll, I feel this way of funding doesn't adversely impact the school budget. A wide range of services are then available to support the school.
- Sometimes, although the offer says fully funded, there is a cost to schools as supply cover needs to be arranged and this can impact on our ability to be involved with all projects.

### Operational barriers (cover/time)

- Funding given for cover to support staff to attend training
- There can be a lot of focus on Headteacher attendance with a lot of the meetings/ CPD - would 1/2 days with a 1/2 day to follow up (if person attending would like to use the time) on the ideas/ thoughts/ development points from the morning, be possible?
- Sometimes training offered is not always relevant to my school and no support is given for cover to support staff to attend
- Sometimes training offered is not always relevant to my school and no support is given for cover to support staff to attend

### Quality of support / EEP / responsiveness

- It is a comprehensive offer. The support of [redacted] Leicester (SIL) to deliver elements, such as triad work, has been very successful.
- I appreciate that this would be very difficult but to have a SENA representative for each school (that works a bit like an EEP but linked purely to SENA) so that there is an easier way

to contact and keep in touch with cases would really help. Consistency of messages and someone to ask for updates that builds a relationship with a school and knows us would really benefit. They could also support with moving SEND provision/resource bases forward.

- Support for those schools who are developing new ERBs in mainstream as this is to become the norm.
- The offer this year has been comprehensive and met the needs of our school and all the other local maintained schools we work with. Can't think of anything, but thank you and keep up the great work! So nice to see maintained school collaborating and accessing central training and development offers again. EEP team are fab - so supportive and really listen to what schools want/need. Helping to bridge communication with other areas of the [redacted] (finance, corporate, school food etc) is really helpful too and seems to have led to many developments over the last year or so and helping schools to feel they are better heard.
- Business planning support: a number of schools will be asked to write plans and present to Ed finance. Schools will probably need help with this.
- In order to maintain the training and support.
- This level of contribution provides a reasonable and sustainable way to ensure that essential improvement, monitoring, and support services remain in place.
- I find the offer supportive.
- I agree and understand that the final decision regarding the de-delegation of funding to support these functions rests with the Secretary of State for Education.
- I have found the support and signposting of services from [redacted] (EEP) invaluable. As a newer Headteacher I have had any support I have asked for to enable me to get the school into the best possible position for OFSTED. We have also had a number of complex situations for which I have needed expertise of HR, Legal, admissions and property - all of which have enabled me to work towards solutions. I really enjoyed learning from consultants (commissioned by LA) and sharing how we have moved forward as a result. As a school we attend as many of the training opportunities offered as possible. The current Oracy project is going to have a significant positive impact on our school.
- The range of support provided, combined with its focus on improving outcomes and strengthening school effectiveness, ensures that the resources invested are used in a targeted and impactful way.
- As a school in the ofsted window we have been able to access high quality support and cpd opportunities

### **CPD and networks**

- facilitation of networking groups
- Training on the use of AI in school particularly for planning and marking. Access to the Key, particularly the [redacted].

- Not finding the training on the leicester website useful

**Value for money / positive impact**

- I appreciate the fact the contribution amount has been frozen and value the service provided by this service
- Value for money and fair with it being linked to the school roll.
- We have benefited from the extensive offer from the LA over the last year and are looking forward to similar provision in this coming year

## Appendix B: Summary Tables

### Q8: Do you support the proposal of a £18 per pupil de-delegation?

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	31	83.8%
Don't know	5	13.5%
No	1	2.7%

### Q9: Do you understand that the final decision around the de-delegation rests with the Secretary of State?

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	36	97.3%
Don't know	1	2.7%

### Partnership working with a dedicated Education Effectiveness Partner (EEP) (Total responses: 37)

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	35	94.6%
Fairly likely	2	5.4%
Not very likely	0	0.0%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

### Support for the development of local collaborative families of schools (Total responses: 36)

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	26	72.2%
Fairly likely	8	22.2%
Not very likely	2	5.6%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

### Participation through a Collaborative Committee for maintained and academy members schools (Total responses: 37)

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	20	54.1%
Fairly likely	13	35.1%

Not very likely	4	10.8%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

**The rolling programme of independent checks and audits to provide external validation, confirmation and feedback (including health-checks and evaluation, safeguarding audit, Pupil Premium review, SEND review, External Review of Governance and Website Audit) (Total responses: 37)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	32	86.5%
Fairly likely	5	13.5%
Not very likely	0	0.0%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

**Next steps support with recommendations from the check and audits, from support commissioned in partnership between school leaders and their EEP and brokered by the LA (Total responses: 37)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	27	73.0%
Fairly likely	10	27.0%
Not very likely	0	0.0%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

**Development and support of Governing Boards, in partnership with the Governor Support and Development service (Total responses: 37)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	21	56.8%
Fairly likely	12	32.4%
Not very likely	4	10.8%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

**Support in advance of, during and after OFSTED inspection. (Total responses: 36)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	23	63.9%
Fairly likely	7	19.4%

Not very likely	6	16.7%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

**Commissioned specialised audits for HR and Finance (Total responses: 36)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	20	55.6%
Fairly likely	10	27.8%
Not very likely	5	13.9%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	1	2.8%

**Fully funded centralised CPD opportunities (recent examples include: Coaching Conference, Oracy Project, Pupil Premium Network, SEND Review Training, Writing Training: Sequencing writing for success & Greater Depth Writing, Subscription to external resources. Preparing for Ofsted and SEF/ SDP Best Practice, Inspection Skills training as well as accessing other external funded CPD opportunities, e.g. Curriculum training) (Total responses: 37)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	33	89.2%
Fairly likely	3	8.1%
Not very likely	1	2.7%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

**Commissioned School Improvement Partner (SIP) support, mentoring and/ or targeted peer support (Total responses: 36)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	15	41.7%
Fairly likely	14	38.9%
Not very likely	6	16.7%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	1	2.8%

**Funding support with evidenced-based research projects in schools (Total responses: 36)**

Option	Count	Percent
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Very likely	16	44.4%
Fairly likely	9	25.0%
Not very likely	9	25.0%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	2	5.6%

**A range of regular communications, including the headteacher bulletin (Total responses: 37)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	29	78.4%
Fairly likely	5	13.5%
Not very likely	3	8.1%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

**Full day local authority induction for new headteachers and mentoring, plus an onsite safeguarding visit for all new to headship headteachers from LCC Safeguarding and Compliance (Total responses: 36)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	7	19.4%
Fairly likely	3	8.3%
Not very likely	12	33.3%
Not at all likely	12	33.3%
Don't know	2	5.6%

**Regular meetings, seminars and webinars provided by the LA and associated partners (Total responses: 37)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	24	64.9%
Fairly likely	11	29.7%
Not very likely	2	5.4%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	0	0.0%

**Access to LCC online training tools as a resource for managers and staff development – where appropriate (for 2026-27 ) (Total responses: 37)**

Option	Count	Percent
Very likely	22	59.5%

Fairly likely	11	29.7%
Not very likely	1	2.7%
Not at all likely	0	0.0%
Don't know	3	8.1%

**References**

- [Schools Operational Guide 2025–26](#) (DfE): Section 6 – Reviewing and consulting on the pre-16 formula; Section 4.3 – DSG transfers; Section 37 – School improvement.
- [School and Early Years Finance \(England\) Regulations 2025](#) (SI 2025/42): Regulation 8(9); Schedule 2 (Part 8 – deficit from previous funding period).
- [Support and intervention in schools](#) Maintained schools eligible for intervention

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