Joint Report:
Director of Finance
Director of Education, Early Years and Skills

Item 3 – Dedicated Schools Grant 2025/26

Schools Forum – 15th January 2025

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report provides an update on the following:

- The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding allocations published by the Department for Education on 18 December 2024 (Section 2)
- The deployment of the dedicated schools grant and the impact on the DSG Management Plan (Section 3)
- Confirmation of activities funded from within the Central School Services Block and Retained Duties Funding (Section 4)
- De Delegated Funding for 2025/26 (Section 5)
- Growth Funding 2025/26 (Section 6)

2 Funding Allocations 2025/26

2.1 On 18th December 2024 the Department for Education, via the Education and Skills Funding Agency published funding allocations for 2025/26 through the schools, high needs, early years and central school services national funding formulae (NFF). These are presented in the table below together with the final allocations for 2024/25 for comparative purposes.

Table 1 – DSG Allocations for 2025/26 compared to 2024/25

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	Difference £000
Schools Block	253,966	272,674	18,708
Schools Block growth	1,346	1,224	-122
High Needs Block	61,749	66,677	4,928
Early Years Block	31,133	39,841	8,708
Central Schools Block (on-going)	1,673	1,880	207
Central Schools Block (historic)	679	543	-136
Sub Total	**350,546**	**382,840**	**32,294**

2.2 Table 1 above shows that the DSG funding across all four blocks has increased by £32.294m an increase of 9.2% compared to the previous year. The Settlement advised of the following in relation to the 4 Blocks;

Schools Block

2.3 A confirmed notional Schools Block, including Growth of **£273.898m**.

The amount allocated is based on the National Funding Formula (NFF) which calculates "notional" budgets for each school in Oldham and uses the total of these budgets to calculate the Local Authority (LA) allocation. The School's Block is made up of the following funding for 2024/25:

- A primary unit of funding (PUF) of £5,769.78 and:
- A secondary unit of funding (SUF) of £7,485.29

2.4 The units of funding are based on 2024/25 (October 2024) pupil numbers and characteristics and make up the vast majority of the Schools block, as illustrated in Table 2 below. This core school funding covers funding for all pupil and school led factors in the funding formula. The PUF and SUF are multiplied by the pupil numbers in reception to year 11 plus pupils aged 4 to 10 not assigned to a year group for primary and pupils in year groups 7 to 11, plus pupils aged 11 to 15, not assigned to a year group for secondary, plus funding for the following factors based on historical spend:

- Premises- includes funding for PFI, split sites and Business Rates. Since 2022/23 the charges for National Non-domestic rates (NNDR) can be paid directly to the billing authority by the ESFA, removing schools from the payment process, however Oldham has chosen not to implement this process at this stage, therefore, there are no changes to the existing NNDR arrangements for 2024.
- Growth- the differences between the primary and secondary numbers on roll between the October 2023 and October 2024 school censuses.

2.5 The number of pupils in resourced provision in maintained primary schools, secondary schools, and academies, is included in the pupil numbers as these pupils receive their core element funding through the School's Block, Table 2 shows the composition of the schools block including the growth allocation.

Table 2- Analysis of Schools Block

	Primary	Secondary	Total £000
Guaranteed unit of funding (£)	5,769.78	7,485.29	
October 2024 pupil numbers	23,657	17,652	41,309
Pupil Led Sub Total (£000)	**136,496**	**132,130**	**268,626**
Premises factors funding (£000)			4,927
Schools Block Sub Total			**273,553**
Additional growth in pupil numbers	143	362	
Unit Value including Area cost adjustment of £1.00569 (£)	1,570	2,350	
Growth Allocation (£000)	**226**	**998**	**1,224**
Less			
ESFA payments to billing authorities for NNDR			-879
TOTAL FUNDING (£000)			**273,898**

2.6 The financial year 2025/26 is the seventh year of the National Funding Formula (NFF) for schools. However, the national funding formula is currently only used to calculate the Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Block to be allocated to each Local Authority. Individual school budget shares and Academy General Annual Grant (GAG) allocations are calculated using the Local Authority funding formula. The Local Authority proposes any amendments to the funding and is responsible for making the final decisions on the formula.

2.7 The overall Schools' Block funding provided to Local Authorities is ring-fenced. It is proposed that the local funding formula model for 2025/26 will not change from the model applied in 2024/25. The only exception being an adjustment to the Area Cost Adjustment (ACA) to 1.001 in 2025/26 from 1.00250 in 2024/25 (the full NFF Area Cost Adjustment for Oldham within the 25/26 national formula is 1.00569). The funding model is based around funding being fair to all schools and targets funding to schools.

High Needs Block

2.8 The High Needs Block mainly funds pupils in specialist and alternative settings, such as special schools (both maintained and independent), resource units within mainstream schools, pupil referral units, and pupils with high needs in mainstream and early years settings and post 16 colleges. It also contributes to central support services such as Educational Psychology and Advisory Teachers for pupils with Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities.

2.9 Table 3 analyses the funding allocation for the High Needs Block for 2025/26 and compares it to 2024/25. The allocation is provisional as there are still adjustments to be confirmed including an adjustment for Halcyon Way Free School funding which are included within the Local Authority allocation and funding for imports/exports (Oldham children educated in schools outside the borough and children from outside the borough educated in Oldham schools). For planning purposes, the allocation for imports/exports has been estimated at the same allocation as for 2024/25.

Table 3 - High Needs Block Allocation

High Needs Block- Funding Allocations	2024/25 £k	2025/26 £k
High Needs Formula	51,334	55,943
Hospital Allocation	680	656
Special Schools Census	7,052	7,346
Additional funding for Special Free School	815	797
Import/Export Adjustment (not yet known 2023/24)	1,869	1,869
Alternative Provision- Pay/ Pension Funding		67
Gross High Needs Allocation	**61,749**	**66,677**

2.10 The provisional allocation for 2025/26 for High Needs is £66.6774m, an increase of £4.928m (8.0%) compared to the final 2024/25 allocation of £61.749m.

Early Years Block

2.11 The total allocation for 2025/26 for Early Years is £39.841m, an increase of £8.709m (28.0%) compared to the final 2024/54 allocation of £301.133m.

Table 4 – Early Years Block Allocation

Early Years Block – Funding Allocations	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	Difference £000
3 & 4 Year Olds Universal	13,007	13,321	314
3 & 4 Year Olds Extended	4,764	5,091	327
2 Year Olds - Disadvantaged entitlement	5,159	5,104	-55
2 Year Olds - Working Parents entitlement	4,161	6,219	2,058
Under 2s entitlement	3,401	9,241	5,840
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)			
3 & 4 Year olds	265	377	112
2 Year Olds	151	249	98
Under 2's	9	22	13
Disability Access Funding (DAF)			
3 & 4 Year olds	171	164	-7
2 Year Olds	34	38	4
Under 2's	10.761	15	4
Total	**31,133**	**39,841**	**8,709**

2.12 Aside from the uplifts to the existing funding allocations, the main changes to the funding for 2024/25 are as follows:

- The full year impact and an increase to 30 hours entitlement in 2025/26 of the original entitlement to 15 hours of free childcare for children aged between 9 months and 2 years old that was introduced in September 2024 (£5.840m).
- Increased funding for the 2 year old working parents, including an entitlement to 30 hours compared to 15 hours in 2024/25(£2.058m)

2.13 The Authority will be undertaking the usual consultation with the education sector/ providers regarding proposed rates to be pass-ported to providers in 2025/26 in the coming weeks. The results of this consultation, which closes on 28 February 2025, will help to inform Oldham's final funding rates to providers and this information will be brought to the Schools Forum meeting scheduled for 26 March 2025. Early Years budgets for schools will be issued by 31st March 2025.

Central School Services Block

2.14 The Central Services School Block (CSSB) introduced in 2018/19 brings together a number of services previously funded from other areas of the DSG and is used to fund the former Education Services Grant retained ongoing responsibilities such as admissions, Schools Forum and historical commitments including premature retirements for teachers in maintained schools and academies

2.15 The confirmed allocation for 2025/26 is £2.423m, an increase of £0.071m compared to 2.352m in the previous year as shown in the table below:

Table 5 – Central School Services

Central Schools Services Block	2024/25		2025/26	
	Data	£000	Data	£000
£ Per Pupil	40.45		45.51	
Pupil Numbers (Oct 23 and Oct 24)	41,356		41,309	
Funding for Ongoing Commitments		1,673		1,880
Funding for Historic Commitments		679		543
Total		**2,352**		**2,423**

2.16 For 2025/26 the Department for Education has again reduced the national funding for historic commitments by 20%; a reduction of £0.136m. The DfE will continue to unwind this funding in future years. The Authority's costs are not reducing and exceed the funding provided, an application has therefore been submitted for the 2025/26 funding to be protected at 2024/25 levels.

2.17 The funding for ongoing commitments has increased by £0.207m, In addition to a low value adjustment for increased pupil numbers the main contributing factor is the fact that the 25/26 allocation now includes funding for amounts previously distributed as stand-alone grants: Teachers Pension Grant (£0.050m) and Core Schools Budget Grant (£0.097m)

3 DSG Management Plan

3.1 Table 6 summarises the current DSG Management Plan, showing the outturn for 2023/24 (subject to audit) and the forecast closing position for 2024/25 and 2025/26. As previously reported the 2023/24 outturn is a total DSG surplus of £3.702m, it remains subject to audit and for this reason remains within the Management Plan. The current 2024/25 forecast is for an in year deficit of £4.275m resulting in a projected outturn deficit of £0.547m in the current financial year. The position is forecast to deteriorate further in 2025/26 with an in year deficit of £2.774m leading to an overall deficit balance of £3.3473m at 31 March 2026.

Table 6 – DSG Management Plan

DSG Summary 2023/24 to 2024/25	2023/24 Outturn £000	2024/25 Forecast £000	2025/26 Forecast £000
Schools Block (excludes central services)	240,592	255,312	273,898
Central Schools Services Block	2,461	2,352	2,423
High Needs Block	59,146	61,749	67,207
Early Years Block	15,748	17,771	18,412
Two Year Olds' Funding	3,653	12,721	20,564
Early Years Pupil Premium	226	425	648
Early Years Disability Access Fund	130	216	218
Total Grant	**321,956**	**350,546**	**383,370**
Budget Requirement			
Individual Schools Budgets	241,031	255,928	273,898
High Needs Funding for Schools (incl Post 16)	45,471	51,123	54,863
Early Year Funding Delegated to Schools	6,785	8,440	8,613
Total Delegated to Schools	**293,287**	**315,491**	**337,373**
Central High Needs Services	11,373	14,085	15,118
Central Early Years Services	1,047	915	1,275
Three and Four Year old PVI's	7,765	8,998	9,182
Under two & Two Year Old Funding	3,480	12,339	19,906
Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)	2,461	2,352	2,423
Total Retained Centrally	**26,126**	**38,689**	**47,904**
Early Years Pupil Premium	226	425	648
Early Years Disability Access Fund	130	216	218
Total Budget Requirement	**319,769**	**354,821**	**386,144**
In Year (Deficit)/Surplus	**2,187**	**-4,275**	**-2,774**
Balance brought Forward	899	3,702	-573
Provisional (Deficit)/Surplus	**3,086**	**-573**	**-3,347**
Anticipated Growth underspend committed for 24/25	616		
Balance Carried Forward	**3,702**	**-573**	**-3,347**
Reported at July 2024	**3,702**	**4,150**	**4,507**

3.2 Table 7 below summarises the movement and major variances between financial years within the current iteration of the Management Plan. As was flagged at the November meeting, clearly there has been a major increase in the level of actual and anticipated net expenditure within the High Needs Block in both 2024/25 and 2025/26. There has been an increase of £4.723m in 2024/25 with largest increases being in relation to; funding for special schools (£1.638m), the number and cost of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP's- £1.600m) and the cost of Out of Borough provision (£1.265m). These trends continue into 2025/26. As per the December announcement funding for High Needs will increase by £3.807m between 2024/25 and 2025/26 with a further £0.530m estimated after adjusting for imports and exports and 'corrections' to the notified funding. This will be more than offset by further significantly increased expenditure of £8.101m, the largest uplifts again being in relation funding for special schools (£2.625m), the number and cost of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP's- £2.400m) and the cost of Out of Borough

provision (£1.265m). It is assumed that the increase in funding for schools, early years and central services will be matched with corresponding expenditure and is therefore neutral within the Management Plan. The forecasts clearly rely on a series of assumptions in relation to both income and expenditure which will be kept under review and the Management Plan will be updated accordingly and at the next iteration will be extended out to 2026/27.

Table 7– DSG Management Plan Variances

DSG Management Plan- Variances	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Balance b/fd	3,702	4,150
Change in surplus / (deficit) from previous year	448	357
As reported in July 2024	**4,150**	**4,507**
Additional funding:		
Schools Block		18,586
Central School Services Block (CSSB)		71
Early Years Block		8,708
High Needs Block- Announced		3,807
High Needs Block- Adjustments		530
Additional adjustment to budget requirement :		
Movement in Opening Balance		-4,723
Schools Block- Distribution of increased Funding		-18,586
CSSB- Expenditure matches additional Funding		-71
Early Years- Distribution of increased Funding		-8,708
High Needs- Post 16	-200	-305
High Needs- EHCP's	-1,600	-2400
High Needs- Additional requirement Out Of Borough	-1,265	-1,265
High Needs- Special Schools	-1638	-2425
High Needs- Early Years	-20	
High Needs- Central High Needs		-506
High Needs- Additional Funding Kingsland		-20
High Needs- SEND Intervention and Prevention		-547
Movement compared to previous position	**-4,723**	**-7,854**
Revised Surplus	**-573**	**-3,347**

3.3 It is an important element of the financial management of the Authority that the DSG, wherever possible is not in a deficit position, notwithstanding which, clearly the financial position of the DSG has worsened with a deficit now being forecast for 2024/25 (£0.537m) and 2025/26 (£3.347m). Implementation of the programme of work funded under the Delivering Better Value in SEND combined with the complimentary work undertaken in the North West Change Partnership Programme (NWCPP) and the Early Language Support for Every Child initiative (ELSEC) will be pivotal in the consolidation and future sustainability of the of the DSG in Oldham and work will continue during the remainder of 2024/25, throughout 2025/26 and beyond to ensure that the current position is mitigated as far as is possible going forward.

4 Central School Services Block

4.1 Sections 2.14 to 2.16 provided details of the Central School Services funding allocation. Schools Forum is required each year to confirm the amounts on each line for activities funded within this block, as shown in Table 8 below:

Table 8- CSSB Proposed 2025/26 Allocation

	2024/24 £000	2025/26 £000	Narrative
Schools Forum	13	13	Hosting, servicing and administration of the Schools Forum
Access Admissions	702	702	Cost of admissions and appeals
Premature retirements	679	543	Retirement costs. These costs will reduce over time. It covers approximately 380 people
Teachers' Pension Grant		50	Previously stand-alone grant
Core Schools Budget Grant		97	Previously stand-alone grant
Sub Total	**1,394**	**1,405**	
National Copyright School Leases	272	298	Relates to the purchase by the DfE of a single national licence managed by DfE for all state funded schools in England
Total	**1,666**	**1,703**	

4.2 In addition, the retained duties rate (£15 per pupil in 2017/18) was paid to Local Authorities to fund the duties that they delivered for all pupils. The retained duties element of the Education Services Grant (ESG) was transferred to the CSSB and requires Schools Forum to confirm the contribution that the Local Authority holds for all schools

4.3 The Authority is therefore requesting Schools Forum to confirm the contribution of £0.720m (£0.668m in 2024/25) from the CSSB for duties previously covered by ESG for the Statutory and Regulatory duties.

5 De-delegated Funding

5.1 The funding reforms introduced from April 2013 outlined the requirement for, in the first instance, as much as possible of Central Services and the corresponding funding to be delegated to schools and academies, so that local decision making is made by schools and academies directly. This change required Local Authorities to delegate funding relating to a number of centrally retained budgets to schools via the Local Funding Formula.

5.2 The table below provides details of the services for Oldham which it is proposed will be de delegated in 2025/26.

Table 9- De-delegated Funding

De-delegation-2025/26	Primary per pupil amount £	Total Budget for Primary £000	Secondary per pupil amount £	Total Budget for Secondary £000
School improvement (including previous Monitoring & Brokering Grant) and Under Performing Schools	29.53	376		
Contingencies	8.55	109		
Insurance	19.44	247	18.37	81
Teacher Union Duties	4.1	52	3.87	17
TOTAL		**784**		**98**

5.3 Locally maintained schools have the option of de-delegating the funding back to the LA to provide better value for money or to pool risk. The Schools Forum representatives of each sector are the decision-making body in such matters, following discussion with their wider stakeholder colleagues. The decision-making process is subject to an annual review and the appropriate Primary and Secondary Forum representatives from maintained schools are requested to confirm the decision for each of the de-delegated services for 2024/25.

5.4 These budgets are reviewed regularly to ensure the amounts and the purpose is still relevant as more schools move to academy, trust and foundation school status. The proposed amounts to be de-delegated per pupil for 2025/26 for these services are the same as in the previous year. De-delegation will mean funding for these services is removed from the formula before school budgets are issued.

5.5 Any unspent de-delegated funding remaining at the year-end can be carried forward to the following funding period, but its use would be subject to the regulations operating in the year.

5.6 Where contingencies and Teacher Union duties have been unspent in previous years the balance has been carried forward as an earmarked reserve to fund future years commitments.

6 Growth Funding

6.1 The growth fund is to support pupil growth relating to LA planned basic need for schools where it has already been agreed with the LA that there will be an increase in the planned admission numbers (PAN) by means of the provision of a school extension. Additional funding will be made available in relation to the number of additional pupils taken.

6.2 Reference may be made to the number of classes required and may include consideration of the number of pupils leaving the school in that year.

6.3 Any allocation will be based on the basic per pupil element funding and would be provided only for a maximum of the first academic year that an additional class is created or until the pupils are included on the October census (as additional funding will then flow through to the school based on the October pupil count).

6.4 The estimated growth underspend for 2024/25 which will be used against the schools block in 2025/26 is currently being calculated, as in previous years, the request is therefore for an agreement in principle to carry forward the growth underspend in the current financial year to be fully committed against the schools block in 2025/26. The actual outturn growth amount will be confirmed at the March Meeting

7 Summary

7.1 The proposed DSG budget for 2025/264 for each funding block is summarised in the table below:

Block	Allocation 2024/25 £000's		Retained £000's	Delegated £000's	Retained / Delegated £000's	Total Deployed £000's		Surplus / (Deficit) £000's
Schools	273,898			273,898		273,898		**0**
High Needs	67,207		15,118	54,863		69,981		**-2,774**
Early Years	39,841		29,954	8,613	1275	39,841		**0**
Central Schools Block	2,423		2,423			2,423		**0**
Total Funding	**383,370**		**47,495**	**337,373**	**1,275**	**386,144**		**-2,774**

8 Actions/ Recommendations

8.1 For 2025/26:

a) Schools Forum is requested to:

1) Note the settlement of Dedicated Schools grant for 2025/26

2) Note the current 2024/25 projected DSG deficit of £0.573m (Section 3 - Table 6)

3) Approve the deployment of Dedicated Schools Grant for 2024/25 to 2025/26 (Section 3 – table 6)

4) Approve the allocation for each service area, totalling £1.703m of funding from the Central Schools Services Block above (section 4).

5) Approve retention of £0.720m retained duties funding in the Central Schools Block (section 4)

6) Approve in principle to carry forward the growth underspend in the current financial year to be fully committed against the schools block in 2025/26

b) Representatives from each sector for maintained schools are requested to approve the de-delegation of funding for School Improvement and under performing schools, Teacher Union Duties, contingencies and Insurance for 2025/26 for locally maintained schools as follows:

1. Maintained Primary Schools- £0.784m
2. Maintained secondary Schools- £0.098m