

Questions to Keith Hawkins and Julie Lessiter of the Education Funding Agency

Warwickshire Schools Forum March 2013

1. All over the country small schools, particularly in rural areas, are claiming that the new funding arrangements are putting them at a disadvantage. Is there likelihood that this problem will be addressed by a National Funding formula?

Cllr.Clive Rickhards – Elected Member – Studley

The new funding arrangements allow local authorities to support small schools by setting a lump sum of up to £200,000. We recognise that there have been concerns from some rural authorities about the operation of the lump sum and we will be reviewing this for 2014-15 – one option in the consultation document is to introduce a sparsity factor for small rural schools. We acknowledge the need to support unavoidably small but necessary schools and this will be considered in our future work. A national funding formula will ensure that schools with similar pupil characteristics in different parts of the country are funded at the same level, after taking into account higher staffing costs in some areas.

2. Is there a possibility that there could be a review of SEN funding to schools in general?

Cllr.Clive Rickhards – Elected Member – Studley

As part of the review of funding arrangements for 2014-15, we have asked for comments on a number of issues relating to high needs funding following the significant changes already implemented.

3. When is a national funding formula likely to come in - if at all - and would they be looking at balancing the books? Do the proposals for each school to set its own salary levels (that is to de-nationalise the teacher's pay scales) lead to a rethink on having a national funding formula?

Stella Saje – Head Teacher – Glendale Infant School

We have said that we will introduce a national funding formula in the next spending review period. This would have to be affordable within the public expenditure totals agreed at the time. Any movement away from national pay scales would not affect this.

4. If the NFF is to be introduced still, how will it be phased in, so that losers have time to adjust and winners' time to grow?

Stella Saje – Head Teacher – Glendale Infant School

We have said that, although the levels of the Minimum Funding Guarantee have only been set for 2013-14 and 2014-15, there will continue to be protection for schools

beyond that. We cannot say at what level this will be because the public expenditure totals have not yet been set.

5. In terms of approach, are the DfE looking for a baseline funding level nationally - that is, a funding level that would ensure the costs of a quality education being available to every school, and then look to share out any remaining money through specific targeted areas - e.g London weighting, inner city premium, areas of high deprivation, SEN etc?

No decisions have yet been taken on how the balance between different factors will be determined.

Stella Saje – Head Teacher – Glendale Infant School

6. De-delegation – where the Schools Forum have decided to de-delegate funding in 2013/14, will this decision need to be made on an annual basis? The DfE have also talked about increased delegation of the schools block. Is this likely to be a requirement for 2014/15 and if so, which lines on the section 251?

The schools block is already fully delegated, subject to decisions on de-delegation by maintained schools, so we have no plans to require further delegation in 2014/15. De-delegation decisions would need to be made on an annual basis.

Sara Haslam - Schools Funding and Strategy Manager

7. Will there be a revision to the Scheme for Financing Schools for implementation in April 2013?

We are reviewing the scheme guidance to check whether any revisions need to be made as a result of the changes to the funding system. If there are, then we will communicate these by the end of March.

Sara Haslam - Schools Funding and Strategy Manager

8. On what basis will the 2014/15 DSG be established? Will the schools block be based on Oct 2013 pupil numbers x the 2013/14 GUF, the EY block based on Oct 2013 census x 2013/14 GUF and the HNB on the 2012/13 baseline? If not, how will it be calculated?

Sara Haslam - Schools Funding and Strategy Manager

This is still to be confirmed, but it is likely that the schools and early years block units of funding will be fixed. The early years block currently uses the January not the October census and is updated in-year for later censuses. We are still considering arrangements for the high needs block.