

**WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL****SCHOOLS' FORUM – 28th MARCH 2022****REPORT BY THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS  
AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND LEAD STRATEGIC FINANCE  
MANAGER – BI-BOROUGH CHILDREN'S SERVICES****TOP UP FUNDING FOR THE ST MARYLEBONE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
BRIDGE SCHOOL**

This report seeks a decision on an increase to the top up funding for The St Marylebone CE Bridge School – a special free school.

**FOR DECISION**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At the Schools Forum on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022 it was agreed that proposals regarding the increase to the top up funding for The St Marylebone CE Bridge School would be brought to the March 2022 Schools' Forum.
- 1.2 Schools' Forum on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 agreed to increase St Marylebone Bridge School's top up rate by 6.9% from £13,000 to £13,900 from September 2020.
- 1.3 The Forum is asked to consider the information and proposals regarding the increase to the top up and approve the rates to be applied from September 2021.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In accordance with Department for Education (DfE) funding regulations special schools receive place funding of £10,000 for each commissioned place and locally agreed top up funding for each pupil. The £10,000 place funding relates to core costs and has remained at that level since it was introduced by the DfE.
- 2.2 Allocations in relation to the previous teachers pay and pension contribution grants will continue to be made in addition to the place and top up funding.
- 2.3 It was noted that the phased approach to the roll out of the top up funding based on the education banding tool (EBT) (over a three-year period) will see St Marylebone Bridge later in the EBT roll out and that it was important to ensure that the school was not disadvantaged by this phased timing. Each pupil at the school will be subject to a statutory annual review as part of the roll out process. It has therefore been agreed to apply a flat rate increase to the existing top up until the school can be transitioned to EBT.

### **3 FUNDING FOR ST MARYLEBONE CE BRIDGE SCHOOL**

- 3.1 The number of places required in specialist settings is reviewed on an annual basis, during the Autumn term. St Marylebone Bridge is commissioned to provide 60 places in 2021/22 and 65 in 2022/23 academic years. These places are funded on the basis of the nationally agreed £10k per place and therefore amounts to £600,000 (60 x £10,000) for 2021/22 and £650,000 (65 x £10,000) for 2022/23. The national place funding does not increase and this will be raised in the SEND review consultation which is covered in a separate paper.
- 3.2 It should be noted that the school is currently in temporary accommodation which limits the number of pupils who can be admitted and means that they are unable to increase their intake to increase their funding. A capital building programme will see the school move into new accommodation in 2022/23 academic year. The purpose build site will offer some opportunities for economies of scale which are not currently an option.
- 3.3 St Marylebone Bridge are requesting an increase of 4.3% to the top up funding, from £13,900 to £14,500 from September 2021, to cover staff and other cost increases. The increase in staffing costs is due to incremental pay progression and not an increase in staffing numbers. After taking the £10,000 per place funding into account, the £600 increase per pupil represents an increase of 2.5% in funding from Westminster's High Needs Block. This increase, in respect of 25 Westminster pupils, is estimated to cost £8,750 in 2021/22 financial year and £15,000 in future years.
- 3.4 The school estimates that without an increase in top up rate there would be an in year budget deficit of £66,378 in the 2021/22 academic year. The proposed increase will not take the school out of deficit, but it does take it to a more manageable £51,378k deficit. The school is taking steps to manage the deficit by reducing inflationary pressure on non-staff costs.
- 3.5 The school's request will increase the current top up from £13,900 to £14,500. It is proposing a differential top up rate of £17,000 in respect of those who are not resident in the borough (currently 30 pupils).
- 3.6 Officers sought views from the high needs block reference group on 1st February 2022 and the group supported the draft forum paper recommending 4.3% increase for St Marylebone CE Bridge top up (equivalent to approximately £600 per pupil per annum for WCC pupils) to be presented to schools' Forum in March 2022 to help the school be financially viable. It was noted that the top up charged to other authorities for their residents is already higher.

### **4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Schools Forum are recommended to approve the 4.3% increase for St Marylebone CE Bridge top up (equivalent to approximately £600 per pupil per annum for WCC pupils). This increase, in respect of 25 Westminster pupils, is estimated to cost £8,750 in 2021/22 financial year and £15,000 in future years.

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**Bi-Borough Executive Director of Children’s Services**

**Background papers:**

DfE High Needs 2021/22 Operational Guide

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/961708/High\\_needs\\_funding\\_operational\\_guide\\_2021\\_to\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/961708/High_needs_funding_operational_guide_2021_to_2022.pdf)

WCC Commissioning plan

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