

**WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL****SCHOOLS' FORUM – 28<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022****REPORT BY BI-BOROUGH DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION****WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL FORUM PAPER ON FAIR ACCESS  
FUNDING FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To consider a request from WSSIC representatives to increase the Fair Access funding payment.

**FOR DECISION****1. INTRODUCTION**

The School Admissions Code requires local authorities to have a Fair Access Protocol in place which ensures that access to education is secured quickly for children who have no school place and that all schools in an area admit their fair share of the most vulnerable children, including those whose behaviour has been challenging. All schools *must*<sup>1</sup> agree and participate in the Fair Access Protocol and will be expected to admit children above their published admissions number if the school is already full.

**2. LOCAL CONTEXT**

- 2.2 This Westminster Fair Access Protocol applies to all secondary school aged children normally resident, or who will be normally resident, in Westminster. It is, in effect, a safety net or a last resort process for the minority of children where normal procedures for in-year admissions have failed and the child is considered to be 'hard to place'.

The Westminster Fair Access Protocol therefore covers two broad categories:

External - Children who have been out of education for a minimum of 4 or more weeks from the date of registration for a school place with the LA and where it can be demonstrated that there are no places available at any school within a reasonable distance from their home<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The word *must* represents mandatory requirements of the Admissions Code

<sup>2</sup> Reasonable distance as defined in the DfE 'Home to school travel and transport guidance' is a distance from home to school no further than 3 miles as calculated as a short walking route, or a public transport journey that does not exceed 75 minutes each way.

Internal - Children or young people attending Ormiston Alternative Provision (OAT) who have been assessed by OAT as ready for reintegration back into mainstream education.

- 2.3 The referral process is managed by the Fair Access and Exclusions officer in the Admissions and Access to Education team. WSSIC members will receive in advance of each meeting cases requiring a school placement. No cases are referred for a fair access placement where schools with vacancies have not been applied for within a reasonable distance. This expectation extends to schools in neighbouring boroughs.
- 2.4 The majority of Westminster secondary schools are full, and several exceed their Published Admission Number (PAN), which is legally permissible. For schools where there are vacancies available, in Westminster this is only applicable to boys, admissions will be managed via the normal in-year process unless there are presenting circumstances that will require a referral for a Fair Access placement. A key objective of Fair Access is to ensure that no school, whether it has vacancies or not, is expected to admit a disproportionate number of children that present challenging behaviour or other needs that may require additional support (does not include children with an EHCP or LAC).

### **3. Funding**

- 3.1 It was agreed in 2014 by Schools Forum to attach a £1k payment for each secondary fair access case. There is no requirement for funding to be attributed to fair access placements, the additional funding is a local agreement and funded from the DSG budget in addition to the associated AWPU (age-weighted pupil unit). Payments are made once the child is confirmed as on the school roll. The funding is to provide the school with any additional resources they may need to support integration. Ormiston does not receive the additional fundings as their places are commissioned and funded by the LA or by schools directly.
- 3.2 A request has been made by WSSIC members to review and increase the £1k funding. An increased amount has not been proposed. At the November 2021 WSSIC meeting, it was suggested that a funding formula that would work better for the time of year the child is taken on roll, possibly at three points of the academic year, and also the year group of the child could be a factor. This however would be complex to administer and is not considered a good use of time when compared to priority work on / with schools with deficits and falling rolls.
- 3.3 The following table sets out the number of placements and associated costs since April 2019.

<b>Academic year</b>	<b>Confirmed on roll</b>	<b>Cost (based on £1k per pupil)</b>	<b>Notes/comments</b>
2021-22 (Sep 21 to Feb 22 <b>to date</b> )	46	£44,000	Total of 46 includes 2 placements at Beachcroft OAT – not eligible for the £1k
Sep 2020 – July 2021	58	£57,000	Includes 1 placement at Beachcroft (formerly TBAP) – not eligible for the £1k
Sep 2019- July 2020*	30	£28,000	Includes 2 placements at Beachcroft (formerly TBAP) – not eligible for the £1k

<b>Financial year</b>	<b>Confirmed on roll</b>	<b>Cost (based on £1k per pupil)</b>	<b>Notes/comments</b>
Apr 2021-Mar 2022 ( <b>to date</b> )	65	£63,000	Total of 65 includes 2 placements at Beachcroft OAT – not eligible for the £1k
Apr 2020-Mar 2021*	57	£56,000	Includes 1 placement at Beachcroft (formerly TBAP) – not eligible for the £1k
Apr 2019-Mar 2020*	44	£41,000	Includes 3 placements at Beachcroft (formerly TBAP) – not eligible for the £1k

\*There were no Fair Access cases referred after the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020 meeting until 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 when the meetings recommenced following national lockdown.

3.4 The Central Schools Block of the DSG is being reduced in 2022/23 and therefore it is not possible to increase the payments for Fair Access without the agreement of School Forum to de-delegate funds from school budgets. Decisions have already been taken for 2022/23 financial year budgets and therefore any change agreed would be from 2023/24 financial year.

## **4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 Schools Forum is asked to discuss and consider:

4.1.1 the requests by WSSIC members to review and increase the £1k funding.

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