

Schools Forum

School Funding and SEN Working Group

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING – DfE follow up Consultation Questions on the NFF

MS TEAMS MEETING

11th July 2022

Minutes

Present: Marie Taylor (Chair), (Finance, local authority ((LA)), Grant Davis (Finance, LA), Lisa Percy (Chair of SF / Hardenhuish), Graham Nagel-Smith (Morgan's Vale & Woodfalls), Andy Bridewell (Ludgershall Castle), John Hawkins (Teacher / Governor rep),

Apologies: Catriona Williamson (Mere) Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley) Georgina Theobald-Kiely (Downlands) Graham Shore (Deputy Chair SF / Holy Trinity)

1.	Welcome and Apologies MT welcomed the group to the virtual meeting and explained colleagues would be joining and leaving during the meeting to cover school duties and teaching cover arrangements.	
2.	Minutes Minutes of the last meeting were not considered.	
3.	Matters Arising There were no matters arising.	
4.	DfE Consultation The group had been sent the DfE consultation paperwork and the local authority's initial response to consider prior to the meeting. GD took the group through the 25 consultation questions. This is a follow up consultation from the DfE and not contentious for Wiltshire schools as Wiltshire took the decision to align as closely as possible to the NFF when it was first introduced. Q1 – Trf to high needs block – the group agreed the fairest way was % across all budgets to reflect size and funding of schools. It was noted that ideally, the HNB should be fully funded at a level which reflected pupil needs and a transfer should not be required. Wiltshire ensures the NFF local model can be funded in full before considering transfers between blocks. Q2 – Indicative SEN budget – the group agreed the £6k should be nationally set Q3 – Growth - the group prefer local discretion as up to date information is held around place planning, pupil numbers and anticipated changes due to military, housing developments etc Q4 - Falling rolls fund – Wiltshire does not set a falling rolls fund and is not supportive of a falling rolls fund especially one which is limited for Excellent & Good Ofsted inspection outcomes, because falling rolls can be due to a number of factors not linked to quality of education in school Q5 – Retain existing methodology – use of historic data is not supported, this methodology is used to allocate a substantial level of high needs block and this has impacted negatively on Wiltshire's HNB funding levels, contributing to the DSG deficit. Q6 – Reinvest – there could be occasions where falling rolls fund may be able to be reinvested in a resource base or other specialist placement arrangements Q7 – Growth – local approach preferred, when funding is based on estimates and these do not transpire or are delayed, the clawback arrangements are wholly inappropriate, incongruous to stability, long term planning and recruitment and retention of teaching staff	

	<p>Q8 – popular schools funding – academies already receive this not maintained schools so there should be alignment at least. Lagged funding delay. Repeat comments around clawback on Q7 above.</p> <p>Q9 – Agree 0.5 mile – reflects Wiltshire’s formula</p> <p>Q10 – Agree split site – reflects Wiltshire’s formula</p> <p>Q11 – 500m – agree – reflects Wiltshire’s formula</p> <p>Q12 – the group felt that a % of the lump sum was fair as Wiltshire is a large rural county with many small schools. These are at the heart of the community. Some schools have merged to ensure financial viability. The group felt that 60% was too low to reflect the genuine doubling up of front office, photocopier, caretaker etc costs of a second school site. The % should be at least 75% to align with Wiltshire’s 76.14%</p> <p>Q13 – the group felt that this was not appropriate – teaching staff tend to be fixed to one site, with HT, caretaker and admin covering both. MATS often share the same pool of staff and these travel between sites with no additional funding. It is therefore not required at an additional level.</p> <p>Q14 – the group agreed this may increase / decrease due to locally known factors or be part of financial recovery plans</p> <p>Q15 – same points in Q12 – 75% not 60% - if this is lower than 75% then MFG protection should be made available to help with the small rural schools who rely on being adequately funded</p> <p>Q16 – Exceptional rental costs – in Wiltshire we submitted a disapplication to reduce from the current 1% to 0.75% to reflect the lower cost better value arrangements in place. Increasing the % will encourage schools to pay their village hall / parish council higher rents to ensure they are funded on top of their SBS. Incongruous to value for money guidance local authorities are bound by.</p> <p>Q17 – Exceptional circumstances are by their very nature vastly different and therefore should be based on actuals so that the latest position is captured and funded.</p> <p>Q18 – MFG – Wiltshire enjoys less than £0.2M due to close alignment with NFF but we agree that schools should be protected from volatility to ensure strategic planning.</p> <p>Q19 – Any simplification of this would be welcomed – dependent upon pupil characteristics and so difficult for schools to forward plan</p> <p>Q20 – Greater transparency – perhaps develop a calculator tool to help schools project the majority of Wiltshire schools find it hard to project accurately into the future</p> <p>Q21 – (i) notional allocations – potentially less helpful (ii) calculator tool preferred; national formula factors, NOR, characteristics, provide for any uplifts (three year data preferred) so much more stability for schools – providing estimates of pay award tricky but could be provided without prejudice based on forecast BoE inflation.</p> <p>Q22 – Calculator tool - 3 year rolling budget helpful for schools planning, re: providing pay inflation estimates - the ESFA/DfE would benefit from knowing schools are all setting budgets on the same basis? Some schools may be too prudent and plan for worst case scenario – depending on level of reserves and if so, appropriate levels of funding may not all be allocated to pupils</p> <p>Q23 – annual October verification could be speedier by the DfE- the most efficient option is the current local authority data driven one</p> <p>Q24 – De-delegation – interesting proposal to continue with de-delegation in new NFF, economies of scale for the LA can be shared with schools, not for profit approach, certain income levels allow LA’s better planning. Data collection just needs to be build into the academisation process, nothing more complex than that</p> <p>Q25 – Timing – works well in Wiltshire Schools Forum</p>	
5.	<p>Communication Strategy</p> <p>MT and GD thanked the group for their input and confirmed the SFWG response would be shared with LA colleagues Wilts Learning Alliance PHF chair WASSH chair WGA chair</p>	GD

	Published on the Right Choice and on the HT weekly newsletter – whilst school leaders would be encouraged to submit responses, this consultation is not contentious for Wiltshire Schools	
6.	<i>Date and Time of Next Meeting – N/A</i>	