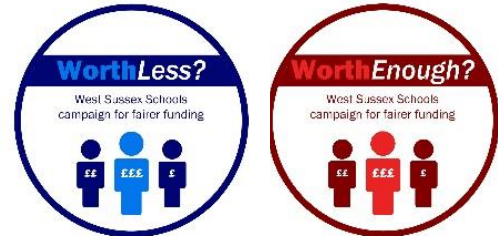




13 March 2017



Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Response to National Funding Formula and School Funding

You will know that our children's educational future is being put at risk by the savage funding cuts that are being put forward by the Government and the Department for Education. School leaders from Cornwall to Norfolk and all parts in between are saying the same thing – we can't all be wrong!

In short, the new National Funding Formula (NFF) provides some increased money to some schools, but large numbers of schools also miss out. Crucially, however, even those schools that seem to get more under the NFF will find that their budgets go down in real terms because of hidden costs such as National Insurance and pension payments that every school has to pay.

Your child will not be protected from these cuts and as a result, the following is happening and matters will get worse:

- Reduction in the number of teaching and support staff
- Increasing class sizes – often to well above 30 in a classroom
- Inferior books, equipment and IT facilities
- Much less extra-curricular clubs and activities
- Reduction in curriculum opportunities
- A potential for modified (reduced) school opening hours in the future

We are also increasingly concerned that parents are going to be asked to make more and more 'voluntary' contributions to pay for their child's education in order for schools to make ends meet. In our view, this is entirely wrong.

It is vital for parents to understand that once the Department for Education makes their proposed decisions, they will be permanent. Our children's educational provision will be severely compromised.

If we can act together then these dreadful cuts can be avoided. We need the Government and Department for Education to listen and then invest in our children's future. They must also stop wasting money on projects that every independent expert says do not provide value for money.

Please use the following guidance to complete the National Funding Formula consultation response by Wednesday 22 March at the very latest – simply copying and pasting is fine. School leaders from many counties have devised the guide so that we all speak with one voice.

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula2/>



You will get just one chance to make a real difference for your child's education. I, and other school leaders, are incredibly grateful for your supportive approach to date. Please let's work together in order to protect our children's education and invest in our children's future.

If you also wish to contact your local MP to voice your concerns, please find their details below:

Henry Smith MP Crawley: henry.smith.mp@parliament.uk
Jeremy Quinn MP Horsham: jeremy.quin.mp@parliament.uk
Nicholas Soames MP East Grinstead: nicholas.soames.mp@parliament.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Ferry', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Ferry
Headteacher

Q1. In designing our national funding formula, we have taken careful steps to balance the principles of fairness and stability. Do you think we have struck the right balance?

Choose: **NO**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

These are the views of a parent:

A new funding formula cannot be deemed to be fair or sustainable when it is based on a historically unfair system. Many of the failures of the previous funding formula are still in the current one. Enormous funding gaps still exist between 'similar' schools in different areas and fundamentally, the formula is being used to partially re-balance a smaller amount of overall funding.

Parents want all schools and all children to be funded adequately. The Institute of Fiscal Studies (an independent body) says that real terms per pupil funding is set to fall by 6.5% across the country. We do not support this.

I am extremely concerned that my child's education is going to be made much worse under the proposed new National Funding Formula and other related spending decisions made by the Department for Education. My child deserves:

- Specialist teachers in all subjects
- Class sizes that allow a teacher to teach my child really well
- High quality books, equipment and IT facilities
- Support from non-teaching specialists such as Teaching Assistants and other trained professionals
- Access appropriate pastoral support and care
- Access to a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities

My child and every child deserves more, not less!

More money needs to be invested into funding basic education, particularly into schools that have historically received comparatively less funding than the national average (West Sussex), where there are no cuts or efficiencies left to be made.

In addition, schools are facing real term cuts of 6-8% which are not acknowledged in the proposed formula. This will effectively reduce budgets for all schools, despite claims that more is being invested into schools than ever before.

In West Sussex the most any school can have its budget increased is by 5.5% but real term costs that are increasing by 6-8% mean that our schools are still losing out. Instead of improving the situation for schools in West Sussex, many will become worse off. We do not support this at all.

Q2. Do you support our proposal to set the primary to secondary ratio in line with the current national average?

Choose: **personal preference/leave blank**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

It is reasonable that there is a difference at different Key Stages but at every Stage adequate funding must be provided

Q3. Do you support our proposal to maximise pupil led funding?

Choose: **YES**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

Maximising per pupil – pupil led funding – is very important. This is because all schools require a minimum level of funding to ensure that they have enough money to support the staffing, equipment and services that our children deserve.

The DfE has begun to look at a minimum position. We support this but it will only work if there is enough money in the system to allow other funding elements to do with deprivation or sparsity not be downgraded.

Just giving an arbitrary core funding percentage will not be good enough if the percentage is of an overall funding amount which is too small in the first place.

The balance between the factors must result in adequate funding for all schools regardless of size and location. The interaction of the lump sum with the sparsity factor is therefore key to ensuring that any necessary and vital small schools remain sustainable as a result of the revised funding formula. If this is not sufficiently considered the formula could result in necessary small schools closing and local authorities incurring additional costs to transport pupils. Further still, there is the impact on the individual children (and potentially some very young children) that would find themselves having to travel.

Q4. Within the total pupil-led funding, do you support our proposal to increase the proportion allocated to the additional needs factors?

Choose: **Do not choose**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

The key is that schools need to receive enough core/baseline funding to operate sufficiently. Real term cuts will impact budgets significantly – redistributing a pot of money that is not big enough is not going to help.

Q5. Do you agree with the proposed weightings for each of the additional needs factors?

Deprivation – pupil based at 5.5%

Choose: **Do not choose**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

Please see answers to Q4 and 5.

The basic school funding that all schools receive regardless of Additional Needs has got to be enough to operate effectively. Where schools attract relatively low levels of additional needs funding there needs to be confidence that basic funding is sufficient to cover the costs of running the school. The additional needs funding should be as the name suggests – additional and to support creative additional programmes for pupils, not prop up the funding for the majority of pupils. Clarity is required between the differences as to what the deprivation funding in the main funding formula and pupil premium are supposed to support.

Deprivation – area based at 3.9%

Choose: **Do not choose**

Children who come from poorer backgrounds that do not get the benefit of extra money (from the Pupil Premium grant) should be given extra support and help.

If this is to happen, the Department for Education needs to spend money wisely. We want deprived children to receive the very best education and this is why money should not be wasted on expensive projects like new Free Schools and Grammar Schools where there is no need to create extra places.

Again, all children need adequate funding and the most disadvantaged children need the most help.

Low prior attainment at 7.5%

Choose: **Do not choose**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

Please see answers to Q4 and 5.

English as an additional language at 1.2%

Choose: **The proportion is about right**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

Q6. Do you have any suggestions about potential indicators and data sources we could use to allocate mobility funding in 2019-20 and beyond?

Personal preference/leave blank

Q7. Do you agree with the proposed lump sum of £110,000 for all schools?

Primary

Choose: **personal preference/leave blank**

Secondary

Choose: **personal preference/leave blank**

Q8. Do you agree with the proposed amounts of sparsity funding of up to £25,000 for primary and up to £65,000 for secondary, middle and all-through schools?

Primary

Choose: **personal preference/leave blank**

Secondary

Choose: **personal preference/leave blank**

Q9. Do you agree that lagged pupil growth data would provide an effective basis for the growth factor in the longer term?

Yes – although a more sophisticated model may be required

Q10 Do you agree with the principle of a funding floor?

Choose: **No**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

The funding floor sets a cap on how much an individual school could gain (up to 5.5%) or lose (up to 3%) from their current funding. At the moment, large differences in funding exist between schools of a similar size. Parents do not wish to see such huge differences continue.

Setting a cap – particularly on how much a low funded school budget can rise is not acceptable. As I have said, each school needs to be funded appropriately and adequately. The Department for Education needs to have a much better understanding of what adequate funding for individual schools actually is.

I have no desire to see schools lose larger proportions of their budget. Further investment must instead be provided for all of our children to get a fair deal. £3billion should not be removed from the overall education budget and the Department for Education must make better use of existing funding too. The use of capital funding programmes for Grammar Schools and Free School expansion (where there is no basic need) is not acceptable and means that low funded schools miss out on vital funds.

The lowest funded schools, once real term cuts/unfunded costs are taken into account, will actually be looking to lose 6-8% of their budgets, even if they are set to 'gain' under the new formula.

Redistributing a pot of money which is simply not big enough to meet basic need means that no schools are set to benefit.

Q11 Do you support our proposal to set the funding floor at minus 3%?

Choose: **personal preference/leave blank**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

Parents do not want one school to lose out as another one gains. What we want is adequate funding for every child in every school. Money should not be wasted on other educational projects and systems at the expense of funding current schools properly.

Q12 Do you agree that for new or growing schools (i.e schools that are still filling up and do not have pupils in all year groups yet) the funding floor should be applied to the per-pupil funding they would have received if they were at full capacity?

Personal preference/leave blank

Q13 Do you support our proposal to continue the minimum funding guarantee at minus 1.5%?

Choose: **No – the minimum funding guarantee should be lower (i.e. allow losses of more than 1.5% per pupil per year)**

Please explain your reasoning and any further evidence we should take into account:

There is no desire for schools to lose larger proportions of their budget. Further investment must instead be provided for all of our children to get a fair deal. The lowest funded schools, once real term cuts/unfunded costs are taken into account, will actually be looking to lose 6-8% of their budgets, even if they are set to 'gain' under the new formula.

Redistributing a pot of money which is simply not big enough to meet basic need means that no schools are set to benefit.

However, locking in an outdated funding mode by restricting the losses of the highest funded areas means that those school in dire financial need that have been historically underfunded will continue to be at a major disadvantage – this is unfair to children who receive more or less funding and a potentially better/worse standard of education, based solely on where they live.

Q14. Are there further considerations we should be taking into account about the proposed schools national funding formula?

- Yes - the new funding formula cannot ignore the real term cuts of 8-10% that schools are facing due to unfunded costs (National Insurance contributions, pension costs, Apprenticeship Levy etc) which mean that all schools will lose out and see reduced budgets over the next few years.
- Adequate funding has got to be available for all children and schools as a bare minimum. Core costs should be met by the 'baseline' budget for all schools. Add ons for factors such as deprivation must serve only as a 'top up' to purely fund the additional challenges schools face - schools must be able to provide a decent standard of education without relying on these additional factors.
- A major flaw in the proposed funding formula is that it is still based on the current outdated model which sees schools receiving vastly different funding based on outdated data.
- Why is the Government allocating vast sums of money to new Free Schools and Grammar School initiatives (where there is no basic need) when schools across the country have been raising serious concerns about their budgets and whether they can provide the very basics of education for children. Headteachers' and parents' concerns need to be listened to. Increased funding needs to be made available for existing schools to provide adequate education for all of our children. We know that the money is there if the political will is there.
- Schools that have long been funded at a lower level have no room left to make cuts - these cuts have already been made in order to stay afloat. A new and fair National Funding Formula must consider how these already struggling budgets are affected alongside the unfunded costs that are being introduced to ensure that budgets do not fall even further
- There is no point trying to redistribute a pot of money that is not big enough to provide adequate educational funding to all children - more has got to be invested and this must provide enough basic funding per pupil in every school. Only then can a fair new formula be introduced.

Q15 onwards

Leave blank/personal preference