

# **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.**

**Name:**

**Organisation (if applicable):**

Slough Borough Council and Slough  
Schools Forum joint response

**Address:**

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

If a minimum threshold is set it should include all pupil-led factors to still enable local decisions over the relative proportions of AWPU and other factors and there should be no cap.

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

The funding attributed to deprivation factors in the previous formula was used as the baseline. There was a factor for historical grants that had to be apportioned with the agreement of the Schools' Forum.

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

As above. A mixture of previous prior attainment factors and an portionment of the historical grants factor.

## 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?

It is important that any replacement for EYFSP is formulated in conjunction with head teachers and governors. It is difficult to identify another indicator but primary schools do need a learning based indicator to enable the formula to operate.

### 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?

It is important that the Mobility factor identifies a greater level of turbulence. A positive step would be to count those pupils that start in non-standard year groups. E.g. other than reception for a primary school and year 7 for a secondary school. We don't think a threshold would then be needed as schools with greater mobility should continue to attract more funding.

### 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?

No answer.

**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?

Local circumstances should allow a differentiated lump sum for different types of schools. Local decisions can then decide about middle and all-through 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 answer.

**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 answer.

**Question 10:** What average distance threshold would be appropriate?

No answer.

**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?

No answer.

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

No answer.

**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?

Logically it must do.

### **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?

It is difficult to gauge whether the allowable deprivation factors work without having another, reliable, indicator of deprivation. We think that it is important to continue to allow the local flexibility to use or not use FSMs and IDACI and to decide the proportions between the two. Between them they give what appears to be the best available coverage of deprivation.

### **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 answer.

### **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?

The EAL data used for allowable EAL factors was too much of a blunt instrument and meant that Slough has not been able to target funding at a sizeable number of children with language fluency problems particularly new arrivals to the country.

### **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 impact of free schools need to be recognised. Where local circumstances are not taken into account there is a danger of good schools being adversely affected by unplanned free school provision.

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

The impact of free schools need to be recognised. Where local circumstances are not taken into account there is a danger of good schools being adversely affected by unplanned free school provision.

### 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 new system does allow high needs pupils to be identified. There may be a problem though for schools with a low level of notional SEN who take a large number of high needs pupils. They are then dependent on funding from the High needs block that might not be available.

**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?

This should be standardised as soon as possible so that schools and local authorities can be clear about funding levels when pupils cross borough boundaries.

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

Of course they should though it may be difficult to identify good practice yet but disseminating good practice in place among schools and LAs would be helpful.

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

Secondary schools have too high a number of funding streams and sources and the confusion around post-16 high needs has not helped this. It would seem sensible for the local authority to hold all high needs funding from 0 to 25. Key is to have a simpler, fair and timely system.



## 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?

We believe that Slough's Forum would already be seen as best practice. That has happened under the existing framework so we are not sure that any new regulations are necessary. Forums will evolve in a way that suits each local authority.

**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](mailto:Funding.REVIEW2013-14@education.gsi.gov.uk)

Send by post to:

Anita McLoughlin  
Funding Policy Unit  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT