

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY. (Please note that 'Information Only' reports do not require Equality Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance comments as no decision is being taken.)

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Children Families and Education

Subject: Local Authority Maintained School Balances at 31 March 2023

Date of meeting: 20 July 2023

Report by: Sarah Daly, Director, Children, Families and Education

Wards affected: All Wards

1. Requested by

Cabinet Member for Children Families and Education

2. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet Member of the level of Local Authority maintained schools' revenue and capital balances as at 31 March 2023.

3. Information Requested

- 3.1. Each year schools are given delegated budgets which are calculated using the locally agreed national funding formula. These budgets are supplemented by specific government grants (e.g. Pupil Premium) and through the income generated by the school. Delegated revenue budgets are intended to be spent during the year on the existing cohort of pupils, although it is prudent for a school to retain a small surplus to provide for future uncertainties.
- 3.2. Schools do spend the vast majority of funds directly on the education of their pupils. However, there are a number of genuine reasons why schools may accumulate a balance at yearend; for example, to provide for planned building works or to provide consistency in staffing levels during funding fluctuations relating to predicted changes in numbers on roll.
- 3.3. In some cases, factors outside of the control of the school can cause increases in balances; for example, large capital building schemes may slip from one year into the next.
- 3.4. Whilst devolved formula capital allocations are ring fenced for capital purposes only, schools may use revenue balances to support capital schemes. In 2022-23, schools allocated some £0.8m of revenue funding to capital purposes (compared to £1.6m in 2021-22).

- 3.5. Schools were surveyed during the spring term to ascertain future commitments against estimated closing balances in order to provide data in accordance with Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) requirements. This data has since been updated to reflect actual, rather than estimated, closing balances.
- 3.6. In 2014 Schools Forum agreed to discontinue the "balance control mechanism" (i.e., a "clawback" system) and to implement proposals to strengthen the monitoring arrangements. An extract from the current Scheme for Financing Schools is shown at Appendix 1 that highlights the 'controls on surplus balances' together with the items that can be deemed committed within the year-end balances.

4. Revenue Balances

- 4.1. The following table illustrates the level of schools' revenue balances over the last three years:

Sector	No. of schools as at 31/3/21	Balance as at 01/04/21 £	% of 2020/21 budget allocation	No. of schools as at 31/3/22	Balance as at 01/04/22 £	% of 2021/22 budget allocation	No. of schools as at 31/3/23	Balance as at 01/04/23 £	% of 2022/23 budget allocation
Nursery & Primary schools	19	4,130,191	14.60	16	3,580,452	12.02	16	3,518,325	14.18
Secondary schools	2	878,465	6.97	2	847,344	6.16	2	1,550,068	10.72
Total	21	5,008,656	12.25	18	4,427,796	10.17	18	5,068,392	12.90

- 4.2. No schools converted to academy during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years, so the table above provides a direct comparison between the two financial years.
- 4.3. It is important to note that the total schools' balances of £5.1m as at 1 April 2023 include £0.296m (£0.131m 2021/22) of community related balances e.g. Community Improvement Partnerships, community lettings, breakfast and after school clubs etc. leaving £4.8m (£4.3m 2021/22) of "curriculum" balances relating to core activity. Of this, a further £1.3m (£0.8m 2021/22) has been committed to specific projects or initiatives, leaving a balance of £3.5m, or 9% of the 2022/23 budget allocation, as genuinely uncommitted. This exceeds the CIPFA guideline of between 2-3% of budget for uncommitted balances.
- 4.4. Overall, 33% (6) of schools saw an increase in their balances when compared to 2021-22, this is lower than the previous year, when 61% of schools (11) saw an increase in balances.
- 4.5. Of the 12 schools that saw a decrease in balances, seven had balances more than 10% of their budget share and are not of concern. Three schools form part of the reducing balance review as set out in Section 5,

and one school, Manor Infant School, is in deficit and the authority is working closely with the school to review the recovery plan

5. Review of Specific School Balances

- 5.1 The school revenue balances as at 31st March 2023 are shown by school at Appendix 2. Over the 2022-23 financial year there has been an increase in the number of schools seeking support to maintain financial stability and manage the longer term impact of the current economic climate. Additionally, some schools meet the criteria of having excessive balances. The following paragraphs set out the explanations for the level of balances and any action being taken.

Reducing balances

- 5.2 During 2016-17 Schools Forum requested that the council contact the Chair of Governors for schools with reducing or low balances as at 31st March 2016. This process now forms part of the annual review of school balances.
- 5.3 As part of the year-end monitoring process of school balances, a review was undertaken to identify those schools that have shown a continued or significant reduction (defined as 25% or more) in their level of curriculum balances and whose total balances form less than 8% (primary) or 5% (secondary schools) of their budget share.

Update on schools with reducing balances on 31 March 2022

- 5.4 As at 31 March 2022 there were three schools that meet the reducing balances criteria (para.5.3), the balances have been reviewed at the end of 2022-23 and an update provided on their financial position:
- Manor Infant the deficit has increased, and the school has produced a deficit recovery plan and the authority continues to work closely with them to develop a sustainable solution.
 - St Georges Beneficial C of E Primary balances have increased by 99% compared to 2021-22 but remain at less than 8% of the budget share.
 - St Swithuns Catholic Primary, balances have increased by 20% compared to 2021-22 but remain at less than 8% of the budget share.
- 5.5 As at 31 March 2023 there were three schools that meet the reducing balances criteria (para.5.3), all schools have been contacted and two have responded to the authority confirming:
- **Bramble Infant and Nursery:** that whilst overall the school remains in surplus they have a deficit on their curriculum balances, the Governing Body has confirmed that they are aware of the financial situation and have developed and agreed a management plan to stop the school going into deficit and maintain financial sustainability.

- **St Pauls Roman Catholic Primary:** the Governing body are in the process of developing a business plan to manage the schools expenditure and stop the school from going into deficit.
- 5.6 At the time of writing the report a response had not been received from St Judes C of E Primary School, but the authority is in discussion with the school regarding the financial position.
- 5.7 It should be noted that whilst some schools may not meet the criteria of reducing balances, the level of balances could be a cause for concern. The authority is in contact with these schools and is working with them to ensure financial stability.

Excessive balances

- 5.8 The Scheme for Financing Schools categorises Primary & Special Schools who have uncommitted balances of more than 8% of budget share as having excessive balances. For Secondary Schools, the threshold is 5% of budget share.
- 5.9 Of the eight Primary schools with uncommitted balances over 8%, six have balances between 10% and 20% and two have uncommitted balances over 20% and had balances of over 20% in 2021-22.
- 5.10 For Secondary Schools, one had uncommitted balances of more than 5% of the budget share at 14.6% of the budget share.
- 5.11 Analysis of the reasons for the high balances are set out below.

St John's Catholic Primary

- 5.12 St John's Catholic Primary year end balances have decreased by £3,685 from £335,433 at the end of March 2022 to £347,748 at the end of March 2023. The school has indicated that £24,211 of their balance is committed, with £323,537 being uncommitted.
- 5.13 With regards to the uncommitted balance of £323,537, this equates to 27.7% of the school's budget share.
- 5.14 The Governing Board have had two projects outstanding since 2019-20 which have been carried forward to future years due to the impact of the national lockdowns and the availability of building contractors. To date, the refurbishment of the playground is yet to start following continuing difficulties in finding a suitable contractor. The project to maintain the flat roof and replace the roofing tiles was delayed for similar reasons, whilst the school has been able to secure a contractor, they will not be able to undertake the work until summer holidays 2023 due to prior commitments. There are no other plans or commitments brought forward from previous years.

5.15 The school has identified that they had a small in year deficit at the end of 2022-23 which reduced their balances by 1% of the previous year. They are planning to utilise their balances to support the two large projects set out in the paragraph above. They are conscious of several uncertainties regarding future funding against their wish to continue to support pupils with the continuing post-Covid recovery and are retaining the remaining balances to support any related one off, short term expenditure.

Wimborne Primary School

5.16 Wimborne Primary School year end balances have decreased by £48,669 from £631,801 at the end of March 2022 to £583,102 at the end of March 2023. The school has indicated that £48,142 of their balance is committed, with £534,960 being uncommitted.

5.17 With regards to the uncommitted balance of £534,960, this equates to 23.25% of the school's budget share.

5.18 In 2022-23 the school had committed to using part of the balances to support several capital projects over the next two years with three projects expected to be completed in 2022-23. Of these projects the playground resurfacing, trim trails and gates have all been completed. The school is expecting to use £141,500 of the balances to support further capital projects in 2023-24 including:

- Refurbishment of children's toilets in the infants building
- Improving the security of the site with additional fencing
- IT Infrastructure.

5.19 The school is expecting the balances to reduce over the next five years as they implement a plan to update the classrooms in the school.

5.20 The authority continues to work with all schools to support the effective financial management of the available financial resources, varying the level of support in accordance to the specific needs of the school. It is hoped that the support and advice will help these schools to achieve and maintain, long term financial stability.

6. Capital Balances

6.1 Devolved capital allocations are ring fenced and schools are expected to spend them on priority capital needs of school buildings. These allocations will therefore be held as capital balances until they are used and may be supplemented by funding from other sources.

6.2 An analysis of schools' current capital balances is given at Appendix 3, together with proposed spending plans as returned in the school survey. Where spending plans exceed balances there will need to be additional funding proposals.

6.3 The table below illustrates the level of school capital balances for the last three years:

Sector	No. of schools as at 31/3/21	Balance as at 01/04/21 £	No. of schools as at 31/3/22	Balance as at 01/04/22 £	No. of schools as at 31/3/23	Balance as at 01/04/23 £
Nursery & Primary schools	19	532,890	16	464,657	16	505,705
Secondary schools	2	1,824,317	2	2,549,241	2	3,158,989
Total	21	2,357,207	18	3,013,898	18	3,664,694

Note: the above totals are the aggregate of surplus and deficit balances

6.4 As there were no academy conversions in 2021-22 and 2022-23 the Table above provides a direct comparison.

6.5 Overall, there has been an increase in capital balances, mostly relating to St Edmunds RC Secondary School. This relates to a large Capital project that is currently in progress. The small reduction in Primary capital balances is due to works identified at the end of 2021-22 financial year being completed during 2022-23.

7. Reasons for recommendations

This report is for information only and Cabinet Member is asked to note the contents of the report.

Signed by Sarah Daly, Director, Children, Families and Education.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: extracts from the current Scheme for Financing Schools

Appendix 2: schools' revenue balances at 31 March 2023

Appendix 3: schools' capital balances and commitments at 31 March 2023

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
School Balances Files and Spreadsheets	Education Finance
Scheme For Financing Schools	PCC website



APPENDIX 1

Extracts from the current Scheme For Financing Schools

4.2 Controls on surplus balances

As schools are moving towards greater autonomy and should not be constrained from making early efficiencies and to support medium term budgeting in a tighter financial climate, the balance control (clawback) mechanism for excessive balances continues to be withdrawn.

Schools will be deemed to have excessive balances, when Primary and Special Schools have uncommitted balances in excess of 8% and Secondary Schools 5% of their budget shares.

The control framework for monitoring school balances and their intended use requires that:

- a. Schools will continue to be asked to provide a breakdown of their year-end balances between committed and uncommitted, as well as an analysis of the intended use of any committed balances. The Education and Children's Finance team will continue to co-ordinate the process.
- b. A School Balances report will be presented to both the Cabinet member for Children's and Education and Schools Forum, following the completion of the year-end closedown process. This report will provide an analysis of the balances by school and schools with significant balances may be highlighted specifically within the report.
- c. Those schools identified as potentially breaching the balance thresholds, will be asked to provide further evidence of the planned use of their balances. The information will be reported back to Elected Members, the Schools Forum and the Education Department.
- d. The Education Department will consider this information as part of its school performance and improvement service provision, school challenge and specific reviews.

In determining whether school balances are committed, schools are only permitted to assign as committed, items listed in Annex 6.

School Forum may revisit the balance control (clawback) mechanism and the above control framework from time to time and where they believe significant and excessive balances have accumulated.

Annex 6 –PERMITTED SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR THE USE OF SURPLUS FUNDS

- Valid orders placed through the financial system, but for which the goods have not been received.
- Funds held on behalf of other schools by fund holder schools (e.g., cluster funding).
- Balances held for specific community projects e.g., nursery provision, children's' centres, extended services.
- Contribution towards capital works with the school (where alternative capital resources have been exhausted). A clear statement of intent signed by the Chair of Governors (subject to clawback if not delivered in stated timescales - maximum 3 years).
- Providing consistency in staffing levels where numbers on roll are predicted to fluctuate within the next year (note that a reasonable commitment would be £3,000 per pupil and forecast variations in pupil numbers should be given).
- Unexpected funds received by the school near the year-end which will be utilised for a specific purpose in the following financial year.



THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

APPENDIX 2

SCHOOLS REVENUE BALANCES AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

The figures in the table above may not sum exactly due to rounding.

DFE No.	Balance as @ 31/03/2022	% of 2021/22 Budget Share Allocation	School Name	2022/23 Budget Share	Analysis of Balance		Balance as @ 31/03/2023	% of 2022/23 Budget Share Allocation	Uncommitted as % of Budget Share Allocation	Committed as % of Budget Share Allocation
					Uncommitted	Committed				
PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOLS										
2008	505,715	17.75%	Copnor Primary	2,830,462	494,341	222,733	717,074	25.33%	17.47%	7.87%
2716	330,564	16.74%	Craneswater Junior	2,019,210	212,379	64,529	276,908	13.71%	10.52%	3.20%
2665	137,787	17.20%	Cumberland Infant	825,947	122,350		122,350	14.81%	14.81%	
2648	122,029	12.46%	Devonshire Infant	1,005,707	11,940	105,000	116,940	11.63%	1.19%	10.44%
2714	345,144	21.37%	Fernhurst Junior	1,591,844	244,696	96,480	341,176	21.43%	15.37%	6.06%
2637	76,759	9.33%	Bramble Infant & Nursery	1,146,916	48,720	14,000	62,720	5.47%	4.25%	1.22%
2719	(18,255)	-1.55%	Manor Infant	1,143,638	(64,316)		(64,316)	-5.62%	-5.62%	
2673	83,825	8.10%	Medina Primary	1,073,330	91,885	27,500	119,385	11.12%	8.56%	2.56%
2765	398,339	18.00%	Portsdown Primary	2,236,696	435,474	5,802	441,276	19.73%	19.47%	0.26%
2680	133,313	14.85%	Southsea Infant	932,951	48,488	48,000	96,488	10.34%	5.20%	5.14%
3214	54,377	3.15%	St Georges Beneficial C of E Primary	1,753,603	108,250		108,250	6.17%	6.17%	
3422	351,433	30.76%	St Johns Catholic Primary	1,167,865	323,537	24,211	347,748	29.78%	27.70%	2.07%
3212	177,260	9.83%	St Judes C of E Primary	1,854,952	52,261	4,080	56,341	3.04%	2.82%	0.22%
5207	175,852	10.70%	St Pauls Catholic Primary	1,565,553	80,591	23,138	103,729	6.63%	5.15%	1.48%
3423	74,509	5.64%	St Swithuns Catholic Primary	1,354,220	89,154		89,154	6.58%	6.58%	
2013	631,801	26.45%	Wimborne Primary	2,309,124	534,960	48,142	583,102	25.25%	23.17%	2.08%
	3,580,452		Total Primary & Nursery	24,812,016	2,834,710	683,615	3,518,325	14.18%	11.42%	2.76%
SECONDARY SCHOOLS										
4303	63,271	0.85%	Mayfield Secondary	7,811,958	686	55,672	56,358	0.72%	0.01%	0.71%
5413	784,073	12.42%	St Edmunds Catholic Secondary	6,650,957	969,710	524,000	1,493,710	22.46%	14.58%	7.88%
	847,344		Total Secondary	14,462,915	970,396	579,672	1,550,068	10.72%	6.71%	4.01%
	3,580,452		Primary	24,812,016	2,834,710	683,615	3,518,325	14.18%	11.42%	2.76%
	847,344		Secondary	14,462,915	970,396	579,672	1,550,068	10.72%	6.71%	4.01%
	4,427,796		Total	39,274,931	3,805,106	1,263,287	5,068,392	12.90%	9.69%	3.22%



THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

**APPENDIX 3
SCHOOLS CAPITAL BALANCES AS AT 31 MARCH 2023**

Balance as @ 31/03/2022		Balance as @ 31/03/2023	Spending Plan	Description of Plan	Projected Balance
PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOLS					
20,281	Copnor Primary		70,000	Covering walkway between KS1 & KS2	
			20,280	Automated driveway gates	
			25,995	Upgrade to lighting	
			44,985	Kitchen and soft play area refurbishment	
		41,535	161,260		(119,725)
(26,986)	Craneswater Junior		5,000	Replacement if lights to classrooms	
		1,292	5,000		(3,708)
8,063	Cumberland Infant				
		15,465	0		15,465
4,844	Devonshire Infant		10,000	Replacement server project	
			13,651	Energy efficiencies	
		24,543	23,651		892
					0
2,401	Fernhurst Junior		16,881	LED Lighting / Replacement Doors	
		20,244	16,881		3,363
18,366	Bramble Infant & Nursery		17,511	Replacing admin PC	
		17,922	17,511		411
3,982	Manor Infant				
		24,768	0		24,768
9,427	Medina Primary				
		23,528	0		23,528

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Balance as @ 31/03/2022		Balance as @ 31/03/2023	Spending Plan	Description of Plan	Projected Balance
44,504	Portsmouthdown Primary		4,969	Upper Girls toilet aria	
			12,750	Contribution boiler works capital programme	
			10,000	Ongoing repairs	
			15,000	Children's & Staff toilet aria	
			20,000	Nursery ramp replacement	
			200,000	Upgrade of lighting fixtures to LED	
		46,527	262,719		(216,192)
(14,482)	Southsea Infant				
		(927)	0		(927)
33,052	St Georges Beneficial Primary				
		29,127	0		29,127
221,263	St Johns RC Primary		50,000	Playground refurbishment	
			2,410	Upgrade fire doors (fire risk assessment report)	
			10,000	Programme of upgrade to IT	
			3,300	Outbuilding repairs to roof	
			3,300	Outbuilding roof repairs	
			9,000	Cycle shelter	
			2,561	Work to skylight Music room and upgrade to lighting	
		193,157	80,571		112,586
30,436	St Jude's CE Primary				
		27,516	0		27,516
8,213	St Paul's RC Primary		8,000	IT Equipment upgrade	
			4,924	Diocese - Salix Loan repayment	
		(949)	12,924		(13,873)
0	St Swithun's RC Primary		0		
		0	0		0



THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Balance as @ 31/03/2022		Balance as @ 31/03/2023	Spending Plan	Description of Plan	Projected Balance
101,294	Wimborne Primary		29,846	Infant girls toilet	
			27,724	Infant boys toilet	
			14,124	YR toilet	
			1,286	Infant entrance area	
			7,597	Toilet flooring	
		41,957	80,577		(38,620)
464,657	Total Primary	505,705	661,094		(155,389)
SECONDARY SCHOOLS					
(49,183)	Mayfield		45,869	Relocation of temporally classroom from Westover Primary	
		48,129	45,869		2,260
2,598,424	St Edmunds RC		3,515,986	New Art Block (EAB004)	
			2,837	Wright Block project (EAB009)	
			46,854	Capital works general/Contingency (EAB008)	
		3,110,860	3,565,677		(454,817)
2,549,241	Total Secondary	3,158,989	3,611,546		(452,557)
SUMMARY					
464,657	Primary Schools	505,705	661,094		(155,389)
2,549,241	Secondary Schools	3,158,989	3,611,546		(452,557)
3,013,898		3,664,694	4,272,640		(607,946)