

Update on Maintained Nursery Schools

Following a question raised at the last committee meeting on funding for maintained Nursery schools (currently there are seven maintained Nursery schools within Wolverhampton), this note provides a summary of the financial position:

- Maintained Nursery schools are funded via the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. Under the Early Years National Funding Formula, Nursery schools receive a flat rate of funding per pupil hour with an adjustment for deprivation. Additional supplementary funding is also paid to maintained Nursery schools in recognition of the additional costs of providing a school provision over and above those associated with private and voluntary providers.
- The Department for Education introduced a National Funding Formula for Early Years in 2017 – 2018, via the School's Forum, the Council decided to be early adopters of the formula, implementing it in its first year.
- The initial budget for Early Years was based on the previous three terms data and adjustments were made for termly intake amendments. Guidance provided by the Department for Education enabled Local Authorities to match 2016 - 2017 levels of funding. In 2018 - 2019 funding was distributed using an hourly rate.
- Current indicators are that the same level of funding will be in place for 2019 - 2020. However, there are no guarantees with regards to levels of funding and the availability of supplementary funding for maintained Nursery schools after 2020.
- All schools, including maintained Nursery schools are required to have three-year budget plans in place, therefore schools are required to make reasonable assumptions regarding budgets from 2020 onwards and make financial decisions on this basis.
- Details with regards to future funding levels for maintained Nursery schools are expected as part of the Governments Comprehensive spending review.
- The Council does not have any control over supplementary funding for maintained Nursery schools. However, it does recognise the extra costs faced by maintained Nursery schools which as stated above include staffing, employment of specialised teachers and building maintenance.
- During 2017 the Council appointed an Early Years Advisor whose role is to support maintained Nursery schools and help them to identify and maximise the income available to them.
- The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills has written to all Nursery school Headteachers and Chairs of Governors and requested that funding information is shared with parents and MP's to stimulate a campaign to Government, who ultimately control funding levels.

In summary the Council has considered the issue of funding for maintained Nursery schools and decided that no new risks require inclusion on the Strategic Risk Register at this time. However, a risk has been included on the relevant departmental risk register. The Council will continue to monitor the situation and any new risks or changes to the assessment of current risks as a result of this issue will be reported to future Audit and Risk Committee meetings.