

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:

Paul Clark

Organisation (if applicable):

Bracknell Forest Borough Council

Address:

Children, Young People and Learning,
Seymour House,
38 Broadway,
Bracknell,
Berkshire,
RG12 1 AU

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?

No. The amount of funding distributed through factors should be determined by the local Schools Forum.

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

It was last reviewed in 2008 in response to DfE requirements to undertake a review of deprivation funding in schools. This resulted in the proportion of funds allocated to schools through the deprivation measures that were allowed at the time being broadly in line with the proportion of DSG funding that was allocated to the Council through deprivation measures.

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

These were determined from rolling forward the total cash allocated through weighted per pupil rates used in 2012-13, adjusted to a uniform value that must be used in 2013-14, and then adding new funds where the outcome from the 2012 consultation with schools was that funding currently being distributed through factors that would in future be disallowed should use low prior attainment data. In some instances there were different decisions in primary and secondary phases.

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?

Yes

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?

Yes. There should be the ability to target resources appropriately to schools experiencing the greatest proportionate in-year admissions. The factor should not be one of general entitlement to all schools. The mobility factor in the 2012-13 BF Funding Formula applied only where in-year admissions exceeded 10% of NOR. Funding was increased by a weighting of around 50% when pupil mobility exceeded 15% of NOR. Turnover of less than 10% did not generate any funds.

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?

Not relevant to BFC. No comment.

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?

It would be helpful to have the option to apply differential lump sum funding between primary and secondary 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?

We have not undertaken a review of necessary costs to comment on this question.

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?

Not relevant to BFC. No comment.

Question 10: What average distance threshold would be appropriate?

Not relevant to BFC. No comment.

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?

Not relevant to BFC. No comment.

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

Not relevant to BFC. No comment.

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?

Probably, but it is not just an issue of revenue funding. There would remain issues of affordability in respect of any capital investments required to make the buildings fit for purpose and these have previously been a barrier to amalgamations in BFC. The priority for capital investments at the moment is ensuring there are sufficient school places.

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?

No comment.

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?

We have not undertaken a review of necessary costs to comment on this question

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?

No comment.

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 Council has not had to close any schools and has used schools in financial difficulty funding to support schools with falling rolls where appropriate.

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

No comment.

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?

It would only identify pupils with needs above the £6,000 threshold, so may not properly identify schools with high numbers of pupils with high needs below this threshold. However, any additional data on high needs pupils would help in making funding decisions, so is welcomed.

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.

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

Yes. This would be a welcome intervention as progress towards a local agreement has been slow and has yet to conclude.

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

A uniform funding period rather than one using financial year and the other an academic year would remove some accounting complications.

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?

The BFC Schools Forum has always operated on a democratic and transparent basis, so no change here.

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:

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