

Slough Schools Forum

Proposal for consideration at Forum meeting on 14 July 2023

Agenda item 8

Future use of Slough Local School Improvement Fund

1. Background

The Slough Local School Improvement Fund was established in the 2017/18 academic year using a combination of DSG underspend and funds set aside by the Local Authority for school improvement.

Additional fund transfers were subsequently made. Funds were held by the Slough Teaching School Alliance and allocated initially by STSA in response to a bidding process, and latterly by the Slough School Improvement Board. A variety of projects ran from autumn 2017 to summer 2020, ranging in scope from £1.5k to £33k across varying numbers of schools. Further allocation of the LSIF was effectively suspended after the pandemic, pending a more strategic approach.

By agreement with Schools Forum in July 2019, an additional sum of approximately £70k held by the primary phase association SPHA has been transferred to the LSIF; this fund had originally been allocated out of DSG underspend in 2016 towards marketing and recruitment project but the majority had not been spent.

The Slough Teaching School Alliance ceased to exist when the DfE's Teaching School programme ended in July 2021. The STSA company was finally wound up in December 2022, and the company's final balance of £162k, which included the remainder of the LSIF in addition to the accumulated STSA operating surplus, was formally transferred to Langley Grammar School as a charitable donation in line with STSA's charitable objective.

Langley Grammar School was redesignated as one of the DfE's new Teaching School Hubs from September 2021, and operates programmes across Berkshire under the name of TSH Berkshire. However, the balance from the old STSA is currently held by Langley Grammar School on behalf of the Slough schools community and is therefore kept separate from TSH Berkshire funds.

2. Current balance

The current unallocated balance of the Local School Improvement Fund is of the order of £225k. A precise figure will be confirmed in the Forum meeting.

This is held by Langley Grammar School on behalf of the Slough community of schools.

3. Proposed future use

Following discussions in other forums, including the Slough Education Partnership Board, the proposal is that the funding be allocated to school improvement or development activities over a period of 2-3 years at the discretion of the primary and secondary phase associations.

Suggested uses of the funds include, but are not limited to:

- Running senior leader networks
- Contributing towards conferences eg speaker fees.
- CPD events or programmes not currently provided by TSH Berkshire.
- Specific projects which involve a significant number of schools working together on a defined curriculum initiative.

4. Allocation and accountability

The proposal is that the LSIF will be allocated in the following way:

- Schools Forum will approve the overall allocations on an annual basis. Allocations for the 2023/24 academic year will be approved at the September 2023 Forum meeting.
- Allocations to the primary and secondary phases will be equitable on a per-pupil basis, using the most recent pupil census figures as a baseline.
- The phase associations SPHA and SASH will each agree the use of the funding allocated; recording specific decisions in meeting minutes to provide an audit trail.
- Langley Grammar School will manage the actual distribution of the funds, and will pay invoiced amounts to individual schools or to third parties as required.
- Any funding allocated but not used within the academic year will be transferred back to the LSIF.
- Reports on the allocation of the LSIF will be provided regularly (and at least annually) to Slough Schools Forum.

The intention is that the LSIF will be allocated over a period of 2-3 years. This means that a significant sum will be unused for at least a year. Subject to Forum approval, it is proposed that Langley Grammar School invests unallocated funds on an annual basis, following the principles set out in its Academy Trust investment policy.

5. Future extension of the fund

The LSIF currently has a fixed level of funding with no determined future sources of additional income. As such, the fund is expected to be exhausted within 2-3 years.

Future models for the possible extension of the LSIF could include transfer from LA or other funds, de-delegation from DSG Schools Block, DSG top-slice or use of 'headroom', or agreed contributions from individual school budgets.

Any such extension to the LSIF model would involve discussion with the phase associations and the Local Authority and would be subject to Schools Forum approval.

6. Forum responsibility for this item

Forum members are asked to **approve** these arrangements for the allocation and monitoring of the Local School Improvement Fund.

John Constable
Schools Forum Chair
July 2023