

Schools Forum

School Funding and SEN Working Group – extraordinary meeting

MS TEAMS MEETING

8th September 2021

Minutes

Present: Marie Taylor (Chair), (Finance, local authority ((LA)), Grant Davis (Finance, LA), John Hawkins (Teacher / Governor rep), Catriona Williamson (Mere), Andy Bridewell (Ludgershall Castle), Lisa Percy (Hardenhuish), Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley) Sam Churchill (Hilmarton) Graham Nagel-Smith (Morgan's Vale & Woodfalls)

Apologies: Georgina Theobald-Kiely (Downland) Cate Mullen (Head of Inclusion & SEND, LA),

1.	Welcome and Apologies	
2.	<p>Extraordinary Meeting to discuss the DfE Consultation:</p> <p>Fair school funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula (NFF) – response deadline 30th September 2021.</p> <p>MT outlined each of the consultation questions and provided the local authority view and commentary as a starting point. The group felt that the DfE had a clear direction of travel to a hard formula, and this has been known for a sufficient number of years to allow local authorities to plan alignment with limited impact on individual school budget as Wiltshire has.</p> <p>The group concurred with the majority of the local authority proposals however changes were made to:</p> <p>Question 1 – No, the group's preference would be to retain some local flexibility with regard to formula factors which the form have previously flexed e.g., sparsity (under the existing sparsity guidance) and mobility.</p> <p>Question 5 – No – to reflect the earlier response to 1.</p> <p>Question 10 – Yes – to reflect the earlier response to 1.</p> <p>Other commentary</p> <p>Question 11 LP provided useful feedback that should CSSB be reduced, and local authority school improvement and other services reduced, diluted or stopped, the impact would be on schools as they would need to procure services using school budget share. JH supported this view.</p> <p>Question 13 With regard to the proposal to move the financial year end of maintained schools to align to academy schools, the academy heads agreed this did make planning straightforward and they liked it however, the duty on academies to produce monthly management accounts meant that producing the required mid year (31st March) report to be included in the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) was straightforward. Maintained heads were concerned that there could be additional burdens on the smaller primaries to have admin & finance staff in school during</p>	

	<p>August to arrange payment of invoices. Contractual issues may arise and cost pressures for additional paid working days. LP responded that they put in artificial barriers for final orders to take place mid July and that new orders were not placed until mid-September to assist with lessening year end duties.</p> <p>A different issue is that of the time between the census data used to fund schools (the October prior to April and September) will mean all schools not just academies will have 11 months lag between the census and the beginning of the financial year. A growing school would be worse off, a contracting school better off. The solution could be to move the census used to January.</p> <p>Question 16</p> <p>The group took full advantage of this box to explain their reasoning to Q1 and the very specific MOD presence in Wiltshire plus the benefits of three-year settlements, assuming adequate uplift was built in for inflation, pay inflation and upcoming changes to NI and pensions.</p> <p>Next Steps</p> <p>MT to update and finalise, GD to load onto Right Choice Publicise via HT briefing, Govs briefing, schools newsletter and ask the chairs of PHF, WASSH & WGA to promote amongst their members.</p> <p>The local authority will also respond. MT to ask senior leadership to respond</p>	<p>MT GD MT</p>
9	<p>AOB</p> <p>MT raised one item for the group – a request to consider suitable proposals for the roles of chair and vice chair of schools forum following the retirement of Neil Baker. CW agreed to ask PHF to consider this at their exec on Thursday.</p>	<p>CW</p>