Dorset Schools' Forum

Date of Meeting	**6 November 2026**
Report Title	**De-delegated Decisions and Education Functions for the 2027-28 financial year** Items which may be removed from maintained schools' delegated budget shares with Schools Forum approval, including consideration of consultation feedback from schools
Executive Director	**Paul Dempsey, Executive Director, People – Children**
Director	**Jen Furnell, Corporate Director, Education and Learning**
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Presenting Officers	**Vanessa Eddey, Team Manager, Schools, Finance & Support**
Report Status	**Public**
Reason for Submission to Schools' Forum	**For APPROVAL** **Under Forum power/responsibility**: 1(a) de-delegation and central retention of funding from maintained primary and secondary school delegated budgets. **Under PART 7 of School and Early Years Finance (England) regulations Items that may be Removed from Maintained Schools' Budget Shares – Primary, Secondary and Special Schools, and Pupil Referral Units** 54. Expenditure incurred for the purposes of supporting the improvement of standards in maintained schools including expenditure in relation to the authority's functions under Part 4 of the 2006 Act (schools causing concern: England).
Recommendation(s)	That maintained members of the Schools' Forum vote on each de-delegation option to determine whether funding is de-delegated / retained for maintained schools in 2027-28, based on the best interests of the whole community of applicable schools.

	That maintained members of the Schools' Forum vote on the Education Functions central retention for the purposes of school improvement, based on the best interests of the whole community of applicable schools.
Reason for Recommendation(s)	To establish whether maintained schools wish the LA to manage funding centrally on their behalf in 2027-28 for: 1. Trade Union facilities 2. Schools' contingency for termination costs of schools in financial difficulty 3. Free School Meal eligibility checking service 4. Education Functions
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	**Schools' Forum members are reminded of their responsibility to make a declaration of interest in any agenda item in which they have an interest, to the Chair or the Clerk, preferably in advance of the meeting.**

1. Executive Summary

Background

The *School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations* provide for maintained members of the Schools' Forum to make decisions annually on de-delegation of funding for specific services as detailed in the de-delegation options consultation document for the 2027-28 financial year. Funding for de-delegated services must be allocated through the local funding formula but can be passed back, or de-delegated, for maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools with Schools' Forum approval.

Education Functions is a LA central (education expenditure) retention under Regulation 11 of the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2025 (Part 3 of Schedule 2). Education Functions can be retained by the LA to discharge its statutory responsibilities, e.g., school improvement.

Decisions are required for de-delegation in relation to the funding for:

1. Trade Union facilities
2. Schools' contingency for termination costs of schools in financial difficulty
3. Free School Meal eligibility checking service

A decision is required for retention of funding in relation to the funding for:

1. Education Functions

Guidance for members on voting is attached at Appendix A.

Summary of responses to the consultation

26 out of 44 (59%) of maintained schools responded to the consultation:

	Respondents	Total Schools	Response %
Primary phase	15	30	50%
Secondary phase	5	7	71%
Learning Centres	2	3	67%
Special Schools	4	4	100%
Total	**26**	**44**	**59%**

Anonymised responses to the consultation are attached at Appendix B.

De-delegated items 1 - 3

		of those that responded; % in favour Primary phase	Secondary phase
1. TU facilities			
Pay in £1.34 per pupil		**73%**	0%
Pay in £1.40 per pupil		13%	0%
No de-delegation		13%	**100%**
2. Termination of employment costs			
Pay in £1.64 per pupil to increase reserves		**67%**	
Pay in £2.47 per pupil to increase reserves		27%	
Pay in £3.29 per pupil to increase reserves		0%	
No de-delegation		7%	**100%**
Pay in £3.89 per pupil to increase reserves			0%
Pay in £5.83 per pupil to increase reserves			0%
3. Free school meal checking service	**£ 0.68**	**93%**	**80%**

- The primary phase voted in favour of de-delegation for Trade Union facilities at £1.34 per pupil whereas secondary phase voted against de-delegation. Data on activity levels was not available at the time of the consultation paper, however this shows an increase of cases supported for the academic year as follows:

Formal casework and extended support for members involving multiple interventions

Whilst this shows the number of schools, some schools may have had multiple formal TU support visits

Phase/type of school	Cases supported by local reps UNISON NEU NASUWT ASCL NAHT		
	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Primary maintained schools	10	12	9
Secondary/middle maintained	13	14	8
Academy/special school/learning centre	23	35	54
Total	**46**	**61**	**71**

- The majority of the primary phase voted to de-delegate funding and hold it centrally for termination of employment costs for schools in financial difficulty, with the most popular rate chosen at £1.64 per pupil. As in previous years, the majority of the secondary phase voted against this de-delegation.

- Both the primary and secondary phases voted in favour of de-delegation for the free school meal checking service at £0.68 per pupil.

Per pupil de-delegated amount 2028-28 financial year

The per pupil rates for 2027-28 and total estimated amount de-delegated will be as follows:

	Per pupil de-delegated amount 2027-28 financial year		
	Primary phase	Secondary phase *	Total
	£	£	£
1. Trade Union facilities	1.34	-	7,610
2. Termination of employment costs	1.64	-	9,314
3. Free school meal checking service	0.68	0.65	7,595
Estimated totals to be updated with Oct 2026 census numbers			
Pupils / places	5,679	5,743	

** Per pupil including 6th form*

Estimates to de-delegated funding are based on the current number of maintained schools.

Education Functions

Voting for the retention of budget for Education Functions would raise approximately £0.18m. This fund would contribute to the costs of the Education Challenge Leads (ECLs) supporting and challenging maintained schools to ensure positive Ofsted inspection grades and strong outcomes for their pupils; this continues to be a LA subsidised service.

In summary 77% of respondents voted in favour of retention for Education Functions.

of those that responded; % in favour of £15 per pupil/place					
Respondents	**Total**	**Yes**	**%**	**No**	**%**
Primary phase	15	10	67%	5	33%
Secondary phase	5	4	80%	1	20%
Learning Centres	2	2	100%	0	0%
Special Schools	4	4	100%	0	0%
Total	**26**	**20**	**77%**	**6**	**23%**

	Per pupil / place retained amount 2027-28 financial year			
	Primary phase	Secondary phase *	Special Schools & Learning Centres	Total
	£	£	£	£
Education Functions	15.00	15.00	15.00	187,300
Total per phase	**85,200.00**	**86,100.00**	**16,000.00**	**187,300**

**Per pupil including 6th form for Education Functions*

If Forum members decide to vote against Education Functions, Dorset Council have the right of appeal to the Secretary of State to seek to demonstrate that the retention is necessary to ensure that Dorset Council are adequately funded to exercise school improvement activities.

2. Financial implications

The total funds raised for 2027-28 from de-delegation represent the best estimate available to the LA at the point when the consultation document was produced. They are based on schools' October 2025 Number on Roll (adjusted for known changes) and will be updated to reflect the number of pupils in maintained schools as at the October 2026 census.

3. Well-being and Health implications

None identified.

4. Climate Implications

None identified.

5. Other implications

None identified.

6. Risk Assessment

Each decision has financial implications for schools and carries risks for schools and services. Details of risks relating to each specific item for de-delegation are outlined in the De-delegation Decisions for the 2026-27 financial year consultation document.

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:
Current Risk: low
Residual Risk: low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Not required.

8. Appendices

Appendix A: De-delegation guidance on voting
Appendix B: Consultation responses

9. Background Papers

De-delegation consultation document: https://www.dorsetnexus.org.uk/Page/10963

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.