

2016-17 SCHOOL FUNDING CONSULTATION RESPONSES (IL1)

General Comments

The library service holdback provides no benefit to the school at all, no evidence of any impact during 2014-15. Union Facilities time is covered by Union subscriptions. BST & PPE teams need to ensure that evaluations are sent to schools to support self-evaluation.

No evidence has been presented to me to explain why secondary schools need a greater ratio - the only rational presented is that Sandwell does not have the national ratio. It is not clear what secondary schools would do with the additional money extra to what they do now. The success of primary schools demonstrates that we make excellent use of the money and it is value for money. If I have to decrease the ratio of teachers to pupils, particularly in year 6, as a result of a budget reduction, I will not achieve the same results as I have done recently.

Question 2: Shireland Hiring Premises - After researching this issue we feel that that the Shireland request is excessive and therefore the money should not be taken from the central funding. Question 4: De Delegated Proposals Q4: School Libraries - This is a historic charge. The majority of schools have their own libraries or links to libraries and no longer get the benefit from this. Question 5: Primary: Secondary Ratio - We are recommending proposal A, to maintain the ratio at 1:1.23. Although we appreciate the reason for the proposal, we feel Brandhall needs to support proposal A to indicate that our current funding is not at all excessive and that in the next few financial years we are potentially faced with some difficult times due to increased pension/N.I contributions and cost of living increases. We fear that Primary Schools, in general, will suffer significantly if the ratio is changed and need to reflect this in our response.

With regards to the primary:secondary ratio we are saying yes to "A". However, should this not be the preferred option then we would ask that proposal B is considered rather than proposal C

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We would like to support school improvement in secondary schools, however we do not support the proposal as some secondaries do not benefit and there is no information about how this money is to be used

The governors do not understand why we are discussing funding academies

General Comments

Further Information required for Q1

Secondary balances are higher than primary balances. If we look at specific pupil funding the ratio in Sandwell is 1:1.39 - This would rank the borough 73rd nationally as opposed to 15th. Current ratio has enabled Sandwell Primary performance to improve considerably, with any change putting this continued improvement at risk

From a meeting of the FGB at X- Re point 5- We understand that secondary schools would like more money (we all would) and also understand that there are extra costs for high schools eg science labs etc, as there always have been. However: A/ There are LAs where the ratio is lower and achievement is good and better- There seems to be no correlation between more money for secondaries even when deprivation factors are taken into account B/ We care for ALL children in Sandwell, but reducing funding at primary (particularly early years) will mean that issues that should be addressed at primary level (and are in the main) will be pushed into secondary schools C/ Secondary schools get increased funding for all factors including EAL and deprivation D/ There have been discussions around some primary schools having large carry-forwards, but although the amount of secondary schools is small the number of schools with this is proportionally similar. This is a separate issue and needs to be addressed. What can the LA do about ALL schools who have high carry forward? Money can make a difference but it must come with a fierce focus on school improvement. Throwing money at a problem will not make an issue disappear.

More information required for question 1. Union Facilities time does not give details of allocation

With regard to Pt.2 the governors were concerned that agreeing to an exceptional premises factor to cover the cost of hiring external PE premises would set a precedence. With regard to Pt.3 the governors felt that there was not sufficient information to make an informed decision.

We agree with the general growth fund but not the £431,400 to subsidise the new Q3 academy. We don't agree with the exceptional premises factor to support Shireland as they have sports hall - <http://www.thelearningbank.co.uk/shireland/innovation.htm>. We do not agree to library and H&S de-delegated as these are now SIPS services

No Change, maintain ratio 1:1.23

Views expressed are those of the governing body from a meeting on 18/09/2015

With regard to Pt 1, a further breakdown of costs required across the schools affected

No way should ratios between primary/secondary be altered. There are already huge concerns over primary budgets being reduced in the future, especially with impact of increases in pension contributions being significant. Why is primary bearing brunt of ongoing costs as well as being penalised by ratio. Cover for union reps is being carried mainly by primary and cost far more than services like library.

General Comments

More detail is required to explain how the figure for the Pupil Number Growth Fund has been arrived at. More transparency is required in order to suitably judge the merits of such a significant retention of funds. The information regarding the proposed Exceptional Premises Factor is out of date. Shireland Collegiate Academy have very recently had a purpose built "Performing Arts and Sports Facility." This seems a little unfair as the academy has recently developed multi-purpose facilities and seems to be self-sufficient. The cap on gains is the only logical and fair way to fund the Minimum Funding Guarantee. The proposed changes to the Primary:Secondary Ratio are without any educational reasoning, there is no correlation between higher Secondary funding and improved exam results. Also the prudent budget setting of the secondary schools in prior years have left them with far higher balances than they expected. The budget setting would appear to be unrealistic to actual spend. In short there appears to be no case whatsoever to move funding from the Primary sector to the Secondary sector.

Q2 - From looking at Shirelands website they seem to have a sports hall, muga, tennis courts etc which they let out (Charging Policy) Unsure why premises are being hired!

Pupil Number Growth Fund - Governors felt that there was not enough information given to explain how the estimated requirement for the growth fund had been arrived at, other than the split between existing schools and the new Q3 Langley Academy. Therefore, they did not feel able to make a decision on this.

As with other Heads I went to the consultation meeting so that I could make an informed decision. I found ultimately the most useful information has been provided by Total Finance information to schools, that looked into each area in more depth. For example Shireland - actually have a state of the art facility in place. Pupil Growth Contingency: concerned at the lack of transparency regarding the process for accessing this funding. The Primary/Secondary Ratio: again not enough information has been provided. My understanding is that Secondary schools already receive 23% more funding than primary. That secondary schools hold higher balances than Primary ie £956 compared to £629 in 2014/15 per pupil. Total Finance provide interesting figures on balances from Budget to Outturn in 2014/15 showing Primary 140% and secondary 764%. The maintained secondary schools actual reserves at close of year £2,639,184 compare to their projection of £305,387. From information provided to me there is no correlation between funding level ratios and performance outcomes. I would actually say that Sandwell Primary as a whole are demonstrating very positive performance probably because we have to build a staff base to support the wide range of Early Help / Family Support / Mentoring / Home School links that support building learning behaviours. I know in my school I have 2.5 Learning Mentors that I fund to do this essential work. Pupils leaving 'good' primaries where these nurturing cultures are effective ensure settled learning into Y7 and continuity in terms of Family Support and Safeguarding. Given the recent OFSTED grading for Sandwell around Safeguarding to change the ratio to benefit secondary will inevitably lead to redundancy of these 'family support dedicated workers'. In essence I don't think an appropriate case has been put to Heads and it would benefit from budget officers invited as they have a more 'balanced evidence based view'. UNION - Although, I don't feel that the explanation for the use of this funding is adequate ie what proportion to each union v union membership across Sandwell schools or is it same amount to each union. Basically is there a formula to calculate this?

General Comments

Primary / Secondary Ratio: More analysis will need to be carried out on this before a move towards the National Average is decided upon. It may well be taken out of our hands by the DFE. In the meantime schools are facing increased costs in with decreasing budgets in real terms. A sudden move of funding could cause immeasurable problems for some primaries, particularly small schools. This will impact on the child's first point of contact with education and could lead to a lowering of standards across the LA.

More information on pupil growth funding before a decision can be made. Would like evidence of how an increase in funding for secondary and reduction in primary funding has improved standards elsewhere.

The funding formula is very unfair to small schools with low deprivation/pupil premium. Schools with high deprivation should get more money but we are just concerned about the extent to which small schools, like X, are left with only enough money to buy the bare essentials, whereas other schools seem to have an abundance of money. X has very little money, beside the money paid per pupil, so changing the ratio of primary to secondary schools will therefore have a devastating affect on the budget. This will mean redundancies and without the current staffing we will be unable to sustain the strategies and procedures that has resulted in sustained achievement.

Pupil Number Growth Fund - More detail is required to judge the merits of such a significant retention of funds
Proposed Exceptional Premises Factor for Shireland Collegiate Academy - No comment as I am new to Sandwell and do not know the history of this Academy
Capping Gains - A cap on gains is the only logical & fair way to fund a Minimum Funding Guarantee
Primary:Secondary Ratio - No educational rationale is presented for the proposed move in funding. There is no correlation nationally between higher Secondary funding and exam results
It has been suggested that Primary schools hold high balances in relation to Secondary schools. This is not always the case, in fact smaller primaries are finding budgeting very difficult and some are cutting staff.

Question 2 (item 3 in Consultation Document) With respect to the question asked on the basis of Shireland Collegiate Academy not having access to any sports facilities and not having a hall/sports hall to set up for exams. This may have been historically the case but is clearly not so now as they have a new build which included a purpose built sports hall which other schools would normally use for their exams. Therefore, this is not an exceptional premises situation.

General Comments

i) De-delegated budgets - proportion charged to academy's is higher than the cost retained for central maintained schools. Why? ii) Pupil Number Growth - of all the schools who have already received this funding, how many of them have had their reserves increased? This money is to cover additional costs and therefore reserves shouldn't be effected. Also, no details have been provided for Q3 (Langley) for the subsequent years. This is needed as I expect the actual cost for the future will be a lot higher. iii) LumpSum/Split site - why are Phoenix Collegiate still receiving 2 lots. The old Manor site has been shut-up for the last two years. There should be no costs in terms of running this site. If there is it should only be rates which is funded seperately. Therefore, can you please provide information as to what costs are having to be met by Phoenix for the Manor site?

Re q1: No – this is a material sum and should not be top sliced without more detailed financial information being made available and a thorough review of alternative sources of finance taking place. The last NOR forecast for the redeveloped Langley site raised legitimate questions over the school's viability.

This proposal re-directs funding intended to resource academic success away from students who are in schools now.

Re q2: The information in 3.3 of the consultation document (The school does not have access to any sports facilities and do not have a hall/sports hall to set up for exams), seems to be factually incorrect. Shirelands has, quite recently, opened a new £8 million facility including a new sports hall; it seems to have been opened by the Duke of York. The facility was reportedly 'targeted at filling deficient areas in the school accommodation'. If a larger sports facility was needed for PE and exams, therefore, it is sensible to suggest that such a space would have been prioritised over a new 400 seat theatre, (which may be / has been designed as a flexible space that can be used for PE and exams as well?) Shireland's lettings charges state that their sports hall, tennis court, netball court, pitches and dance studios can all be hired out. Shirelands seems to hire its auditorium out at £6,000 / day? Photos on the internet suggests there are fantastic facilities. Perhaps a site visit would be good idea? Is this new facility explain why the EFA has stopped providing additional funding?

Is the list under 3.2 exhaustive? If there is going to be an Exceptional Premises Factor to deliver PE / exams in sports halls / performance spaces that don't exist but seemingly do? – then there should be other exceptional premises factors for schools, for example, that have not benefited from new builds, to offset increased repairs and maintenance costs. Re q3: - Yes, for the next 4 /5 years when, hopefully, the Primary / Secondary ratio reaches the national average.

Question 1 - Mlore detail is required. nothing has been given to show how these figures have been arrived at.

Question 2 - It would appear from their website that they have a new sports hall.

Question5 - main concerns regarding this:-

a) Upon examination of data it would appear that secondary school balances are higher than primary

b) That when looking at performance of secondary schools from authorities who are funded closer/above national avege, there isn't necessarily a correlation between funding and outcomes.

c) That primary schools are going to face significant budget constraints with increased national insurance pensions and wage. A change to ratios at this point will only exacerbate this.

General Comments

That the increase of pupil numbers is now feeding into secondary schools and as a result their funding will increase. Without the need for further measures.

IF more money is to be allocated to secondaries then assurance as to how this is going to be used to secure improved

1) We agree with the proposals for the growth fund

2) We do not agree with the exceptional premises funding. If a school knows that funding is for a timescaled period, this should be planned within their future budget projections. Money should be allocated for this. The impact of the Shireland funding will be detrimental for a number of Smethwick schools due to the proposed opening of the Shireland Primary Free School. The extra funded facilities will detract and potentially pull children away from maintained Local Authority schools. Many other schools are probably in similar situations, but do not know that this fund exists. The LA should make schools aware of this funding stream and find out how many organisations are in the same position.

3) Yes, the funding cap should stay in place to ensure that the Minimum Funding Guarantee can continue

4) We agree with all the proposals

5) We agree with proposal A for the reasons stated below:

The funding formula should not be changed in favour of secondary schools All research points to the importance of early educational development. The reason that Sandwell is obtaining this success is due to its investment in primary education.

Looking at the 2014 GCSE league tables, both Kingston-upon-Thames (1:23) and Sutton (1:22) are ranked within the top 10 Local Authorities in the country. We need to look at how they achieved this success whilst on the same, or lower, ratios than Sandwell.

The 10 lowest performing Local Authorities in the UK all give secondary schools considerably more funding than primaries (Wolverhampton 1:36, Salford 1:40, Middlesbrough 1:37, Nottingham 1:34, Bradford 1:33, Knowsley 1:53). This shows quite clearly that by just increasing funding for secondary schools does not mean any impact on academic performance standards.

Secondaries need to concentrate on the 'old fashioned' method of quality first teaching ensuring that when children enter in KS3 they are pushed forward immediately. The predicted 'extra' funding levels on an individual school basis are not enough to make a large impact on schools own budgets to make an impact on standards.

We don't disagree with extra funding where a school can justify the required spend, but feel it unfair that even 'outstanding' and 'good' secondaries will receive more. Surely the money needs to be targeted to the clear areas of need and not just a blanket system.

Our school buildings are crumbling. At present need new heating and a new roof. The PMA can not afford to provide this (we are being partially reroofed at present, however, the job is not going to be carried out to provide a long term solution due to lack of money in the PMA). As a school we can not afford to spend the hundreds of thousands of pounds that we need to.

If our funding is reduced, it will mean staff cuts, building work not carried out and will overall lead to a decline in standards.