

MINUTES OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING
DfE Consultation on Schools National Funding Formula
Wednesday 23 March 2016
Council Chambers, Waltham Forest Town Hall
5:30 – 7:00pm

ATTENDEES	CONSTITUENT
Shona Ramsay	Chair of Schools Forum and Secondary Headteacher Representative
Debbie Callender-O'Neill	Clerk to Schools Forum debbie.callender-oneill@walthamforest.gov.uk 020 8496 3669
Maintained Primary Headteacher Representatives (4)	
Jane Harris	Edinburgh Primary
Kate Jennings	Mission Grove School
Lindsey Lampard	Chingford CofE Primary
Maureen Okoye (Vice-Chair)	Davies Lane Primary School – <i>part attendance</i>
Special School and Special Academies Representative (1)	
Gary Pocock	Hornbeam Academy
Non-School Representatives (4)	
Penny Wycherley	Waltham Forest College representing the 16-19 Providers Sector
Moira Bishop	Diocese of Brentwood
Secondary Academies and Secondary Free School Representative	
Gareth Cross	Deputy Headteacher - Connaught Schools for Girls
PRU	
Julian Lee	Hawkswood Group
LBWF Officers	
Rosalind Turner	Interim Director of Schools Standards
Andrew Beckett	Interim Assistant Director - Inclusion
Rishi Peetamsingh	Group Accountant – Schools
Duncan Pike	Strategic Finance Advisor – Families
Raina Turner	Head of Finance Families Group (Schools and Education Services)

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Shehwar Sultan	Principal Accountant – High Needs and Schools
Observers	
Linda Adair	Headteacher – Henry Maynard Primary
Daphne Faicher	Business Manager – Henry Maynard Primary
Sumera Beg	Chingford Cof E

Special Schools Forum – DfE Consultation on Schools National Funding Formula

Minutes

1. Welcome from the Chair

Chair welcomed all to the Special Schools Forum to discuss the DfE consultation on the Schools National Funding Formula. Chair specified the meeting was not quorate but RT felt that as the meeting was a consultation that the meeting can continue because the meeting became quorate.

Chair specified there are two items on the agenda and that extensive documents and papers were circulated in advance of the meeting

2. Schools National Funding Formula Consultation

The DfE launched the consultation 3 March and is a two stage consultation. The intention is to take into account the views expressed in the first phase on rationales and principles. The second stage sets out the values until the second stage is known we cannot comment further.

On page 3 of the report the seven principles are outlined on where they want to underpin the principles. This is a three-year transition and would be implemented by 2019-20. The recommendations are set out in page 2.

DP stated there are 25 questions and would be too much to go through each one. The responses will include some views from Schools Forum in the responses even though there may not be agreement by all.

The consultation has a tight deadline however if there are any Headteachers' meetings it would be useful to include a collective response.

DP stated the questions had been extracted and wanted to go through particular questions that officers felt were more important.

Question 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?

In years 2019-20 schools would get direct funding by the EFA. Although in the High Needs Block (HNB) it will still be locally led.

Questions 3-12 are all the factors and the proposal is whether to keep them or not.

Participant question: With Deprivation should you use a basket or IDACI and what about using pupil-led or area-led?

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Response: On these factors we do not use Factor 6.nor do we use Looked After Children (LAC).

What is missing from the consultation is weighting for each factor and what money they are going to put in each one. There is lots of money into rates, split sites, PFI so this is really important for us.

Question 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? Business rates, split sites private finance initiatives and other exceptional circumstances

Proposed response: The two soft years they will run the national funding formula (NFF) for pupil led formula and will aggregate and add to it on the non-pupil formula from 2016-17. Rates do fluctuate and some schools would acquire new buildings, such as with split sites as schools grow.

As more schools convert rates will go down and therefore we will have a problem by using the historical factors.

Question 14

Do you agree that we should include a growth factor?

Proposed response: Yes.

Question 15

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

Proposed response: We will secure it in at the current rate. There needs to be a solution re: top slicing.

Question 16

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

b) Which methodology for the area cost adjustment do you support?

- ***General labour market methodology***
- ***Hybrid methodology***

Proposed response: Yes and direct the DfE towards the fair funding campaign. We also emphasise the weighting they give to areas must also reflect across all of London.

Question 18

Do you agree that we should not include a factor for mobility?

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There is a proposal to abolish Mobility. For some schools this is important therefore schools to forward their views. Post-16 we do not use.

Question 20

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

Proposed response: Schools Block must be fully pass ported and no retention. This is less important in Waltham Forest as the HNB has not been subsidised as the ring fencing.

Question 21

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

Proposed response: MFG at the most is fixed at minus 1.5 per cent. If we are not able to flex and historical fix we may need to raise the non-pupil rate. The final four are mostly about responsibilities with no historical commitments.

Question 24

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

There will be a creation of a new central block with ongoing responsibilities.

Questions / Comments

Rosalind Turner (RT) stated this is all part of the changes the way it is moving. As Schools Forum there is still discussion on whether there will there be some things that may still want to buy in some way.

RT went on further on whether the Council creates a Learning Trust where schools will contribute on either a traded or commercial basis. There will be discussions about sharing problems, risks and priorities. It is going to affect schools. The amount of funding received has an impact.

Chair commented it will not be possible to de-delegate services but there are other ways to do this so schools can still pool.

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Comment: we will see in London a decrease in money in expense of outer London boroughs. London Councils modelled a reduction between now and 2020 but until we reach stage 2 how would we know.

Response: In question 25 it asked whether the Council agree to allow local authorities to retain some of their maintained schools' DSG centrally but this is temporary.

Chair queried that under paragraph 4.4 under *The Principles* what they mean by Transparent and whether it means Education outcomes.

Response: It could be about diversity and opportunity to provide Excellence everywhere. We can give out of London areas a far more flexibility. Chair suggested schools provide additional comments or extra contributions to any of the questions schools are unsure about.

DP stated that one comment to make is to put in by saying the Council have maintained schools and they would be funded by the NFF. Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) will get a block grant and they can use as they see fit. The remaining maintained schools would have no capacity to do that. Allocate money according to the priorities anomaly.

It is difficult how this is going to predict. Keen to feedback how to keep the conversation going once we are in this position. There will be some mechanism but it is too early

Comment: Regarding the *Fair* principle we're looking into what does it relate to. There still needs to be some Local Authority influence

Question: Does it say the funding for those schools will be allocated as a block?

Response: There is no proposal to change that. Schools could get differential funding. There are positives and negatives: large trusts could be able to mitigate the smaller trusts. If an academy is multi regional you could mitigate that also.

Comment: You could end up with trusts as you may get the argument to fund.

Chair asked whether there were any comments on any of the factor issues.

DP stated schools should maintain the factors. On question 4 asking about Deprivation, there is some talk about changing the IDACI banding but there are no details.

Question: In question 6 the response would be 'yes' and what about Question 7 on lump sum?

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Response: What is missing is whether or not part of it is from Key Stage 2. Many authorities fund primary and secondary differently. Other areas give more weighted. We expect the primary and secondary to be different. They tend to be different in other authorities.

Comment: It is not clear as it is difficult which factors will benefit. We would need to trust the local authority expertise on this.

As Schools Forum members represent others they try to get others to contribute. A meeting between the primary and secondary Headteachers will take place after Easter.

Chair asked whether there were any comments on questions 9, 10 and 11. DP responded these are very important especially for growing schools and this would be an additional burden.

Question 12 is not relevant.

Questions 13, 14 and 15 are factors that have been agreed are of great concern to the Council. If they calculate pupil-led funding and if they give historical spend for rates in split site PFI and growth would have rates fluctuate. This is a concern. However, as any maintained school expands its rates go up. Waltham Forest is a high payer of rates in London. Waltham Forest is an outlier, so that is fixed historically.

Question: How do we manage the locally led how would this impact on PFI schools. Similarly with Growth how do we fund extra bulge class if it is capped?

Question: Is there a political drive?

Response: We have to fund first year on the new school. For those two free schools expanding will cost us an extra £2 million.

Question: Would the growth fund completely be unsustainable.

Response: it would be an ongoing problem to those pupils schools don't include. Each year there is a gap where kids start in September. We want a true reflection. We will be asking and then what?

Question: What happens to schools that are growing?

Response: Question 16 we are responding 'Yes' and would reiterate those.

Question: About the funding on schools would the Growth go back into the schools budget? Will we go to the EFA and suggest some implications ongoing for those schools?

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Response: They might say we don't want you to top slice and you fund the growth otherwise so there could be much local turbulence.

Comment: We are a school that grew and had significant issues. No school would agree this. This goes back to whether there is underlining political feelings as this may need to be used for free schools. These issues really concerned us in the September Schools Forum. These are the areas we can reduce.

Question 18 on Mobility should be kept. It is falling. We concentrated on a small number of schools.

Questions 20 and 21: There was a lack of inter block transfers and issues around question 21 therefore we would have to say yes. Not able to flex the pupil led guarantee that means affordability gap would need to go the pupil led split sites.

Question 22: Ongoing responsibilities were admissions, pupil place planning and special needs therefore the response would be 'yes'.

Questions 24 and 25: to keep it in agreement with maintained schools.

DP will use the comments to formulate the responses.

3. High Needs National Funding Formula consultation

Andy Beckett stated they will not go through the questions as the implications need to be thought through. They will give further thought on what the Local Authority would respond to. Draft responses to the HNB

The Inclusion Group meeting will be taking place on 12 April.

This is more technical how funding is distributed. The needs to pupils are funded are set up of levels. Give some thought on the implication how that would change the distribution of funding. Also proposals which are less contentious post 16 and how schools would be funded.

Early years has an input. It is possible for other people attend the Inclusion Group?

The draft response from the LA so that would be ready end of next week

Question: Does the Inclusion Group only allow Schools Forum members?

Response: the Terms of Reference established the membership of the Inclusion group which was ratified at a Schools Forum meeting. The decision-making was by established members.

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A collegiate board meeting other colleges would represent. Commenting in a similar way might be helpful.

DP stated that he wanted to highlight the last bullet on 2.2 inclusion group agreed to maintain the £1.2 million which was originally going to disperse. In the best interest but will hold some back. It is prudent given the level of uncertainty.

Decision

DfE Consultation on Schools National Funding Formula (Stage 1)

2.1 Schools Forum notes:

- That this report highlights key proposals on the Schools national funding formula Consultation; and comments on the rationale and principles proposed in Stage 1.

2.2 Schools Forum comments on the Questions and agrees for those comments to be included in the LA's responses, in particular Questions 2, 13, 15, 16, 20 and 21.

Votes:

In favour: 9

Against: 0

Schools Forum noted 2.1

Schools Forum agreed to 2.2

High Needs Funding Reforms Consultation

2.1 Schools Forum approves:

- Delegation to the High Needs Block (HNB) Inclusion group to submit a consultation response on their behalf.

2.2 Schools Forum notes:

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- That this report highlights key proposals in the DfE's High Needs

Funding Reforms Consultation and ;

- How they may affect Waltham Forest Local Authority and its stakeholders of High Needs funding in relation to principles and rationals proposed.
- It is not possible to quantify effects of the consultation until after the second phase.
- The Inclusion Group has agreed to retain **£1.2 million** of the cumulative underspend until the position for 2017-18 and beyond becomes clearer.

Votes

In favour: 9

Schools Forum approved 2.1