

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?

Portsmouth has allocated 89.77% of funding through the pupil led factors which is higher than the proposed minimum threshold of 85% within the consultation document. Therefore this would not impact on our funding allocation to schools. However, if thresholds were set for specific factors, this could create fluctuations in funding at the school level which would require additional mitigation, through the MFG and capping mechanisms.

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

Portsmouth has allocated 11.75% of funding through the deprivation factor. The quantum of funding was identified based on the factors in the previous funding formula that related to deprivation, etc. However in order to minimise the MFG and fluctuations in funding for schools, some adjustments were made between the funding factors.

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

The quantum of funding was identified based on the factors in the previous funding formula that related to additional educational needs, etc. However in order to minimise the MFG and fluctuations in funding for schools, some adjustments were made between the funding factors.

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?

The EYFSP indicator should continue to be used. It has been identified that as a result of using this factor, those schools that have Nursery Units attached are seeing a reduction in funding through this factor as a result of the children achieving higher EYFSP scores.

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?

The pupil mobility factor has not been used in our funding formula, as the level of pupil mobility was not significant. Funding has instead been targeted through other factors to meet pupil needs.

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?

N/A - This has not been an issue for our Authority.

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?

N/A - This has not been an issue for our Authority.

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?

One lump sum is sufficient for both our primary and secondary schools as we have not experienced the issue highlighted in relation to the small schools. We have applied a lump sum rate of £140,000 to all schools, which we feel is adequate and the current cap of £200,000 provides sufficient flexibility.

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?

N/A - This has not been an issue for our Authority.

Question 10: What average distance threshold would be appropriate?

N/A - This has not been an issue for our Authority.

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?

N/A - This has not been an issue for our Authority.

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

N/A - This has not been an issue for our Authority.

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?

Some incentive is required in order for schools to consider amalgamating in the future. There are a number of options available for doing this, for example:

- (a) Allowing the school to retain the second lump sum for a maximum of two years.
- (b) Reimbursing the school for either (a) the overall loss in funding created by the amalgamation or (b) the value of second lump, depending on which is the lower (again for a maximum of two years).

A tapering mechanism, whereby the funding in the second year is reduced by say 50% may assist in helping transition to the ultimate reduced funding level.

There also needs to be a mechanism in place to allow for an update to the funding pro-forma during the year where an amalgamation takes place.

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?

We have been able to use the allowable deprivation factors. However we did find through the financial modelling exercises, that schools that had received high levels of deprivation funding, through specific grants which have been mainstreamed in the past, saw a reduction as a result of the formula based allocations in the new funding model.

We compensated for this impact as much as possible, however there were still some schools that were affected, and received protection through the MFG mechanism.

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, this has not been identified as a concern for our Authority.

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

The increase in the threshold to £6,000 has led to concerns at school level about meeting pupil needs within the revised funding allocations. The additional flexibilities have enabled the targeting of funding to those schools with a higher level of pupils with statements.

It would be helpful to have an allowable factor to target funding to schools with a higher number of pupils with statements, to support and incentivise them to remain inclusive.

Schools with falling rolls

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

N/A – We do not have any schools affected by this issue.

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

This has not been identified as a significant issue for our Authority.

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?

Yes, there is a need to be able to distribute funding to those schools with disproportionately high numbers of High Needs children. There are however issues around meeting the needs of each child when the funding is formula driven. This is a particular issue when there are significant numbers of mid-year moves.

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?

Yes, this should be made a requirement for 2014-15. We have already implemented the £6,000 threshold.

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

Yes.

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

There is a need to align the funding of element 2 (£6,000) so that pre and post 16 systems are the same, and there is not a perverse incentive for colleges to increase costs above element 2 levels

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?

Yes.

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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