

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Schools Forum

Subject: School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMBG)

Report of: Directorate Finance Lead – Schools and Education

Summary

In November 2021 Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) launched a consultation on the how local authorities school improvement functions are funded. ESFA, in January 2022 published the outcome of the consultation: Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded, which confirmed the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering grant (SIMBG) will reduce by 50% from financial year 2022/23 and by removed entirely from 2023/24. Schools and Early Years Finance Regulations 2022 has been updated to allow local authorities to deduct funding from maintained school budget shares with the approval of their Schools Forum maintained school representatives. As reported to School Forum January 2022, the Council do not seek further de-delegation 2022/23 following reduction of the SIMBG 2022/23.

Recommendations

Schools Forum Members are asked to note:

- The outcome of the ESFA consultation: Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded and the impact on the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering grant (SIMBG)
- Options for the delivery models for school improvement services 2023/24 are to be evaluated and presented later this year.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

Supporting Reports:

15 November 2021	Schools Forum – Agenda Item 4 De-delegation 2022/23
17 January 2022	Schools Forum – Agenda Item 4 De-delegation 2022/23 - Final

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Nationally the government allocates c.£50m SIMBG annually to local authorities to provide school improvement for maintained schools. It is allocated based on the number of schools which continue to be maintained by the Local Authorities (LA). ESFA consultation November 2021 sought views on a proposal to remove the LA level School SIMBG and instead to allow local authorities, with the approval of their maintained schools representatives to replace the funding for this function by deducting funding from maintained schools' budget shares so that LAs are not negatively impacted by the change.
- 1.2 Manchester submitted a response to the consultation highlighting that the funding underpins Quality Assurance protocol and processes; this has been a key driver in improving schools' performance which is reflected in improved Ofsted judgements as well as providing the Council with an overview of schools' strengths and challenges which has informed Council priorities. The outcome of this consultation was published on 11 January 2022, confirmed that the SIMBG would reduce by 50% in financial year 2022/23 and be removed entirely from 2023/24.
- 1.3 Schools Forum November 2021 were made aware of consultation and the potential request to de-delegate this function in 2022/23. The Council confirmed to School Forum January 2022, that they did not seek additional de-delegation 2022/23 for school improvement services

2. School Improvement Services

- 2.1 The SIMBG alongside Council budget, allows the Education to monitor performance of Manchester schools, identify common priorities and challenges across schools, broker school improvement provision, and intervene as appropriate. It is currently used to provide interventions for schools causing concern including leadership support when required; it is also currently used to support thematic interventions such as reading, phonics, maths and to commission Quality Assurance visits which is a universal offer available to all schools in the city. This has been highly effective in ensuring that the Council has a good overview of schools in the City and can support proportionately and appropriately when required. The approach in Manchester and the knowledge about our schools is regularly recognised by Ofsted when they inspect schools.
- 2.2 The Council's Senior School Quality Assistance Officers (SSQA) posts are funded jointly from Council budget and element within the Education Services General (ESG) Duties de-delegation from maintained schools as approved by School Forum. The SIMBG supports the Council to commission a number of Quality Assurance Professionals (QAP), many of whom are current or previous Ofsted inspectors, who are available to visit every Manchester school at least once a year, to provide an external view of current school performance and priorities. This information provides the Council with assurance about the schools in Manchester, identifies where there may be schools at risk of being inadequate or where there are specific concerns about performance. These visits also enable the Council to identify thematic priorities across the school system. Maintained schools with identified risks or with an

inadequate or requires improvement judgement are offered more visits from a Quality Assurance officer.

3. **School Improvement Services and funding 2022/23 onwards**

- 3.1 The SIMBG for the financial year 2021/22 was £398k, compared with the estimated 2022/23 estimate of £174k. Table one below shows the SIMBG from financial year 2020/21 to 2023/24. Due COVID and school closures which impacted on delivering school improvement services 2020/21, the unspent SIMBG funding was carried forward to 2021/22. This has facilitated the Council to carry forward £316k from 2021/22 into 2022/23. This has assisted with the funding needed for 2022/23 in continuing to provide school improvement services and clarifies that the request for de-delegation for 2022/23 was not needed.

Table One: SIMBG 2020/21 to 2023/24

Manchester's SIMBG <u>£'000</u>			
2020/21	2021/22	*2022/23 estimated	2022/24
£432	£398	£174	£0

- 3.2 For 2023/24 onwards the Council will need to evaluate and consult on various options for service delivery models and funding for school improvement services normally supported by SIMBG. The change in how this service is to be funded may impact on the level of school quality assurance provided across the city from 2023/24. A report on the funding and proposed options for 2023/24 will be reported to School Forum later this year, prior to 2023/24 de-delegation report.

4. **Recommendations**

Schools Forum Members are asked to note:

- The outcome of the ESFA consultation: Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded and the impact on the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering grant (SIMBG)
- Options for the delivery models for school improvement services 2023/24 are to be evaluated and presented later this year.