

Review of 2013-14 School Funding Arrangements

Response Form

The closing date for responding is 26 March 2013.

Your comments must reach us by that date.

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

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If you have an enquiry related to the policy content of the review document you can email Funding.REVIEW2013-14@education.gsi.gov.uk

Section 1: Are we moving towards national consistency?

Question 1: Should we set a minimum threshold for the pupil-led factors and, if so, at what level?

This seems a necessary part of moving to a national funding formula, but may cause difficulties for authorities with high lump sums and a large number of small schools

Question 2: On what basis did local authorities decide on the quantum or proportion of funding to target to deprived pupils?

This has been based on a previous analysis of deprivation funding allocated through DSG

Question 3: On what basis did local authorities decide on the per-pupil amounts for the prior attainment factors?

The rate was set as the amount needed to allocate the deprivation funding above

Section 2: Areas of concern and possible changes for 2014-15

Prior Attainment

Question 4: Do you agree that local authorities should continue to use EYFSP data as an attainment-related proxy or should we consider use of a different indicator to identify low cost SEN in primary schools? If so, what indicator?

Yes - having changed to use this measure and in the absence of a better proxy indicator.

Pupil mobility

Question 5: Would it help to allow an additional weighting to be given if a school experiences in-year changes to pupil numbers above a certain threshold? If so, where should this threshold be set?

This is not significant factor for Wirral and is not used.

The lump sum

Question 6: In areas with large numbers of small schools, could the problem of having a fixed lump sum be overcome by reducing the relevant AWPU?

See answer to question 1

Question 7: Would having the ability to apply a separate primary and secondary lump sum avoid necessary small schools becoming unviable? If so, how should we deal with middle and all-through schools?

Wirral has relatively low lump sums within the funding formula; generally there is only limited recognition of the need for lump sums to support small secondary schools.

Question 8: We said in June that we would review the level of the lump sum cap (currently £200,000) for 2014-15 in order to establish whether it is the minimum cap needed to ensure the sustainability of necessary small schools. If we continued with one lump sum for both primary and secondary, what would be the minimum level of cap needed to ensure the sustainability of necessary small schools? If we had separate lump sums for primary and

secondary, what would be the minimum cap needed for each in order to ensure the sustainability of necessary small schools?

No comment

Question 9: Would using a school-level sparsity measure to target a single lump sum, based on distance between pupils and their second nearest school, avoid necessary small rural schools becoming unviable?

No comment

Question 10: What average distance threshold would be appropriate?

No comment

Question 11: If we had a sparsity measure, would it still be necessary to have a lump sum in order to ensure that necessary schools remain viable? Why? What is the interaction between the two?

Not all small schools supported by a lump sum are in sparsely populated areas.

Question 12: What alternative sparsity measures could we use to identify necessary small schools in rural areas?

No comment

Question 13: Would the ability for both schools to retain their lump sums for one or two years after amalgamation create a greater incentive to merge?

Yes the loss of a lump sum is a disincentive to an amalgamation. However schools can also overcome this by Federation

Targeting funding to deprived pupils

Question 14: If you think local authorities will be unable to use the allowable deprivation indicators in order to prevent significant losses to schools with a high proportion of deprived pupils, why do you think that is the case?

The loss of funding for some schools with higher levels of deprivation has arisen because of the changes required to the previous grants elements within the formula. It was not possible to model these evenly in a way that matched previous allocations.

Service Children

Question 15: Do you have any evidence that service children (once we account for deprivation, mobility and pastoral care through the Pupil Premium) require additional funding in order to achieve as well as non-service children?

No – however this should be available to support the current allocations through the Pupil premium.

Other groups of pupils

Question 16: Have the 2013-14 reforms prevented local authorities from targeting funding to groups of pupils that need additional support? If so, which?

No

Schools with falling rolls

Question 17: In cases where a population bulge is imminent, what is preventing good and necessary schools from staying open?

The available funding and pupil numbers are the major factors. Trends should be clear from 3 year financial plans.

Question 18: Are there any other circumstances in which falling rolls are unavoidable in the short term?

No comment

Section 3: Options for adjusting high needs funding in 2014-15 and beyond

Question 19: Would a formula factor that indicates those pupils who receive top-up funding be a useful addition to help deal with the funding of high needs?

The additional costs for schools with disproportionate pupils with high needs are raised by schools.
This factor would appear useful.

Question 20: To address the variation in base funding between neighbouring local authorities, how fast should local authorities be required to move towards the £6,000 threshold? Should it be made a requirement from 2014-15?

Unsure that this is the main reason for the difference in costs between LA's

Question 21: Should the Department play an active role in spreading good practice and model contracts/service level agreements?

Support in this area is valuable both nationally and locally.

Question 22: Do you have ideas about how the pre and post-16 high needs systems might be brought closer together?

The Post 16 High Needs changes have been complex and need time to become embedded.

Section 4: Schools Forums

Question 23: Do you think that Schools Forums are operating more democratically and transparently? If not, what further measures could the Department take in order to improve this?

The changes have introduced a lively voting session as part of the budget. The Forum as an advisory body remains at the centre of the process for allocating resources to schools.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 26 March 2013.

Send by e-mail to: Funding.REVIEW2013-14@education.gsi.gov.uk

Send by post to:

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