



Title of report: De-Delegations and Education Management Function Proposal 2027/28

Meeting: Herefordshire Schools Forum

Meeting date: Friday 23 October 2026

Report by: Head of Strategic Finance (Deputy S151)

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To request Schools Forum agree the De-Delegated Services and the Education Management Function for 2027/28.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- **Consider the proposals for 2027/28 mainstream maintained schools De-Delegated Services and the Education Management Function set out in this report; and**
- **Schools Forum to advise the Corporate Director, Children & Young People of Schools Forum's support or otherwise.**

Key considerations

1. During budget setting each year, Schools Forum will be asked to approve the de-delegation of funding for centrally provided support based on a per pupil rate, considered to be a fair way of accounting for the size of the school and its budget.
2. The final de-delegation budget will be determined once the October 2026 pupil numbers are confirmed in the Authority Pro Forma Tool (APT), which is used to calculate the schools' budgets. The details of which will be presented to Schools Forum in January 2027.
3. For the purpose of this report, inflation has been applied to services as per 2026/27 budget setting (2.47%). This will be updated once the final Schools Block has been confirmed by DfE in December 2026 and the final inflation will be confirmed at the Schools Forum meeting in January 2027.
4. Schools block de-delegation does not apply to academies, special schools or pupil referral units (PRUs).
5. The Forum will be required to vote on each service separately and by sector. Academy school representatives cannot vote on de-delegated services.

Recommendations for De-Delegations 2027/28

6. The proposed De-delegations for 2027/28 are as follows:

A. Access Budgeting Software

Access Education Budgets is a cloud-based school budgeting and financial planning system designed for schools, academies, and multi-academy trusts. It supports budget creation, forecasting (up to five years), scenario planning, salary modelling, and financial reporting.

Proposal to **remove** from the de-delegations for 2027/28 and will be charged via the core Hoople SLA packages.

B. Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility checking

Eligibility checks to confirm entitlement to Free School Meals (FSM). Data is processed on the relevant systems, notifications issued to schools along with real time access system for schools to check eligibility dates. FSM legislation changed on the 1 September 2026 so increased work is required to establish pupils who meet the new criteria and annual checks on eligibility for all pupils.

With the significant FSM changes that came into effect this September, it is proposed that this de-delegation **remains unchanged for 2027/28** (other than an inflationary rise).

Proposed de-delegated funding for 2027/28:

Primary per pupil rate	£	1.43
Secondary per pupil rate	£	1.09
Total De-delegated funding 2027/28	£	13,884.32

C. English Additional Language (EAL) Service

The EAL Service provides advice and support to Herefordshire schools for underperforming ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners. The service offer to LA maintained schools provides a range of support including assessments, interventions for nursery children, parent engagement support, exam preparation and delivery, and various training, observations and advice for staff. The EAL Service has experienced increasing demand from schools for specialist assessment, intervention and support for newly arrived bilingual learners and their families.

For 2027/28 de-delegations, the core EAL team has been reviewed and an additional EAL Teaching Assistant and Team Leader have been incorporated into the service. The addition of these new posts will increase capacity for direct pupil support, enable earlier intervention, strengthen strategic oversight and ensure schools continue to receive timely, high-quality support to improve outcomes for EAL learners.

Therefore, to support the continued increase in demand for EAL provision, it is proposed that the EAL Service de-delegation for 2027/28 is **approved at the adjusted rate**, incorporating the revised staffing structure required to meet service needs.

Proposed de-delegated funding for 2027/28:

Primary and Secondary per pupil rate	£	2.32
Ever6 FSM per pupil rate	£	14.08
EAL per pupil rate	£	73.10
Total De-delegated funding 2027/28	£	104,073.73

D. Trade Union Facilities Service

The local authority provides facilities time to recognised trade unions to comply with the need for employers to have appropriate arrangements for trade union recognition, consultation and negotiation. Primary schools have previously voted to de-delegate this funding, whereas Secondary schools have chosen to buy back the service via a service level agreement (SLA).

It is proposed that this de-delegation **remains unchanged for 2027/28** (other than an inflationary rise).

Proposed de-delegated funding for 2027/28:

Primary per pupil rate	£	2.90
Total De-delegated funding 2027/28	£	20,745.89

E. School Improvement Service

The School Improvement Service provides strategic leadership, challenge, and support to schools to secure and sustain high-quality education outcomes for all pupils. The service works in partnership with maintained schools, and other stakeholders to promote continuous improvement, raise standards, and ensure statutory duties in relation to education quality and inclusion are met.

For 2027/28 de-delegations, the School Improvement Service has been reviewed, and an additional 1FTE School Improvement advisor has been incorporated into the service.

The revised state-funded School Inspection Toolkit places a significant emphasis on schools demonstrating strong leadership, effective governance, robust safeguarding, inclusion, curriculum quality, achievement, attendance and behaviour, and continuous improvement. The toolkit explicitly states that it can be used by school leaders to support self-evaluation and continuous improvement, with inspections focused on the effectiveness and impact of leaders' systems and processes.

In this context, additional school improvement capacity funded through de-delegation represents a prudent and preventative investment that supports schools before concerns escalate and reduces the need for more intensive intervention later. The local authority retains a statutory responsibility to promote high standards of education and educational opportunity for all children and young people. Providing school improvement support enables the authority to fulfil this duty while helping schools meet the increasingly demanding expectations set out within the inspection framework. Additional de-delegated funding would enable the local authority to:

- Provide early intervention and challenge where performance indicators suggest emerging weaknesses in attendance, behaviour, achievement, safeguarding or leadership.
- Support schools to undertake rigorous self-evaluation against the inspection toolkit and identify priorities for improvement.
- Deliver targeted support to schools requiring improvement in leadership and governance, which Ofsted identifies as a key determinant of effectiveness.
- Strengthen safeguarding culture, inclusion and provision for vulnerable learners, all of which are central themes within the inspection framework.
- Provide enhanced support to maintained schools experiencing staffing instability, financial pressures or recruitment challenges that may otherwise impact educational quality.
- Undertake monitoring and quality assurance activity to ensure that concerns are identified and addressed promptly before they affect outcomes for pupils.
- The inspection toolkit highlights that inspectors consider how effectively leaders secure continuous improvement and ensure pupils achieve, belong and thrive. Schools increasingly require specialist support to meet these expectations, particularly given rising levels of SEND, increasing complexity of pupil need, attendance challenges and workforce pressures. Additional school improvement capacity allows the local authority to provide both challenge and support, helping schools maintain strong performance and supporting those where performance is declining.
- Furthermore, de-delegated school improvement funding provides collective value for money. Maintaining a centrally resourced team allows expertise to be deployed rapidly across a number of schools, supports consistency of standards across the local area, shares effective practice and reduces the cost of individual schools procuring external improvement services independently. This collaborative approach helps ensure that all

maintained schools have access to high-quality improvement support regardless of size or capacity.

It is proposed that the School Improvement Service de-delegation for 2027/28 is **approved at the adjusted rate**, which reflects the revised staffing structure required to deliver the service effectively.

Proposed de-delegated funding for 2027/28:

Primary and Secondary per pupil rate	£ 12.34
Total De-delegated funding 2027/28	£ 129,421.92

F. Contingencies

The contingency de-delegated budget is a relatively small allocation that was originally intended to support areas such as shortfalls arising from academy conversions, unexpected costs (including census errors and employment tribunal costs etc).

Due to the small allocation of this service, and the current inability to roll forward any de-delegation reserves, it is proposed to **remove** from the de-delegations for 2027/28.

G. Inclusion Outreach Team (previously Behaviour Support Service)

The Inclusion Outreach Service is a key part of the Local Inclusion Support Offer, designed in response to feedback from schools to provide quicker support and more practical help in classrooms.

The team includes advisory teachers and intervention specialists working across domains:

- social, emotional and mental health
- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning needs

The Inclusion Outreach offer is now available for all schools, and therefore it is proposed to **remove** from the de-delegations for 2027/28.

7. The below table provides a summary of the de-delegated services, comparing the amounts for 2026/27 to those proposed for 2027/28:

	Budget 2026/27 £	Proposed 2027/28 £	Variance £
Access budgeting software	23,056	-	(23,056)
Free school meals eligibility checking	13,550	13,884	334
EAL Service	54,761	104,074	49,313
Trade Unions facilities time	20,246	20,746	500
School Improvement Service	67,228	129,422	62,194
Contingencies	11,222	-	(11,222)

Behaviour Support Service	31,120	-	(31,120)
Total De-Delegations	221,183	268,126	46,943

8. **Education Management Function**

The general duties part of the Education Services Grant (ESG) (relating to maintained schools only) ceased from September 2017. Local authorities are now able to deduct funding from maintained schools' budgets much the same way as for existing de-delegated items in order to fund these services, with the consent of maintained school members of Schools Forum.

The Education Management Function funding from Herefordshire's maintained schools covers the following services (relating to maintained schools only):

- Statutory HR and Finance
- National Curriculum monitoring and assessment
- Internal Audit
- Property Services
- Governor Services

Proposed Education Management Function funding for 2027/28:

Primary and Secondary per pupil rate	£ 13.69
Total Education Management Function 2027/28	£ 143,580.64

9. The below table provides a summary of the Education Management Function (EMF), comparing 2026/27 to the proposed amount for 2027/28:

	Budget 2026/27 £	Proposed 2027/28 £	Variance £	Comments
Education Management Functions	140,120	143,581	3,461	Inflated by 2.47% (26/27 rate) will update in Jan 27

Community impact

10. Increasingly schools funding is directed by government, and the council can only allocate funding given by government. School governing bodies retain the responsibility to spend the school budget on meeting pupil needs. Schools, colleges and post-16 providers and potentially parents will need to be consulted on any changes to the high needs services.

Environmental impact

11. This is a consultation with Schools Forum on school funding and will have no direct environmental impacts. School governing bodies and trustees are responsible for deciding on expenditure and they will be encouraged to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

12. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows: A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to – (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. In relation to school finance, it is the responsibility of individual governing bodies to commit expenditure according to individual pupil need. Changes in high needs provision will require consultation with users, and further advice from legal services will be sought should this be necessary. However, the decisions of the school forum should have regard to this duty and the potential implications of any decisions made.

Resource implications

15. De-delegated services are funded from the Schools Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Legal implications

16. The Schools Forum is a statutory decision making and consultative body constituted in line with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and its associated regulations, including the Schools Forum (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, to enable members of the local school community to work in partnership with Herefordshire Council when making decisions about school funding and finances.
17. The funding of schools is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) through the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2026.

Risk management

18. Budget Working Group (BWG) reviews all reports and proposals in detail prior to making recommendations to the Schools Forum. This two-stage process helps to ensure greater scrutiny of budget proposals and mitigate against any risks that may be identified. Any identified risks will be monitored and managed by the Children and Young People directorate jointly with the Schools Forum.

Consultees

19. Budget Working Group (BWG) was consulted on 9 October 2026 and recommended the de-delegated services and education management function budgets for 2027/28 be approved as set out in this report, pending the DSG funding announcement and validated with the October 2026 School Census data. BWG will consider the budget proposals further once the DfE have announced the final DSG allocations in December 2026.

Appendices

Schools Forum Presentation Slides

Background papers

None.

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report

APT	Authority Pro-Forma Tool
BWG	Budget Working Group (of Schools Forum)
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English Additional Language
ESG	Education Services Grant
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HR	Human Resources
PRUs	Pupil Referral Units
SLA	Service Level Agreement