



Campaign for fair funding for schools

Fairness

f40 seeks fairness and equal opportunities in education for all children, regardless of where they live, and wishes to see all schools properly funded to enable them to provide a quality education. The basic entitlement should be enough to run a school, before extra money is added.

There are still too many discrepancies in the way funding is distributed, with some schools receiving far more per pupil than others. The historical add-ons that some schools receive should be abolished. Additional funding should be given for deprivation and other additional needs and realistic area living costs, but

base funding for every school should be the same. While government has acknowledged the unfairness and is attempting to level up, it is a slow process and the unfairness continues, with many areas, especially large rural communities and 'shire' local authorities still receiving inequitably less funding.

The Covid pandemic has shone a light on these disparities and highlighted the plight of disadvantaged pupils. More funding should be given for all disadvantaged pupils – including those living in more rural areas, which are sometimes forgotten, as well as those in towns and cities.

Increased funding

The pandemic has placed greater stress on already tight budgets. For a number of years, education funding has not kept pace with inflation, while the demands on schools and teachers have grown rapidly. In real terms, school funding is at 2010 levels.

In July 2019, f40, joined by a number of headteacher and school organisations, including teaching unions and parent and school governor groups, calculated that education required an extra £12.6b up to 2023.

In October 2019, government agreed a £7.1b incremental increase to the overall schools budget – with an additional £700m for special educational needs. While welcome, based on the figure previously calculated, it was £5.5b short of what was needed.

With teachers' pay and pensions being increased, much of the extra £7.1b will be used to pay for these increases, once rolled out.

To put this into context, the Schools Block budget increased by £1.7bn in April 2020; According to the NEU, £960m was absorbed by increased school costs (including pay rises) and £350m by the increase in the number of pupils. This left a real increase of £430m – £58 per pupil.

However, we know that schools incurred considerable costs due to Covid just in preparation to return to school last September, which will have eaten into any increases.

SEND

Special Educational Needs continues to be a major concern, with need outstripping budgets and EHCP applications continuing to rise. The situation will get worse unless the High Needs system is overhauled, with less reliance on EHCPs and greater emphasis on school inclusion. We urge government to complete the review of SEND, and its funding, and implement the recommendations.

Schools need support systems, guidance and additional funding to enable them to be properly

inclusive of SEND pupils. And local authorities need additional funding to settle the huge deficit SEND budgets they currently have, which is increasing each year.

SEND funding continues to be unfair, with some councils receiving far more than others, despite having similar pupil numbers, need and deprivation. Funding is based on historic factors, rather than the situation now. The DfE is attempting to level up SEND funding, but it is a very slow process.



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Early years

Early Years has become much more of a concern throughout the pandemic. Children have not necessarily attended nurseries, but provision is still expected to be available. Funding for the free entitlement has received some support, but many providers have lost private parental income that is not being replaced but is a significant part of the organisation. There are fears many will go out of business unless financial support is given.

Up to 2019, there had been no increase in funding for the free entitlement for a number of years, but with significant increases in costs in wages (from the

national minimum wage) and from pension requirements, leaving nurseries running on a shoestring. The pandemic has highlighted how fragile this market is, but we know how necessary early education is for the life chances for our young people.

We are grateful of the recent announcement that children who are registered with a provider but not attending as a result of Covid can be counted on the census and that there is an 85% guarantee for LAs, however this does not address the loss of private parental income and the need for nurseries to have guaranteed funding to enable financial planning.

Covid

Schools cannot afford the additional costs and financial impacts of Covid, such as:

- Extra teaching needs
- Heating and cleaning
- PPE
- Additional learning and catering resources
- Lack of guaranteed nursery funding (private/voluntary/independent/schools)
- Loss of income

We believe government should provide assistance with additional costs and loss of income incurred.

We acknowledge government has promised to pay additional teacher costs from November and December 2020, dependent upon levels of school reserves. But so far, only Covid expense claims from March to July 2020 have been processed, and the criteria for that was too narrow.

We are asking that the second window for claims be opened, with a third window planned for the end of 2021, allowing schools to properly explain their individual financial circumstances as they start to return to normal.

What f40 is asking for

Changes to the National Funding Formula to make it fairer, more easily understood and transparent.

We would like a minimum level of funding to meet basic educational need of all pupils, and the removal of historic inequalities and funding protections for Schools Block and High Needs Block. We do not wish to remove additional funding for deprivation, additional needs or realistic living costs.

At least £5.5b additional school funding (above full inflation increases) in 2022/23, for Early Years, Primary, Secondary, 16-19, and High Needs up to age 25. A further £5.4bn is needed from 2023 to 2025 to ensure every child is taught by a qualified teacher in classes of no more than 30. These figures were estimated in 2019 and are currently under review. f40 is refreshing its funding model in 2021 to ensure our figures take account of the latest data and cost pressures in education.

A guaranteed rolling, three-year funding programme to enable education providers to budget ahead.

Schools recompensed for Covid expenses relating to additional teacher costs, a reduction in nursery attendance, heating and cleaning, PPE, and extra learning and catering resources, with 75% of lost income met.