

Schools Forum

12th December 2022

Schools Funding Consultation 2023-24 – Response Results

This report is for decision

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That Schools Forum makes a recommendation on the responses to the proposals outlined in the schools funding consultation document (as presented at the November meeting and as consulted on with schools per the detail below).
- 1.2 That Schools Forum considers the comments received in the consultation and agree on a way to take these forward.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 To gain a recommendation from Schools Forum members for the basis for the schools funding formula for 2023-24 following consultation with schools.

3. Links to School Improvement Priorities

The decisions of the Forum define the budget setting processes for all schools and academies within the borough for the next financial year. Given national government announcements on future funding for schools, this process will assist schools in preparing strategic plans, ensuring schools are able to create viable budget, staffing and curriculum plans. All decisions will affect the amount available to be delegated directly with schools and focus on what funding is centrally retained to protect services and schools.

4. Report Details

- 4.1 The 2023-24 Schools Funding Consultation document was issued electronically to schools on 11th November 2022 on circular 166 and asked 7 questions.

4.2 The details of these questions and responses can be found in Appendix 1.

4.3 The table below compares responses from the previous 3 years:

	Primary	%	Secondary	%	TOTAL	%
2020-21	56/94	60%	9/18	50%	65/112	58%
2021-22	60/95	63%	10/20	50%	70/115	61%
2022-23	43/94	46%	10/20	50%	53/114	47%
2023-24	55/94	59%	6/20	30%	61/114	54%

4.4 Meetings to explain the overriding principles contained within the consultation document were held with the following stakeholders:

- Joint Executive Group – 10th November 2022
- Secondary Partnership – 17th November 2022
- Joint Union Panel – 22nd November 2022
- Q&A Teams meeting – 23rd November 2022

- Primary Partnership – 24th November 2022
- Association Sandwell Governing Bodies – 30th November 2022

4.5 Schools Forum will be aware that as Local Authorities are directed to move closer to the National Funding Formula the amounts stipulated in the modelling options for 2023-24 were to be treated with extreme caution and this was explained at the above meetings.

4.6 It was made clear that there were 6 large caveats / assumptions within the modelling options in question one which would make it very difficult to give any certainties over funding for 2023-24 and these are set out below:

- The modelling assumed a growth fund of £1.664m
- The modelling assumed £0.375m transfer of funding from the schools block to the Central Schools Services block
- The modelling included 2 brand new factors and removed a factor from 2022-23.
- The data supplied was on October 21 census data
- The SSG grant would be rolled in to DSG for 2023-24
- The £322m September funding used to model the figures is likely to be higher (based on past results and the announcement to increase school budgets by £2.3billion).

- 4.7 Schools Forum should also note that an enquiry was received concerning the figure used in model option 1 and 2 for the 10%/20% tightening of the EAL factor for the Primary Sector.
- 4.8 It was explained in an email to all schools from the Director for Children's Service that the figure used was NOT an error but it was enforced by the DFE APT modelling tool and it was not possible to change this. A suggestion to re-model and manipulate the Free Schools Meals factor to "compensate" for this was dismissed.
- 4.9 The EAL factor was one of many caveats and it did not in our opinion detract from the question being asked which was how fast schools wished to move toward the National Funding Formula and not how much would be received from each option.
- 4.10 As a result of this enquiry however it was agreed to extend the deadline for responses from 1st December 12.00 noon to 5th December at 5.00pm.
- 4.11 The anonymised comments received from schools in relation to the consultation are included in Appendix 2. Most of these responses were concerns around the EAL factor.

Trade Union Response

- 4.12 The authority consulted with the Joint Union Panel and received a joint response on behalf of Sandwell NAHT, Unison and NEU as follows:

"We prefer the minimum transition option as we believe this offers schools more time to adapt to the medium-term budget changes that are on the way. This route would seem to offer the greatest protection for jobs in the short-term by allowing schools greater time to consider ways to adjust to the forthcoming changes.

We would like to record our concerns regarding the consultation, in particular, the issue regarding the flawed modelling of EAL. Obviously, this modelling significantly impacts on the final decision taken by schools and for them not to have as full and accurate picture of the possibilities is unfortunate to say the least. We are also reliably informed that the latest position is to refuse to revise the modelling, whilst insisting on maintaining the current deadline. Surely, this cannot be seen as an acceptable position.

We are further aware that not all schools appreciate that this issue with the modelling exists and will blunder on regardless. Surely, a reasonable response would be to provide a clear explanation of the situation to all schools (as its impact would be felt across both sectors), whilst offering a short extension to the response deadline

Whilst appreciating the potential impact on Schools' Forum to make a final decision, it is surely better that such an important decision be made with full and complete information, rather than one made with inaccurate evidence.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

The impact of the decision made this year has far-reaching effects, as it establishes the position for decisions in subsequent years. This current situation has potential to do considerable damage to budgets and seems wholly unfair in its current format.”

Proposed Schools Funding 2023-24

- 4.13 The views of all stakeholders will be taken into consideration in relation to the consultation and the authority will consider the recommendation of School forum, but ultimately setting the Schools Budget next year, is a local authority decision.

5. Recommendations

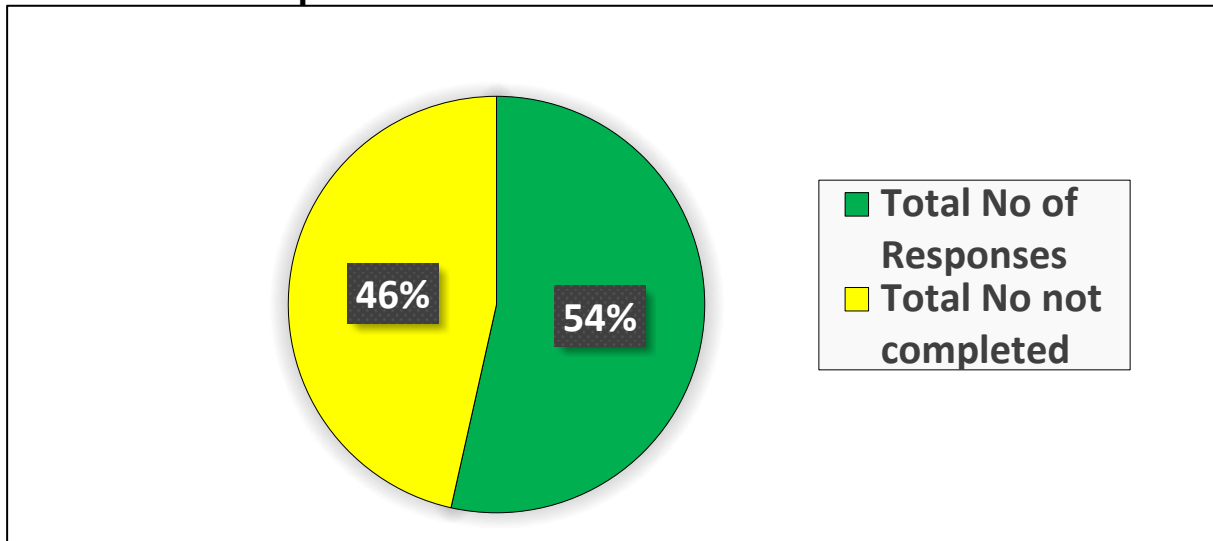
- 5.1 Question 1 Formula Transition: Most respondents voted for Option 1 which was the Minimum Transition.
- 5.2 Question 2 Growth Fund: Most respondents voted for Option 2 which was to make use of the brought forward.
- 5.3 Question 3 Top Slice of Schools Block: Most respondents agreed to this block transfer.
- 5.4 Question 4 Level of Attendance Service: Most respondents who agreed to the top slice/block transfer then agreed to the intermediate level of service.
- 5.5 Question 5 CSSB Proposals: Most respondents agreed to all these proposals.
- 5.6 Question 6 De-delegated Proposals: Most respondents agreed to all these proposals.
- 5.7 Question 7 Education Functions Proposals: Most respondents agreed to all these proposals.

Contact Officer: Elaine Taylor
Finance Business Partner - Childrens Services

Date: 07/12/2022

Consultation Questions and Summary Responses

Overview of Responses



Question 1

What option do you prefer to use for calculating schools funding in 2023-24? There were 3 possible responses which were:

- minimum transition
- accelerated transition
- NFF factor values

Q1: Overall Responses	Total	%
Minimum Transition	50	82%
Accelerated Transition	6	10%
National Funding Formula Factor Values	5	8%
Grand Total	61	100%

Q1: Detailed Responses	Total	%
Minimum Transition	50	
Primary	48	96%
Secondary	2	4%
Accelerated Transition	6	
Primary	4	67%
Secondary	2	33%
National Funding Formula Factor Values	5	
Primary	3	60%
Secondary	2	40%
Grand Total	61	

Question 2

Please indicate the option you prefer to use for calculating pupil number growth fund? There were 2 possible responses which were:

- Maintaining the current criteria
- Utilise B/F funds

Q2: Overall Responses	Total	%
Maintaining the current criteria	18	30%
Utilise Brought Forward funds	43	70%
Grand Total	61	100%

Q2: Detailed Responses	Total	%
Maintaining the current criteria	18	
Primary	17	94%
Secondary	1	6%
Utilise Brought Forward funds	43	
Primary	38	88%
Secondary	5	13%
Grand Total	61	

Question 3

Do you agree to the top slice of the schools block to fund the attendance team from the CSSB block? There were 2 possible responses which were either Yes or No. If yes was chosen then question 4 was asked and if no was chosen then question 5 was asked next.

Q3: Overall Responses	Total	%
No	17	28%
Yes	44	72%
Grand Total	61	100%

Q3: Detailed Responses	Total	%
No	17	
Primary	17	100%
Yes	44	
Primary	38	86%
Secondary	6	14%
Grand Total	61	

Question 4

Please indicate the option you prefer for the attendance service. There were 2 possible options which were:

- Intermediate service
- Enhanced service

Q4: Overall Responses	Total	%
Intermediate Service	29	66%
Enhanced Service	15	34%
Grand Total	44	100%

Q4: Detailed Responses	Total	%
Enhanced Service	15	
Primary	11	73%
Secondary	4	27%
Intermediate Service	29	
Primary	27	93%
Secondary	2	7%
Grand Total	44	

Question 5

Please indicate if you agree with the CSSB funding Proposals? There were 2 possible responses which were either Yes or No to each of the proposals.

Q5: Responses	YES	NO
CSSB1 – Statutory & Regulatory /Welfare and Asset Man	56	5
CSSB2 Admissions Service	58	3
CSSB3 Historical Commitment Pensions Administration	52	9
CSSB4 Schools Forum	57	4

Question 6 and 7 (maintained sector only)

Please indicate if you agree with the De-delegated and Education Functions Proposals? There were again 2 possible responses which were either Yes or No to each of the proposals.

De-Delegation

Q6: Responses	YES	NO
DD1 Health & Safety Licences	48	1
DD2 EVOLVE	48	1
DD3 Union Facilities Time	32	17
DD4 School Improvement	41	8
DD5 Schools in Financial Difficulty	34	15

Education Functions proposals

Q7: Responses	YES	NO
EF1 Education Benefits Team	46	3
EF2 Children's Clothing Support Allowance	46	3

Purple writing = EAL queries/questions
Blue writing = Growth queries/questions
Black writing = Other queries/questions

Queries/Questions (anonymous)

Attendance - White Paper says LAs have responsibilities for its funding
 Admissions - Service is not a good enough quality, can't contact department and inaccuracies in pupil tracking data
 School Improvement - 50% increase, although we recognise government cuts, we are not seeing these own increase in our own budgets

Bearwood's falling roll is one of our biggest challenge.

Can you let us know the issue with EAL and provide more information for Qu 2

CONSULTATION QUESTION 1 -

It is impossible to run a formula to the strict parameters of moving all existing factor values 10% closer to NFF values. These parameters would then dictate the total funding rather than the other way round. The total would be wrong and would require a technical adjustment known as fudging!

In other words, the Local Authority would need to unilaterally pick one or more of the funding characteristics and change the unit value attached to them to make the total distribution match the funding available.

How would the Local Authority decide which characteristic to change and how would it ensure that this was fair to all schools? Sandwell appears to have done this already with the EAL factor in the options shown in Appendix B
 Other characteristics have been moved by 10% of their difference from the new NFF values.

EAL has been moved down by £279 per pupil but ONLY for the Primary Sector. This reduces the figure that should have been distributed to Primary Schools by £1,573,932. Secondary schools see no reduction.

In the original Local Authority figures, twenty schools received the most under Option 3 - National Funding Formula, the revised figure when the correction to the EAL factor is made, is actually only two. This may have a material effect on school decision making.

The EAL amount for primary, having moved significantly from 2022/23 values to Option 1, doesn't then move at all from Option 1 to Option 2, despite the fact that Option 1 is supposed to be a move of 10% of the current difference and Option 2 a move of 20%!

The Government's "National Funding Formula for Schools and High Needs Document" instructs Local Authorities to use three years for the funding period after EAL pupils enter the statutory school system from 2023/24 onwards. Sandwell currently uses two years as the funding period. This will increase funding for Junior, Primary and Secondary Schools. Infant and Key Stage 1 in Primary will not see increases as Year 2 pupils will not have been in the system for three years by the October census at the start of Year 2.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 2 -

The majority of the funding in this area goes to secondary schools. Please can Forum be provided with a breakdown of expenditure in this area for 21/22?

CONSULTATION QUESTION 4 -

I think admissions should offer a bespoke package, i.e. where schools can opt in for the full package of statutory admission points (YR, Y3, Y7) as well as mid-year admissions or an option to purchase just the statutory admission points.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 6 -

More information needs to be shared with schools about all the H&S features we have access to through the de-delegation, e.g. CLEAPPS as this is not visible or transparent enough.

Facilities time needs a review. It is valuable but the service/amount should be reduced in the current climate.

Most schools are in financial difficulty now, or will be in the future, so this pot won't go far and therefore should not be allocated to.

Could we please request a detailed breakdown of the Union Facilities time contribution - we do not currently receive any support in this area. Although we have a Union Rep on our payroll (reimbursed by the LA) we have been informed that it would be a conflict of interest to be supported by them.

EAL distribution appears incorrect Primary v Secondary - this needs to be recalculated as it shifts -£1.5 million away from Primary with no change to secondary. for the first question, we will have option one with EAL corrected

Funding - Option 1 minimum transition with EAL amendments otherwise we as a school would lose £25k. We need accurate figures to base our figures on.

De-delegated - Please explain the increase in school improvement costs.

What benefits will we see?

What will the future of school improvement look like?

I don't believe that all questions raised at Partnership have been fully answered before requiring submission

Is it possible to reduce the pupil growth funding to the expected £1.3m. We are experiencing a decline in numbers, not a growth. What evidence supports the request for £2m.

It is our belief that the calculations for EAL with question, may not be entirely accurate.

Pupil growth - whilst we agree to the utilising the carry forward we are concerned that there is no growth for Primary Schools and we are facing surplus places which impacts on school budgets. Therefore, we propose that you consider ring fencing some of the pupil growth budget for children who arrive in Reception after October census.

Q2 - if an option existed to vote no to this we would have chosen that option. Question the need for this when there is not a current bulge of numbers.

Q5 - How has the cost of the Admissions service not changed at all since last year? Consideration being given to bringing this service in house.

DD5 - Answered no to this as there was no supporting information provided in support of the service.

Question 1: Schools have felt quite let down by how information regarding how the consultation was presented. It took our budget officer to highlight that figures proposed do not match the narrative of the consultation. The fact that no clear communication was issued to schools regarding the wide-ranging issues with the EAL aspect of the formula. This has made the consultation a flawed process as we are being consulted on figures and factors that will not necessarily reflect the eventual funding outcome. We understand that the recent national budgetary changes, will potentially add more money into school budgets, however if the formula remains flawed linked to the EAL factor, we continue to have an obscured view of our budget positions. Given how hard it is currently to set balanced budgets linked to all of the in-year factors that are beyond our control; such as unfunded pay awards, energy crisis, rising school meal costs; the consultation process has been really unhelpful in terms of supporting Heads with planning the resources our school communities so desperately need, in particular human resources.

Question 2: Isn't it time that we had a more appropriate model to support school mobility and provide funding to schools on a termly basis to reflect new pupils in school?

Question 4: We agree to this contribution, however schools do need this to be a high quality service that is both responsive and proactive.

Question one has been answered to enable completion of this form but we are aware of the issues with the EAL modelling. An extension and further modelling for this would have been appreciated and enabled greater scrutiny. It is concerning that not all schools may be aware of this and following last week's P/Partnership, these issues have not been addressed, contrary to reassurances made.

Re: Question 2 - This used to state, 'Is a pupil growth fund needed?' It is now an expectation when primary PAN is falling across the authority. As a result, this funding is being used for Secondary to the detriment of Primary schools. Despite the fact that some secondaries have additional capacity which is not being utilised. We were informed at Primary Partnership on 24/11/2022 that additional information would be sent regarding this. To date this has not been received. An alternative use of this money, (of course would need consulting on) may be to support those schools with reduced PAN, where whilst a temporary PAN is in place with a watching brief from the LA, should this need to be reversed, financial support can be provided for the schools who have budgeted for a reduction.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

Schools are still waiting for revised modelling in relation to Question 1 because of the issues around the modelling not matching the criteria set by Schools Forum.
The discrepancy is how all other factors follow that modelling; moving by those percentages. The exception is EAL which seems to be the budget factor that has been set in such a way that it allows the Sandwell budget modelling to 'hit' the DFE funding pot. This EAL factor 'tweak' only made to Primary and with no impact on secondary, goes above the option 3 NFF future parameter. It inevitably skews the consultation as it is not a true picture; neither is there any consultation note to explain the very different treatment of this factor in the consultation and why it only impacts primary and not secondary.
The EAL factor appears incorrectly calculated moving -£1.5 million from Primary with no change to secondary. This needs to be recalculated fairly.
The EAL funding formula for primary schools has not been applied in the same way as it has to secondary school and this needs to be addressed to ensure that there is fairness and parity between primary and secondary schools. This funding formula used for EAL in the proposed options has resulted in primary schools suffering significant reductions in budgets. There has been very little transparency in how the funding formulas have been applied and this is evident in the fact that all 3 of Rood End options resulted in the exact same total figure which is difficult to understand considering we were led to believe that funding formulas for each of the factors within the options should be different.
The information has been presented very well under challenging circumstances for all. Thankyou.
<p>There is an error for EAL funding for primary pupils on both the 10% and 20% transition models. This will need to be rectified to reflect the modelling that has been done for secondary pupils. Cape are set to lose out on almost £50k of funding.</p> <p>The figures listed for each school under Option 3 - National Funding Formula don't match the Government published allocations.</p> <p>The attendance service should not be top sliced from maintained schools' budgets and used for the benefit of all schools. Furthermore, the white paper suggests the service should be provided for schools at no cost.</p>
Very difficult to ascertain which option is the best for the school given the information made available and having no background in finance.
We have provided an answer to Q1 because we had to answer that to complete this form but we are aware with the problems with the table and we are aware that the deadline for Q1 was being delayed however, this has not been shared with schools and the timescale is now approaching an end. It is also concerning that not ALL schools have been made aware of this situation/error and so will vote based on inaccurate information as the knock on effect of this could be devastating for primaries. Although these issues were raised at Primary Partnership and we were told more information would be sent to us all, nothing has been sent/changed and again the deadline is fast approaching
We provide free uniform for all pupils starting Reception. Could we re-claim any of this funding for the most deprived families?
We would like to know why the proposed reduction in the EAL factor only applies to primary schools and not the secondary sector.
The figures listed under Option 3-NFF do not match the government published allocations so as part of this consultation, we would like you to explain the variances in your calculations

Would like to propose that given the growth needed in specialist provision across the LA, that growth funding be considered for this, rather than it solely coming from the HNB. (If this is allowed!)

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]