

## **Slough Borough Council**

### **High Needs Financial Sustainability Policy**

#### Introduction

Special Schools' and Resource Unit budgets are no longer fixed for a financial year under the new funding regulations and therefore there is a greater risk of high needs' settings facing financial losses.

Special Schools, PRUs and Resource Units within mainstream schools do receive a guaranteed level of place funding each year but the majority of their funding is top-up funding which should follow the pupil. This is a change from the previous funding system where schools received guaranteed funding for a year. The major risk would come if a number of pupils left at the same time, especially if they attract a higher level of top-up funding.

The new School and Early Years Finance Regulations do not explicitly allow for the High Needs Block to hold a contingency for schools in financial difficulty but local authorities do appear to have some leeway within the High Needs Block to make additional payments to schools in addition to place funding and top-up funding.

Below are a set of criteria which form a policy that would allow special schools and schools with resource units, experiencing unexpected and onerous financial losses to apply for support. The level of support available would depend both on the school's circumstances and also the funding available within the Dedicated Schools Grant in order to increase the High Needs Block for this purpose.

An example of a situation which may be suitable for support is where a school has lost pupils unexpectedly and in a short space of time and their support adds up to the cost of two members of the teaching staff.

#### Criteria

1. All requests for financial support from schools must be in writing and signed by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.
2. All requests must show a financial projection for the current financial year, clearly showing the projected shortfall.
3. All requests must explain why any shortfall is due to unforeseen circumstances e.g. exceptionally high pupil losses. The reasons for any pupil losses should also be given. This should include a breakdown of the school's expenditure compared to the original budget plan.

4. The support would take the form of an interim payment so that any support would be intended to cover the period that places were unfilled and would cease once the places were filled. If the places remained unfilled until the end of the financial year then the support would not be repaid but Slough would wish to review the level of commissioned places.
5. All requests will be considered by appropriate local authority officers in conjunction with the Chair and Vice Chair of Slough's School Forum before going to the full Schools' Forum.
6. The school making the request will receive a written reply giving a clear response and reasons for the response.

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