
VOLUNTARY AIDED/TRUST ADMISSIONS CONTINGENCY

Purpose of Report

1. To revisit arrangements previously agreed re the funding of schools' admissions functions.

Background

2. At the School Forum held on 23 April 2013 a number of proposals were put forward re the future of the Voluntary Aided/Trust school admissions contingency:
 - For a number of years School Forum has agreed a top slice of the DSG to provide a contingency of £20,000 for Voluntary Aided/Trust schools to call upon with regard to their admissions functions.
 - As Voluntary Aided/Trust schools are responsible for their own admissions they are charged by the Local Authority for admissions appeals, whereas maintained schools are not. The purpose of this contingency was to offset this charge and therefore ensure that Voluntary Aided/Trust schools were not disadvantaged financially and treated in the same way as all other schools.
 - Payment has been calculated for the qualifying schools by means of a lump sum amount and a pro-rata allocation of the remaining budget based on numbers of appeals. The total payment equals the £20,000 budget.
 - When School Forum approved the budget for 13/14 a £20,000 contingency was agreed as in previous years.
 - Since the contingency was approved for 2013/14, it has become apparent that the current contingency no longer covers costs. In 2013/14 the £20,000 contingency covered approximately two thirds of the total appeals charge from Democratic Services.
 - Academies are also responsible for their own admissions and therefore are now charged by the Local Authority for appeals. Under the system Academies could not access the contingency unless they are one of the ex-maintained voluntary/trust academies. This created an unfair situation where not all schools were treated the same, as some Academies would receive assistance from the contingency and some would not. As a result the contingency in its current form is no longer appropriate.

Proposal

3. To consider that £20,000 continues to be allocated for appeals through Schools Forum and given directly to Democratic Services as a baseline for the Appeals process and that all Academies then have an SLA for their individual Appeals. This will ensure that maintained and VA schools, that are not Academies, will still be funded through the Local Authority and so not disadvantaged.

Rationale

4. Such a move would guarantee a flat rate income to Democratic Services and dissuade Academies from accessing Appeal Services from outside the Borough.

Recommended

5. The Forum note the content of the report
6. That Forum agree to the proposal for the £20,000 baseline and individual SLA with Democratic Services and ask the Finance Manager to take up with Democratic Services on Forum's behalf

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