

Report to Schools Forum

11 December 2023

Subject:	Schools Funding Consultation 2024/25 – Response Results
Director:	Director of Childrens Services, Michael Jarratt
Contact Officer:	Finance Business Partner, Elaine Taylor elaine_taylor@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Schools Forum makes a recommendation on the direction of the 2024/25 schools funding guided by the responses to the proposals outlined in the 2024/25 Schools Funding Consultation Document and Appendix 1.
- 1.2 That Schools Forum decides on the central funding for pupil growth.
- 1.3 That Schools Forum decides on the movement of the funds from the Schools Block to the Central Schools Services Block.
- 1.4 That Schools Forum consider the individual comments received in the consultation and agree on a way to take this forward.


2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Schools Forum Regulations 2012 requires that the Schools' Forum meets regularly and is consulted by the local authority concerning the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Schools block is one of the four blocks of funding within the Dedicated Schools Grant.



2.2 The Schools' Forum is requested to define the funding 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 budgets, 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.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people Delegated grant funding in support of children and schools providing suitable provision within schools in the community and being able to support that readiness and long term promotion of becoming good citizens within the community.</p>
---	--

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The 2024/25 Schools Funding Consultation document was issued electronically to schools on 10th November 2023 on circular 124 and asked 7 questions.

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

4.3 The table below compares responses from the previous 4 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%
2024-25	55/94	59%	10/20	50%	65/115	57%



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

- Association of Sandwell Governing Bodies – 8th November 2023
- Joint Executive Group – 15th November 2023
- Joint Union Panel – 22nd November 2023
- Primary Headteachers Partnership (Microsoft Teams meeting) – 22nd November 2023
- Secondary Headteachers Partnership – 23rd November 2023

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 2024/25 were to be treated with caution and this was explained at the above meetings.

4.6 It was made clear that there were assumptions within the modelling options in question one which would make it very difficult to give any certainties over funding for 2024/25 and these are set out below:

- The modelling assumed a growth fund of £1.6m
- The modelling assumed £0.512m transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the Central Schools Services block
- The data modelled used the October 22 census data
- The MSAG grant would be rolled in to DSG for 2024/25

4.7 The anonymised comments received from schools in relation to the consultation are included in Appendix 2. Most of these responses were concerns around Facilities time, Composition of Schools Forum, Children's clothing eligibility (how it disproportionately favours secondary schools) and Health & Safety.



Trade Union Response

- 4.8 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. Schools will respond on an individual basis in their returns to the more specific questions, very much dependent on their interactions with certain services

Proposed Schools Funding 2024/25

- 4.9 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 Implications

Resources:	As at 2023/24 the Sandwell’s Schools Formula was substantially different to the National Funding Formula (NFF). By 2027/28 all schools will be funded in the same way and so there will be a period of change on the way resources are allocated as we move closer to the NFF.
Legal and Governance:	The School and Early Years Finance Regulations 2023 set out the funding arrangements for the 2024 to 2025 funding period. These regulations make provision for the financial arrangements of local authorities in relation to the funding of maintained schools and providers of prescribed Early Years provision in England. The schools’ forums (England) regulations 2012 govern the constitution and conduct of meetings of the Schools Forum and determine those matters on which the local authority must or may consult the schools’ forum and those in respect of which the schools’ forum can make decisions.
Risk:	There is a risk that as we have to move closer to the NFF that schools may see a reduction in their funding.



	Schools and their Governing Bodies are responsible for setting an annual balanced budget, however they have another 3 years to incorporate these changes into their strategic plans.
Equality:	There are no Equality Implications
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no Health and Wellbeing Implications
Social Value:	There are no Social Value Implications
Climate Change:	There are no climate change implications
Corporate Parenting:	There are no Implications for Corporate Parenting responsibilities

6 Appendices

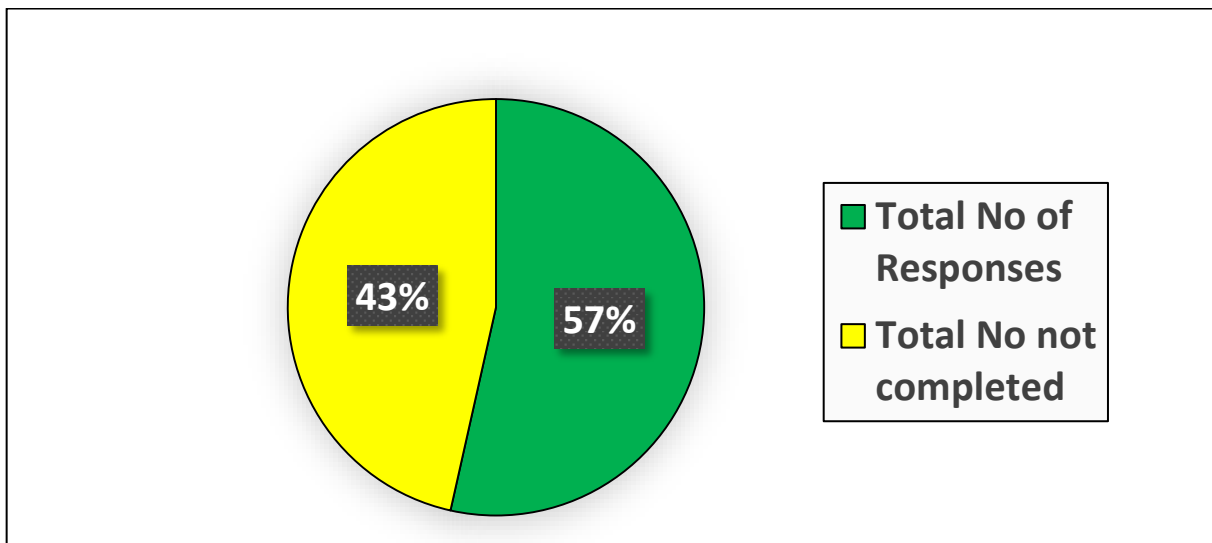
Appendix 1 Consultation Questions & Summary Responses
Appendix 2 Comments Received from the Consultation

7. Background Papers

The Consultation Document was circulated at the previous meeting and communicated to schools on circular 124.



Overview of Responses



Question 1 (voting - ALL members)

Please indicate the option you prefer to use for calculating schools funding for 2024/25? There were 3 possible responses which were:

- OPTION 1 - Minimum transition
- OPTION 2 - Accelerated transition
- OPTION 3 – National Funding Factor (NFF) values

Q1: Overall Responses	Total	%
OPTION 1 - Minimum Transition	51	78%
OPTION 2 - Accelerated Transition	5	8%
OPTION 3 - National Funding Formula Factor	9	14%
Grand Total	65	100%



Q1: Detailed Responses	Total	%
Minimum Transition	51	100%
Primary	47	92%
Secondary	4	8%
Accelerated Transition	5	100%
Primary	3	67%
Secondary	2	33%
National Funding Formula Factor Values	9	100%
Primary	4	44%
Secondary	5	56%
Grand Total	65	100%

Question 2 (voting - ALL members)

Do you agree to the use of the Brought Forward of £0.282m to set the Pupil Number Growth Fund? There were 2 possible responses which were:

- YES
- NO

Q2: Overall Responses	Total	%
YES – Utilise the Brought Forward	56	86%
NO – Do NOT use the Brought Forward	9	14%
Grand Total	65	100%



Q2: Detailed Responses	Total	%
YES - Utilise the B/F	56	100%
Primary	47	84%
Secondary	9	16%
NO – Do not utilise B/F	9	100%
Primary	8	89%
Secondary	1	11%
Grand Total	65	100%

Question 3 (voting – ALL members)

Do you agree to the introduction of a Falling Rolls Fund (FRF)? There were 2 possible responses which were:

- YES
- NO

Q3: Overall Responses	Total	%
YES – Agree with the introduction of a FRF	44	68%
NO – Do NOT agreed with the introduction of a FRF	21	32%
Grand Total	65	100%

Q3: Detailed Responses	Total	%
YES – introduce a FRF	44	100%
Primary	38	86%
Secondary	6	14%
NO – Do NOT agree with a FRF	22	100%
Primary	18	82%
Secondary	4	18%
Grand Total	65	100%



Question 4 (voting - ALL members)

Do you agree to the top slice of £512,000 from the Schools Block to the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) to fund the Attendance Team? There were 2 possible responses which were:

- YES
- NO

Q4: Overall Responses	Total	%
YES – agree to £512k top slice	57	88%
NO – Do NOT agree to £512k top slice	8	12%
Grand Total	65	100%

Q4: Detailed Responses	Total	%
YES – agree to £512k top slice	57	
Primary	47	82%
Secondary	10	18%
NO – do NOT agree to £512k top slice	7	100%
Primary	7	100%
Secondary	0	0%
Grand Total	65	100%

Question 5 (voting - ALL members)

Do you agree with the indicative allocation of the CSSB?

Q5: Responses	YES	NO
CSSB1 – Statutory & Regulatory /Welfare and Asset Man	57	8
CSSB2 Admissions Service	57	8
CSSB3 Historical Commitment Pensions Administration	57	8
CSSB4 Schools Forum	57	8



Question 6 and 7 (voting - Maintained Sector members only)

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

De-Delegation

Q6: Responses	YES	NO
DD1 Health & Safety Licences	43	8
DD2 EVOLVE	50	1
DD3 Union Facilities Time	33	18
DD4 School Improvement	44	7
DD5 Schools in Financial Difficulty	31	20

Education Functions proposals

Q7: Responses	YES	NO
EF1 Education Benefits Team	45	6
EF2 Children's Clothing Support Allowance	32	19



Appendix 2

Any Other Comments – Comments Received

Comment 1

Health & Safety - I have said no as this de-delegated amount seems to support a service that is required/utilised more by secondary schools than it is primary. I have never been sent any access to CLEAPPS from the LA (despite asking) so cannot see how my school benefits from that. We pay separately for H&S support as the de-delegated spend doesn't cover all our requirements as a school.

Facilities Time - I have said no to this as I believe that the facilities arrangements need review. I would be happy to de-delegate a smaller amount of money or would be happier de-delegating if I understood arrangements between unions/how much of this money is used by each union. However, as it stands, I do not believe it is the right amount to de-delegate.

Schools in Financial Difficulty - I have said no as all schools have a responsibility to manage their budget. I have taken strategic and prudent decisions to ensure my school doesn't go in to deficit. I agree we should have a falling rolls fund for those occasions where a roll falls significantly but I do not believe budget (which could be used for children at my school) should be used to support schools where leaders have not taken appropriate action to manage their budget.

Children's Clothing Allowance - I do not feel that this significantly supports primary families as the funding can only be used when children are joining Reception at primary level (whereas it can be used for each year group in secondary). Furthermore, there is new uniform guidance now from the DfE so schools should be making individual efforts to ensure uniform is affordable and that second hand uniform can be purchased. Therefore, if all schools were doing as they should, this grant would not be necessary."

Comment 2

Although, we agree to union facilities time, we have concerns that academies, that do not fund this, will still benefit e.g. with the policies that are written.

It would be better if the CSSB was divided up, and schools could vote on each element.

Comment 3

As a Primary school we feel strongly that we should move slowly towards the National Funding Formula and this will always be our preference.



Comment 4

Can we please consider the split between how much is de-delegated from primary schools for:

- uniform allowance i.e. can we access this for all years and not just Reception?
- H&S services- can a formula be considered that is weighted for secondary needs that primary schools simply don't have?
- as a school with a falling roll, I cannot express how difficult it is to budget for this- recruitment, retention and even down to classroom furniture is always a challenge- knowing there is some form of criteria to enable schools to access this would allay concerns and even redundancies. This year we did not appoint a teacher and have had to get long term supply to save future redundancies.

Comment 5

Please note that in answering Q2 we chose to answer No as we don't believe there is a bulge of pupil, so would question the need for a growth fund at all.

Please could we have an estimate of the amount top sliced from our school in respect of the Admissions & Appeals Service (I can't see any details in annex A1 for this service at all) and also if we chose to take this service in house in the future would we still be top sliced for the service, should it be agreed at Schools Forum, or can we choose to opt out?

Thanks

Comment 6

This has been completed in consultation with the Chair of Governors, the School Business Manager and the Head Teacher.

Comment 7

We would like to know more about the Falling Rolls funding and the criteria to be eligible, as well as the formula to work this out. We generally agree though so have ticked yes.

Comment 8

In response to question 6 and where the response has been no- Health & Safety: Seems to be a service for secondary schools rather than primary, rather than all schools.

Facilities time: This seems a lot of money to set aside for this, given we know little of how much uptake there is for this.

Schools in financial difficulty: All should be responsible for managing their budget. If falling numbers are an issue, this would then be utilised from the falling roll fund.



Children's clothing allowance: Seems to be a service for secondary schools rather than primary, rather than all schools.

Comment 9

1. The reconstitution of the school's forum has resulted in an increase in secondary membership, greatly favouring secondary school pupils over primary school pupils.
2. Q3, more information is really required to give a reflective answer.

Comment 10

Union facilities time

It's time for schools to receive much greater detail regarding the number of maintained schools that are benefiting and whether the cost to academies is equitable and fair. In many ways we deserve an SLA because an increasing amount of school time is spent trying to schedule meetings, with delays often subject to union availability. This increasingly is causing stress and wellbeing for the staff involved, when the delay is purely down to union rep availability.

Falling roll fund

Further information required, as there is no detail as to where the funding would come from.

Concern about the unfair re-constitution of school forum, where maintained primary are disproportionality under represented compared to academies. I'm also concerned the only communication regarding this comes from my Budget Officer (TF); who diligently share LA changes that appear to disadvantage and potentially break rules and regulations regarding the forum constitution. Can I request that Headteachers receive clarity re this at the next HT partnership meeting?

Comment 11

Question 2 - Comment: DSG Outturn report 2022/23 overspend of £0.575m. No report presented for 2023/24 yet so figure unknown

Question 3 - Comment: There are no figures provided, making it very difficult for schools to decide.
Also no mention where the funding would come from.

Question 6 - School Improvement £50K increase since 2022/23 - explanation needed for this increase.
It says 3 core visits per term but this should be per year.

Schools in Financial Difficulties – high balance already carried forward. LA should know which schools will finish the current year in deficit, therefore a true figure should be known

Question 7 Children's Clothing Support Allowance – Reception only/Secondary each year group can benefit. Primary schools also now driving forward initiatives such as pre loved uniform.

Comment 12

The Governing Body of Highfields and myself would like to express our frustration as to our inability to comment appropriately when the numbers presented in the document do not reflect what we believe to be the reality of the situation. It is also frustrating that the deadlines set, do not facilitate Heads with the



opportunity to discuss this in greater depth in either our learning communities or through Primary Partnership.

Comment 13

Whilst I agree with the Falling Rolls Fund given our current situation, there was no mention as to where the money would be sourced from and how much this might be.

Comment 14

Q3 - We support this in principle, but feel we cannot answer yes, until we are informed how much this fund will require.

Q5 - We feel that as Pension Admin is a statutory duty, the full cost of this needs to be included in CSSB.

Q7 - Clothing allowance, as a Primary School, our pupils only benefit from this in the first year of school when they start in Reception, it does not support our needy families in other year groups, we support these families by using donated used uniforms, and do not restrict the use of branded school logo uniforms.

Comment 15

We have answered yes to question 2 but can you please confirm that the B/fwd balance does not include the PNG money owed to OSCA and Forge for 5 months, April to Aug 2023. can this be investigated please.

Comment 16

Please note we have said yes to question 2 but can you please confirm that the balance carried forward does not include pupil growth amounts for April to August 2023 owed to Ormiston Forge and Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy, Can this be resolved urgently,

Comment 17

Q3. Difficult to answer. No costings provided.

DD1 - Do not use as a Primary School.

DD4 - Unsure if £150,000 or £100,000. Wasn't clear at the meeting. Conflicting answers.

EF2 - Not as beneficial to Primary Schools as Secondary Schools.

