

# **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.**

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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?

We do not think a minimum threshold should be set.

We have reservations about the degree of focus on pupil-led factors: there is in our view a danger that this could force changes in the number of schools or the way they are organised at the expense of taking the focus off standards.

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

N/A

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

N/A

## 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?

N/A

### 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?

Where authorities have significant mobility issues, these can have a significant impact on costs in the schools concerned and it is therefore essential that this factor is able to reflect those differences in cost. It would be helpful to allow for an additional weighting factor for those with higher levels of mobility, but a sharp cut-off point would be perceived as unfair for those who are just below it. A banded approach to smooth the progression of funding would be preferable.

**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?

In our view it would be most helpful if local flexibility was allowed in this. Local authorities are best placed to recommend how this can be achieved.

**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?

In our view, having the ability to apply a separate primary and secondary lump sum could assist necessary small schools in remaining viable. Currently, we do not follow the logic of a lump sum set at the same level in primary and secondary schools because they tend to be organised quite differently.

If a separate lump sum was permitted by sector, the amounts to middle and all-through schools could be apportioned by using primary and secondary values on the basis of the proportion of pupils in each age category.

**Question 8:** We said in June that we would review the level of lump sum (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 do not have a view on what values would be best for a separate primary and secondary lump sum, but believe that a lump sum should be sufficient to cover the fixed costs.

**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?

In our view, the DfE must ensure that the benefit of using a sparsity measure is proportionate to the effort involved. We would be concerned if this became a complicated measure.

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

N/A

**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?

N/A

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

N/A

**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?

In our view it would be helpful for schools to be able to retain their lump sums for a defined period following amalgamation. This would encourage schools to consider measures such as merger where it would be rational to do so thereby promoting greater value for money. We believe that one year would probably be sufficient, given that the Minimum Funding Guarantee will provide some protection.

**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?

N/A

### **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?

N/A

**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?

N/A

**Schools with falling rolls**

**Question 17:** In cases where a population bulge is imminent, what is preventing good and necessary schools from staying open?

N/A

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

N/A

### 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?

N/A

**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?

N/A

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

That would be helpful. In particular, it would be useful for guidance regarding the implementation of high needs reforms and all aspects of the system to be brought together in one simple, comprehensive, updated volume.

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

N/A

## 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?

N/A

**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)

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