

Council Response to the Consultation Issued to Schools Forum

A review of the consultation responses, discussion with some Secondary Business Managers and attendance at the Primary and Special Heads meetings highlighted a number of themes which have then been demonstrated via the formal consultation responses. These include concerns about the process, lack of knowledge and understanding of the funding of the High Needs block and transparency of the recovery plan strategy.

In response to the consultation, the LA has welcomed the opportunity to discuss with Heads and Business Managers some specific concerns but also the overall position of the DSG. Council officers look forward to future opportunities to attend groups on a larger scale to engage across sectors, maintained schools and academies to ensure that there is a greater understanding and sharing of knowledge on funding and arising pressures.

Going forward, the schools' finance team, central educational services and external consultants, Social Finance, will be developing the emerging recovery plan and inclusion strategy with the assistance of the working groups of Head Teacher representatives. The recovery plan will be completed by the end of the financial year and it is therefore expected to implement any changes to funding including any top up proposals for schools from September 2019.

In addition the LA accepts comments about process and will be planning the consultation with all schools and working groups including the Fair Funding Group from May 2019. As part of this the representation on these groups will be revisited to ensure fair representation of all schools.

It is important to reiterate the highlight the fundamental principles upon which the consultation proposals were prepared:

- an understanding that the transfer of funding of 1% between the Schools and High Needs block had been accepted given the requirement to address the shortfall in funding for High Needs and the deficit DSG position
- the presentation of what is considered to be the fairest allocation of resources for Oldham Schools and Academies having regard to prevailing pressures and issues (in particular that no school receives less resource than it has received in 2018/19)
- to ensure that Oldham Schools are best placed for smooth implementation when the National Funding Formula for Schools is fully introduced
- the positive management of the DSG deficit position (subject to the agreement of Schools Forum).