



Schools Forum

Date: 16 September 2021
Time: 8.30 am to 10.30 am

Venue: Virtual via Microsoft
MS Teams

Paper

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Public

Consultation on 'Fair School Funding For All'

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Summary

On 8 July 2021 the Government launched a consultation seeking views on the approach they are taking in completing their reforms to the national funding formula (NFF) and how they most effectively transition away from local formulae to all schools' funding allocations being determined directly by the NFF in the years ahead.

This is the first stage of their consultation, with plans to publish a second stage consultation with more detailed proposals following feedback to this first consultation.

The consultation is for local authorities, schools and academy trusts, and any other interested organisations and individuals. Responses have to be submitted by 30 September 2021.

Recommendation

That Schools Forum consider and respond to the Government's 'Fair School Funding For All' consultation.

REPORT

Background

1. The Government launched a consultation on 8 July, in what is the first stage of a process of seeking views on the approach to completing the move to a direct or 'hard' NFF, completing the reform of school funding that was started with the introduction of the NFF in 2018-19. Following this consultation and the feedback from it, a second and more detailed and technical consultation will be held.
2. There are wider reviews currently underway on the SEND systems and alternative provision (AP) arrangements that will impact on the way high needs funding is allocated, with a separate consultation proposed shortly linked to these reviews. On the back of this later consultation, there will be a further consultation on the distribution of high needs funding, which will impact beyond 2022-23.

3. The consultation survey can be accessed at:
<https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/completing-our-reforms-to-the-nff/> ,
while the full consultation document is available at:
https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/completing-our-reforms-to-the-nff/supporting_documents/Fair%20Funding%20For%20All%20Consultation.pdf
4. The specific questions and initial draft responses prepared by Council officers are appended to this report. Schools Forum are invited to consider the draft response, with a view to informing the final version that will be submitted by the closing date of 30 September 2021.

Proposals

5. A summary of the proposals are:
 - that all NFF funding factors – pupil-led and school-led – are included in the hard formula and that all funding distributed through the NFF is allocated to schools on the basis of the hard formula, without further adjustment by local authorities
 - to improve premises factors within the NFF in advance of the introduction of the hard formula, meaning future allocations are based on a consistent, objective assessment of current need rather than previous years' local spending decisions
 - to reform the approach to funding for schools experiencing significant growth in pupil numbers, reflecting the overall principles of the hard NFF ie simplicity, transparency and fairness
 - to ensure a smooth transition for schools to the hard NFF, given that there will be a significant transition for schools in some areas, a careful and measured approach will be taken to its introduction, with changes likely to take effect from 2023-24 onwards (though there is no fixed target date for when it will be fully implemented)
 - to support a 'greater strategic role for trusts, recognising, in particular, their status as the key vehicles for school improvement', while 'supporting LAs to deliver their remaining responsibilities and services'
 - to allow multi-academy trusts to continue to be able to pool their funding
 - to reform the approach to funding for central school services delivered by local authorities
 - to support effective special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision
 - to change the role Schools Forums as the hard NFF is implemented and how this will impact on national consultations

- to consider the potential value of moving to a consistent funding year across maintained schools and academies, understanding the appetite for a change in the funding year for maintained schools.

Response

6. A draft response prepared by officers is appended to this report. This has largely been informed by the fact that, following consultation with Shropshire schools and Schools Forum back in 2017, Shropshire's local formula for distributing the Schools Block to individual schools and academies has been mirroring the NFF since 2018-19.
7. Schools Forum are asked to consider and comment on the draft response ahead of submission by the 30 September 2021.
8. If available at the time of the meeting, the draft response from the f40 group of local authorities will be shared with Schools Forum as well.