

Appendix 6

Summary of Main Themes from the Schools Block Formula Consultation 2019/20

When reviewing the consultation responses it appeared there were a number of themes that could be determined. These are summarised below.

NFF values from 2018/19 to be replicated in 2019/20

- 55% of primary schools do not agree with continuing with the NFF values from 2018/19 due to the fact that they think there should have been 2 models produced, one with and one without the 1% move.
- All secondary schools who responded prefer Appendix C.

MFG 0%

- Those schools who do not agree to the 1% transfer disagree with an MFG of 0%.
- Two schools consider that 0% should be a minimum level One school would prefer the NFF fully implemented
- One school considered that the consultation was based on the assumption that the response to question 4 will be positive. However, if this had not been the case then a MFG of 0.5% could be applied, therefore passing on to schools the committed increase that the government outlined in September 2017.

1% Transfer to High Needs Block

- One Academy trust considered that the consultation should have established whether the average per pupil cost of meeting need has risen, which would be a better measure of efficiency and a comparison of costs across the mainstream and specialist sectors for meeting similar needs .
- Six schools commented that earlier in 2018/19 assurances were given at Schools Forum and Fair Funding that this would not become an annual transfer in future years.
- One academy trust school considered that there should be benchmarking with other local authorities in terms of costs per sector in relation to proportions of children with EHCs who are being educated in specialist and mainstream respectively is needed i.e. are we spending more or less on special schools placements, out of borough etc. (Harmony)
- Seven schools stated that the options provided all assume the repeated transfer of the 1% from the schools to high needs block, there is no modelling information provided pre transfer. The transfer has not been agreed yet and is still to be approved. The modelling only provides information on the local authority preferred option.
- One academy trust commented that the DSG deficit recovery plan has yet to be presented and meanwhile the deficit has increased further.
- One academy trust stated that an increase in pupil numbers rather than solely increase in costs should have been provided in terms of the transfer request to provide transparency .
- One school asserted that the local authority shouldn't underestimate the pressure being faced at school and academy level which is further exacerbated by the repeated shifting of 1% from the Schools to High Needs Block.
- One school advised that there is little evidence of work undertaken to address an issue which has been known about for some time. It would have been useful to have comparisons with other LA positions to identify if this is as grim everywhere or if there are areas which we can learn from other LA to reduce the impact of central fiscal control.

- Two schools advised that they supported a transfer of funds last year on the basis that spending on the High Needs Block in 2018/19 would be brought into line with the budget and a recovery plan agreed, shared and implemented. It is disappointing that the over spend is actually increasing, a comprehensive baseline understanding/review of SEND only due to start this month and no recovery plan has been shared (North Chadderton,

Reduction in Top up rates in Mainstream Schools

- Two schools considered that this would directly impact on the provision put in place for students with EHCP. This funding has already been reduced in recent years and does not cover the cost of the staffing that is needed to support these students.
- One school considered that there was a need to look at supporting early intervention in schools rather than relying on the high needs block
- This proposal will simply shift pressure, in particular, to those academies with the greatest number of children with high needs.
- One academy trust advised that the proposals risk penalising those mainstream schools that are already working with the average proportion of SEN children. No account is taken for the additional resource implications for leadership time when allocating resources.
- Three schools considered that mainstream schools do not have high numbers of EHC plans so cannot benefit from economies of scale for interventions and current top up funding levels already prevent the recruitment of TAs qualified at a level that can provide greater contribution to improving the outcomes of these pupils.
- One school considered that a reduction of top up funding will have detrimental impact on outcomes for children in primary schools, resulting in lower SEND progress & school performance
- With regard to EHC plans, four schools considered that primary schools still require teaching assistants to cover EHC hours. Current top up funding levels prevent schools from recruiting suitably qualified TAs and this impacts on improving outcomes for SEND pupils.
- One school considered that this constitutes a cut in the very small proportion of the high needs budget directly allocated to mainstream schools
- One school considered that already underfunded as budgets are based on very out of date historical data where notional funding is concerned.

Reduction in top up rates of Special Schools

- Seven schools/trusts considered that as the top up rates appear high, benchmarking data would be helpful. It is also not clear what proportion of spend is on out of borough, high cost placements and whether additional special school capacity would help reduce costs and keep children within borough.
- Two schools considered that they could probably not support this although it is difficult to know how the figures have been calculated and whether they are fair, without further information or comparisons with other LA's

Changes to Over Capacity Funding within Special Schools

- One school considered that it could not agree that Special Schools Top Up rates should be reduced as well as the overcapacity funding. Would suggest one or the other, favouring not reducing top up rates and allocating funding to support over capacity should this arise.
- One school considered that there seems to be some mileage in this as there may be some duplication costs that can be avoided but would like to see some actual figures

in terms of the sliding scale. Equally, the school would be wary of this argument being applied to mainstream settings in terms of admitting numbers over PAN

- One school considered that as the LA has identified, economies of scale can be applied to remove overfunding and make savings

Additional Funding model for secondary schools

- Two schools commented that the Fair Funding Group requested the modelling for primary & secondary schools so it is unclear why Appendix C information hasn't been modelled and included for primary schools in this consultation document.
- Secondary schools welcome the re-issuing of the consultation but want to record that Fair Funding Group did ask for different financial modelling for all schools, not just secondary schools;

Process and Future Year Requests

- It was apparent from the meeting with Council officers that it does not matter whether we agree or not during this consultation as it will go ahead anyway.
- The whole process has been dealt with in a chaotic fashion; schools were expected to make decisions with very little information and within a very short time frame (originally).
- Two schools considered that the LA should not automatically make the assumption this has been approved but undertake a timely consultation;
- Three schools considered that the LA better engage with the Fair Funding Group in a timely manner to allow alternative financial modelling to be discussed and reviewed before presentation to all schools or Schools Forum;
- Five schools commented that the LA should not use EGRESS for matters open to a 'public' consultation.
- Four schools considered that Local Authorities should stand together and demonstrate the true deficit position to the government to direct a further High Needs funding review.
- One school advised that the Fair Funding Group did ask for different financial modelling for all schools, not just secondary schools
- One academy trust advised that drop in sessions would be useful for future consultation
- One school requested details of Fair Funding Group membership, meeting schedules and an outline of the work plans to enable schools to establish links with representatives.

Other Comments

- The LA are just passing their debt on to schools which are already at breaking point. Schools simply cannot provide the level of provision they need to. It is fast becoming a safeguarding and Health & Safety issue with the radical depletion of staffing. Children with additional needs are missing out most as they are unlikely to get any support unless they have an EHC plan.
- It is disappointing that there is disagreement that a nil response to the consultation indicates affirmation of the LAs proposals.
- We cannot agree to a funding model that includes a transfer figure that has yet to be approved.
- What consideration has been given to seek support from schools for an interdependent solution? (E.g. Large amounts of money are used to provide residential care for pupils outside the borough. Could local Trusts be approached to look at the possibility of residential/part-residential care via the Free School route?)