

A consultation on school funding reform: rationale and principles

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is:

25 May 2011

Your comments must reach us by that date.

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online response facility available on the Department for Education e-consultation website (<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>).

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Name Nick Davies

Organisation (if applicable) Children England

Address: Unit 25, Angel gate, City Road, London, EC1V 2PT

If you have an enquiry related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact either

Juliet Yates on: Telephone: 020 7340 8313 e-mail: juliet.yates@education.gsi.gov.uk,
or

Ian McVicar on: Telephone: 020 7340 7980 e-mail: ian.mcvicar@education.gsi.gov.uk

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Consultation Unit by e-mail:

consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk, by Fax: 01928 794 311, or by telephone: 0870 000 2288.

Please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent.

School

Schools Forum

Governor Association

Teacher

Local Authority
Group

Individual Local Authority

Teacher
Association

Other Trade Union /
Professional Body

Early Years Setting

Campaign Group

Parent / Carer

X Other

Charity

1. Do you agree with the stated characteristics of an ideal school funding system? (Section 2)

X All

Some

None

Not Sure

Comments:

We agree with the stated characteristics of an ideal school funding system. In particular, the characteristic that there should be a level funding playing field for different types of schools is essential. At present, many maintained schools are opting for Academy status on the basis that the LACSEG funding they receive will be worth considerably more than the services that are currently provided for them by local authorities. Equally, many local authorities have claimed that they are losing a disproportionate amount of funding to Academies and that the reduction will inevitably impact on the quality of services provided to the remaining maintained schools in a locality.

2. Are there further characteristics the system should have? (Section 2)

X Yes

No

Not Sure

If 'Yes', what are they?

The funding system should take into account the increased cost of providing services in expensive areas such as London and the South East by retaining the existing Area Cost Adjustment.

3. Do you agree with the analysis of how the current system falls short of these aims? (Section 3)

Yes

No

x Not Sure

Comments:

We agree that the system is opaque and complex, that it can lead to schools with similar intakes receiving very different levels of funding and that it fails to reflect need correctly. However, we disagree that it doesn't support the new school system. As mentioned above, we believe that it actually gives Free Schools and Academies an unfair advantage due to the additional LACSEG funding that they receive.

4. Do you agree with the case for reforming the system?

Yes

No

X Not Sure

Comments:

We certainly agree that there are major inconsistencies in the way that schools are funded. However, the consultation document offers no evidence as to the impact that these funding differences have had on pupil outcomes or the potential impact of reform. We would need to see both of these before fully supporting such a significant change.

5. Do you agree that the aim of ensuring all deprived pupils get the same level of funding no matter where they live is the right one? (Section 4)

Yes

X No

Not Sure

Comments:

We agree that there should be a consistent premium attached to disadvantaged students but that this should be subject to an Area Cost Adjustment.

6. Do you agree the underlying funding formula needs to change to meet this aim more quickly and effectively?

Yes

No

X Not Sure

Comments:

We believe that the underlying funding formula will need to change to meet this aim but that it is important not to rush the process. This is particularly important in those cases where schools currently receive a disproportionately high funding settlement and have a large number of disadvantaged students. Reducing DSG too quickly would likely have a significant negative impact on the outcomes of those disadvantaged pupils.

7. Do you think the school funding system should be based on a purely national formula? Or should there be flexibility for local decisions about funding levels? (Section 5)

Purely National X Some local flexibility A lot of local flexibility Not Sure

Comments:

There should be some flexibility so that local authorities can respond to local needs. For example, it would enable local authorities to pool some budgets for services that could be delivered more efficiently that way. For example, the local authority could commission a VCS organisation to provide extended schools services to maintained schools in the area.

It would also allow local authorities to channel additional funding towards struggling schools such as those on special measures.

8. If so, should that flexibility be limited, and if so how? (Section 5)

Yes No X Not Sure

9. If there is local flexibility, what should the roles of local authorities, schools and the Schools Forum be in decision making? (Sections 5 and 6)

Local authorities:

Schools:

Schools Forum:

Comments:

10. If there is local flexibility for maintained schools, how should Academies and Free Schools be funded? (Section 5)

Through the fair
funding formula

Taking into account
local decisions

Not Sure

Comments:

The theoretical basis for the Government's Academies and Free Schools programme is the belief that providing schools with greater financial independence from local authorities will empower professionals and drive up standards. Giving local authorities control over the budgets of Academies and Free Schools would confuse this principal of financial independence.

In order to maintain a level playing field, Academies and Free Schools should receive the centrally determined funding expectation i.e. if local authorities choose not to change the funding for maintained school, all schools in the area will be funded on the same basis.

11. How do you think SEN support services might be funded so that schools, Academies, Free Schools and other education providers have access to high quality SEN support services? (Section 7)

Comments:

12. How do you think a national banded funding framework for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled could improve the transparency of funding decisions to parents while continuing to allow for local flexibility? (Section 7)

Comments:

13. How can the different funding arrangements for specialist provision for young people pre-16 and post-16 be aligned more effectively to provide a more consistent approach to support for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled from birth to 25? (Section 7)

Comments:

14. How successfully has the EYSFF been implemented? How might it be improved? (Section 8)

Very Fairly A little Not at all X Not Sure

Comments:

15. How important is an element of local flexibility in free early education funding? What might alternative approaches look like? (Section 8)

Very Fairly A little Not at all X Not Sure

Comments:

16. How should we identify the total amount of funding for early years and free early education for three year olds and four year olds not in reception from within the overall amount of 3-16 funding? (Section 8)

Comments:

17. Should the formula include only pupil led factors or also school led factors? (Section 9)

Only pupil-led factors

Include school-led factors

Not Sure

Comments:

We believe that the formula should be principally determined by pupil-led factors but should also take some school-led factors into account where these significantly impact on the cost of running the school.

18. What factors should be included? (Section 9)

Comments:

- Number of pupils
- Number of deprived pupils
- Area cost adjustment
- Number of pupils for whom English is not their first language
- Additional funding for small schools
- Condition and type of building e.g. the school uses a listed building

We do not believe that the Government should provide incentives or rewards for improved performance. If anything, it should be those schools that are performing worst that should receive additional funding.

19. What is the right balance between simplicity and complexity? (Section 9)

Comments:

In general, we believe that fairness in better matching the needs of pupils is far more important than aiming for simplicity as a primary objective. As long as the formula is logical, it should be fairly easy for parents, schools and potential promoters of new schools to calculate the funding they will receive.

20. What level of change in budgets per year can schools manage? (Section 10)

Comments:

21. How much time do schools need to plan for changes in their funding? (Section 10)

<input type="checkbox"/>	3 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 – 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 – 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than 1 year	X	Not Sure
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Comments:

**22. When is the right time to start moving towards a fair funding formula?
(Section 10)**

<input type="checkbox"/>	2012 – 13	<input type="checkbox"/>	2013 – 14	<input type="checkbox"/>	2014 - 15	<input type="checkbox"/>	2015 - 16	X	Not Sure
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Comments:

23. Have you any further comments?

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

X Yes No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Donna Harrison, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 794304 / email: donna.harrison@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 25 May 2011

Send by e-mail to: schoolfunding.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk

Send by post to:

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