

SCHOOLS FORUM

WEDNESDAY, 13 APRIL 2016

Present: Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim (Chairman), Alison Penny, Stuart Muir, Ania Hildrey, Mike Wallace, Chris Tomes, Martin Tinsley, Hugh Boulter and Jo Haswell.

Officers: Edmund Bradley, Kevin McDaniel and David Cook

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Helen McHale, Heather Clapp, Heidi Swindenbank, Ann Entwistle, Amanda Hough and Nick Stevens,

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

DFE SCHOOLS NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA - CONSULTATION STAGE 1

The Schools Forum were informed that the special meeting had been called to agree the Forum's submission to the Government's consultation. It was noted that the Local Education Authority would be making their own separate submission.

The Forum approved the following responses:

Principles for a reformed funding system

1 Do you agree with our proposed principles for the funding system?

Yes

Please provide any further comments::

All principles are valid and sensible

The structure of the funding system

2 Do you agree with our proposal to move to a school-level national funding formula in 2019-20, removing the requirement for local authorities to set a local formula?

Yes

Please provide any further comments:

The timetable for hard formula implementation and subsequent application of a MFG must be sufficient to allow planning for staff changes and/or restructuring.

If additional funding was deemed to be necessary to meet a local need, each school would need to contribute on a voluntary basis unless a local formal agreement was established which is unlikely to be straightforward.

Building block A: per-pupil costs

3 Do you agree that the basic amount of funding for each pupil should be different at primary, key stage 3 and key stage 4?

Yes

Please provide any further comments:

The stage 2 detail will be important - particularly the differential between primary and KS3 being kept to modest levels and the very significant increase in secondary costs being recognised at KS4.

Building block B: additional needs factors

4a Do you agree that we should include a deprivation factor?

Yes

4b Which measures for the deprivation factor do you support?

Pupil- and area-level

Please provide any further comments:

The review of IDACI every 5 years causes step changes in funding for some schools. This does not adhere to the fundamental principle of predictability.

5 Do you agree we should include a low prior attainment factor?

Yes

Please provide any further comments:

In principle, we agree that this is necessary to support schools with significant numbers of low prior attainers. The stage 2 detail will be will be important.

6a Do you agree that we should include a factor for English as an additional language?

Yes

6b Do you agree that we should use the EAL3 indicator (pupils registered at any point during the previous 3 years as having English as an additional language)?

Yes

Please provide any further comments:

If there had been an option to choose EAL4 or 5 we would have given it serious consideration as the need still presents itself in that time period.

Building block C: school costs

7 Do you agree that we should include a lump sum factor?

Yes

8 Do you agree that we should include a sparsity factor?

Not Answered

Please provide any further comments:

No relevant experience in order to form an opinion

Building block C: other school costs

9 Do you agree that we should include a business rates factor?

No

10 Do you agree that we should include a split sites factor?

Not Answered

11 Do you agree that we should include a private finance initiative factor?

Not Answered

Please provide any further comments::
No opinion

12 Do you agree that we should include an exceptional premises circumstances factor?
Not Answered

Please provide any further comments::
No opinion

13 Do you agree that we should allocate funding to local authorities in 2017-18 and 2018-19 based on historic spend for these factors?

Yes/No - Business rates:
Yes

Yes/No - Split sites:
Yes

Yes/No - Private finance initiative:
Yes

Yes/No - Other exceptional circumstances:
Yes

Building block C: growth

14 Do you agree that we should include a growth factor?
Yes

Please provide any further comments:

The funding system must be predictable. Given the proposals in the White Paper to academies all schools and the duty of LAs to provide places, we are interested to find out how. in practice. place planning will work.

15 Do you agree that we should allocate funding for growth to local authorities in 2017-18 and 2018-19 based on historic spend?
Yes

Please provide any further comments:
A system based on known future costs would be preferable.

Building block D: geographic costs

16a Do you agree that we should include an area cost adjustment?
Yes

16b Which methodology for the area cost adjustment do you support?
general labour market methodology

Factors not included in the formula

17 Do you agree that we should target support for looked-after children and those who have left care via adoption, special guardianship or a care arrangements order through the pupil premium plus, rather than include a looked-after children factor in the national funding formula?
Yes

18 Do you agree that we should not include a factor for mobility?
No

Please provide any further comments:

This is a serious issue for some schools particularly in the light of current migration patterns. We queried whether there was more recent research data available to gauge the impact of mobility on school budgets.

19 Do you agree that we should remove the post-16 factor from 2017-18?
Yes

Transition to the reformed funding system

20 Do you agree with our proposal to require local authorities to distribute all of their schools block allocation to schools from 2017-18?

Yes

Please provide any further comments::

On the basis of predictability this is the right answer. However, we could not reach agreement on how a shortfall in high needs funding could be met once the ability to transfer funds between blocks is removed.

21 Do you believe that it would be helpful for local areas to have flexibility to set a local minimum funding guarantee?

Yes

Please provide any further comments:

Due to the current variance in funding across LAs, the new model may initially provide insufficient funds to meet needs.

Funding remaining with local authorities

22 Do you agree that we should fund local authorities' ongoing responsibilities as set out in the consultation according to a per-pupil formula?
Yes

23 Do you agree that we should fund local authorities' ongoing historic commitments based on case-specific information to be collected from local authorities?

Yes

The education services grant

24 Are there other duties funded from the education services grant that could be removed from the system?

Please provide your comments::
No opinion

25 Do you agree with our proposal to allow local authorities to retain some of their maintained schools' DSG centrally – in agreement with the maintained schools in the schools forum – to fund the duties they carry out for maintained schools?

Yes

Please provide any further comments::

Once the detail is clear it will be easier to form a view on this question

DFE HIGH NEEDS FUNDING FORMULA AND OTHER REFORMS - CONSULTATION STAGE 1

Principles for a reformed funding system

1 Do you agree with our proposed principles for the funding system?

Yes

Should there also be a principle to support early intervention?

The Forum queried whether a formula-driven and transparent principle is rather undermined by the phrase " it is not necessary or desirable to have complete consistency across the country" on p20 of the paper.

Distributing high needs funding to local authorities

2 Do you agree that the majority of high needs funding should be distributed to local authorities rather than directly to schools and other institutions?

Yes

Please provide any further comments:

However, schools must be able to rely on the transparency principle so that forward planning and future proofing are enabled.

3 Do you agree that the high needs formula should be based on proxy measures of need, not the assessed needs of children and young people?

No

Please provide any further comments:

There is more work to be done on the measures to capture all additional needs. For instance, we could not see where so-called high-functioning autistic children's needs would be met. We were also concerned that the wording of the question is likely to provoke an emotive rather than a well-informed response.

Formula design

4 Do you agree with the basic factors proposed for the formula?

Yes/No - Basic entitlement:

Agree

Yes/No - Population:

Agree

Yes/No - Child health:

Disagree

Yes/No - Child disability:

Agree

Yes/No - Low attainment at key stage 2:

Disagree

Yes/No - Low attainment at key stage 4:

Disagree

Yes/No - Deprivation - free school meal eligibility:

Agree

Yes/No - Deprivation - income deprivation affecting children index:

Agree

Yes/No - Adjustments - for "imports/exports":

Agree

Please provide any further comments:

There is limited confidence in the accuracy of data captured through census checks and even less through NHS records, to secure up-to-date, current data sets for strategic budget planning at school level.

5 We are not proposing to make changes to the distribution of funding for hospital education, but would welcome views as we continue working with representatives of this sector on the way forward.

Please provide your comments::

No opinion

6 Which methodology for the area cost adjustment do you support?

general labour market methodology

Please provide any further comments:

Managing a smooth transition

7 Do you agree that we should include a proportion of 2016-17 spending in the formula allocations of funding for high needs?

Yes

Please provide any further comments:

8 Do you agree with our proposal to protect local authorities' funding through an overall minimum funding guarantee?

Yes

Please provide any further comments::

The inclusion of an on-going damping mechanism to smooth out step changes in funding would be a welcome addition.

Changes to the way high needs funding supports mainstream schools

9 We welcome views on what should be covered in any national guidelines on what schools offer for their pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

10 Do you agree with the proposed changes to the funding of special units in mainstream schools?

Agree

11 We welcome examples of local authorities that are using centrally-retained funding in a strategic way to overcome barriers to integration and inclusion.

12 We welcome examples of where centrally-retained funding is used to support schools that are very inclusive and have a high proportion of pupils with particular types of special education needs, or a disproportionate number of pupils with high needs.

Please provide any comments:

There is evidence that where a school gets a reputation for excellent provision for high needs children, that reputation drives attraction and there becomes an uneven distribution of high needs children across the LA.

Changes to the way high needs funding supports independent special schools

13 Do you agree that independent special schools should be given the opportunity to receive place funding directly from the Education Funding Agency with the balance in the form of top-up funding from local authorities?

Disagree

Please provide any further comments:

It rather depends on whether the ISS is within the LA and impacts on its budget.
Changes to the way high needs funding supports post-16 providers.

14 We welcome views on the outline and principles of the proposed changes to post-16 place funding and on how specialist provision in further education colleges might be identified and designated.

Please provide any comments:

Any scheme which gives greater simplicity would be welcome.

The meeting, which began at 9.30 am, finished at 11.55 am

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....