



REPORT REFERENCE: **11.0**

REGULATORY AND OTHER COMMITTEE REPORT

NAME OF COMMITTEE:	Schools' Forum
DATE OF MEETING:	13 October 2010
SUBJECT:	2010/11 Section 251 benchmarking information
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IS REPORT EXEMPT?	
IS REPORT CONFIDENTIAL?	No

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to share with the Schools Forum the latest s.251 benchmarking data published by the DfE in September 2010.

DISCUSSION

All Local Authorities (LA) are required to publish prior to the start of the financial year, a statement showing their planned expenditure on Children's services. Since 2003/04, the DfE has used that information to publish benchmarking tables of planned expenditure and details are presented to the Schools Forum each year.



The latest benchmarking information is published at:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/financeandfunding/informationforlocalauthorities/section251/benchmarking2010-2011/benchmarking2010-11/>

Although this information is very useful, it must be recognised that differences can arise because of LAs' varying approaches to: delegation; the interpretation of the DfE' s251 guidance, and; the methodology used for apportioning corporate overheads, etc. It is also important to note that the 'per capita' figures shown in the report are calculated using the planned spending and often, the total school population. It does not always take account of specific cohorts, such as the actual number of early years children, the actual number of children placed in independent settings, or the number of children actually transported to and from school, etc.

Direct comparisons with previous years are difficult because there are often alterations to the content of the s.251 budget statement and that in turn increases the risk of LAs classifying expenditure differently on the s.251 statement.

A copy of Table 1 of s.251 is attached at Appendix 1. The most notable comparators are set out below:

Col	Description / Comment	Lincs £ per pupil	Upper Tier median £ per capita	Ranking out of 27	English mean £ per capita
1	Individual Schools Budget <i>This essentially reflects the funds available directly to schools.</i>	3,605	3,649	17 th	3,912
9	ISB including SSG, SSG(P), SDG, etc <i>This reflects the funds available directly to schools, but also includes other grants.</i>	3,614	3,665	19 th	3,927
10	Early Years <i>This provides funding for private, voluntary and independent providers.</i>	117	126	17 th =	105
18	Fees for independent special schools <i>The LA's lower than average cost is, in part, due to the building of four EBD schools several years ago.</i>	66	79	19 th	90
27	PRUs / Behaviour support / Education Otherwise <i>This is significantly below similar LAs.</i>	45	78	24 th =	88
28	14-16 More Practical Learning options <i>This highlights LCC's historical success in developing provision and securing DfE' funding.</i>	11	6	9 th	7
42	Termination of Employment costs <i>In January 2010, the Schools Forum supported an increase in this budget. It is projected to be fully spent this year.</i>	23	2	1 st	4
49	Capital Expenditure from the Revenue Account <i>This reflects the continued significant investment by LCC in the schools' capital programme.</i>	67	21	3 rd =	21



51	Total Schools Budget¹ <i>This is now the median (last year it was £149 per pupil below similar LAs).</i>	4,204	4,204	14 th	4,478
60	Home to School transport – SEN <i>Considerable effort is continuing to be made to reduce these costs.</i>	106	69	4 th	74
61	Home to School Transport – Other <i>Actual spend will be lower than originally planned, but spending remains comparatively high. The £86 per capita differential equates to c.£8m. Rurality is a key factor.</i>	167	81	2 nd	53
64	Home to College Transport – Post 16 <i>LCC introduced charges for post-16 transport four years ago.</i>	21	5	4 th	5
66	School Improvement	69	59	5 th =	61
80	Youth Work	27	31	15 th	35
93	Residential care	46	56	19 th	82
94	Foster care <i>This is notably below the average for similar LAs.</i>	56	73	22 nd	107
127	Commissioning and Social Work	112	103	9 th =	118
130	Statutory and Regulatory duties <i>The increase in costs over recent years is largely attributable to an increase in corporate costs and the methodology used to apportion those both to Children's Services and across the s.251 statement.</i>	76	46	2 nd	53
146	Grand total	5,120	5,099	10th	5,450

Further comparisons can be made by referring to Appendix 1.

For most of the lines shown in the table above, there has been no material change in the LA's spending or ranking. However:

- The ISB funding available directly to schools (column 9) shows Lincolnshire to be £51 per capita below the median for Upper Tier authorities, giving a ranking of 19th. This compares to last year's ranking of 25th and a £139 per capita variation. It is not clear why Lincolnshire's position has improved relative to other LAs.
- The Total Schools Budget (column 51) shows Lincolnshire to hold the median. Last year, it was £149 per capita below the median for Upper Tier authorities, giving a ranking of 25th. This improvement is mainly due to the unexplained improvement in the ISB position, referred to immediately above.
- The grand total is also affected in a similar way and shows Lincolnshire budgeting to spend £21 per capita more than the median for Upper Tier Authorities, with a ranking of 10th. Last year the corresponding figures were £33 per capital below the median and a ranking of 16th.

¹ The budget lines up to this point reflect expenditure financed by the DSG (and LSC funding of sixth forms, plus DfE grants). The remaining lines are financed directly by LCC budgets and together demonstrate total planned spending on Children's Services.



In summary, the funding directly available to Lincolnshire schools has improved, but remains £51 per capita below the Upper Tier median. That improvement has been reflected in the Total Schools Budget figure, with Lincolnshire's planned spending now the median figure. However, as reported in previous years, whilst total spending on Children's Services is broadly in line with Upper Tier Authorities, significantly more of that funding is being spent on funding the costs of home to school and college transport, thereby leaving less resource available to support other services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Schools Forum is asked to note the contents of the report.

APPENDICES - these are listed below and attached at the back of the report.

Appendix 1

2010/11 Section 251 benchmarking data for Upper Tier Authorities (Table 1 - net)