

Schools' consultation response

A summary of the responses to the consultation was provided to the October 2018 meeting of the Schools Forum that covered all the different points of view expressed and is publicly available via the Schools Forum website. A briefer summary is provided below:

- A detailed survey was sent to all schools to which 77 responded. In addition, several finance presentations were held across the county at Norwich, Dereham, Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth. A workshop was also held at the Headteachers conference to collect views. A Schools Forum national funding formula working group was formed to reflect the diverse landscape of schools in Norfolk. The changes were formulated in consultation with the working group and the Norfolk Schools Forum, which is representative of schools in Norfolk.
- The majority of school responses supported allocating the additional funding via the national funding formula including the introduction of the minimum per pupil level of funding. Some schools opposing the implementation felt we should wait until the DfE gives a clear implementation date. However, the DfE have been clear that this is the direction of travel once they have resolved issues on funding premises and local exceptional factors.
- The new national funding formula increases the funding allocated via additional needs factors, so targets the funding where it has the most impact on educational outcomes. Some schools felt that this was a duplication of the Pupil Premium grant which is based on free school meals, double funding the same pupils. Schools without high level of additional needs will lose under the new formula. The minimum per pupil funding factor will ensure that all schools have the minimum recommended level of funding as recommended by the DfE.
- The current split between the primary and secondary ratio of funding of 1:1.19 was a historic Schools Forum decision which was thought right at the time. It does not reflect the national ratio of 1:1.29 which the national funding formula will implement. There is concern that some primary schools and small secondary schools will suffer financial difficulty. A phased move is preferable as it will stop school budgets falling off a cliff edge. It is prudent to do this while we can protect school budgets with a Minimum Funding Guarantee of -1.5% by capping the gains on those that benefit under the national funding formula.
- The majority of Schools Forum and a number of schools supported the need to move the £4.58m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, to reflect the 10% increase in demand for high needs specialist places and Day 6 Alternative Provision for excluded pupils. Schools Forum majority vote to support this movement was based on the Local Authorities strategic sufficiency plan to recover the High Needs Block to a rebalanced position and allow it to move away from private sector placements at a far higher cost.

- It was understood by the majority of schools that the cost pressure on the High Needs Block cannot be managed within the High Needs Block allocation from the DFE.
- Schools expressed concern that the additional funding intended for schools under the National Funding Formula was not being used for its intended purpose, at a time when school budgets are under pressure from real terms cost pressures of price increases, salary and pension increases.
- Some schools felt the £4.58m should be retained in schools where it would better placed to provide early intervention for pupils with SEND