

NGA's response to the 'Fair school funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula' consultation

The scope of the National Funding Formula

NGA supports the principle of a hard national funding formula, but we also recognise that the distribution of funding for some school-led factors relies upon local knowledge. We are therefore in favour of retaining local control over certain aspects of funding, at least until more is known about how the DfE would approach distributing funding appropriately between schools under a direct NFF. Linked to this is our support for schools' forums, the representative bodies in each local authority, continuing to have an important role advising DfE over their centralised funding model. Governor representatives make an immense contribution to schools' forums up and down the country. They bring their skills and competencies to manage and communicate funding policy to their rank and file.

Comments on how to reform premises funding during the transition to the directly applied NFF

This is a complex area and NGA is not in a position to provide detailed feedback. However, we think that NFF needs to be responsive to the diverse population in schools in England. Because the distribution of funding for some school-led elements such as premises are unique to their locality, we have reservations as to whether this can be reflected through a standardised formula.

Growth and falling rolls funding

We are unsure about the proposal to use national, standardised criteria to allocate all aspects of growth and falling rolls funding and whether local circumstances can be adequately reflected in a standardised criteria.

We do not agree with an approach that would see falling rolls funding provided only to schools with a good or outstanding Ofsted rating at their last Ofsted inspection and only allow MATs to seek additional funding for 'popular' growth.

Comments on the proposals regarding ongoing central school services

Local authorities continue to play a vital leadership role in our education system ensuring the wellbeing and good academic outcomes for children and young people in their schools. It is important that they receive the necessary funding required to fulfil this role.

The possibility of moving maintained schools to being funded on an academic year basis

We think it would be sensible for all state funded schools to be funded on the basis of the same funding year.

Equalities Impact

NGA supports any commitment to tackling barriers for learning and to providing high quality education for all.

A fundamental principle for us is that funding should be objectively, transparently, and equitably distributed. This does not mean that all schools should receive the same amount of funding, but that schools should receive funding to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. We want to see the NFF implemented but not at any cost. The gradual approach is the right approach, provided that the outcome is a more responsive system, which targets funding to more deprived schools.

We are concerned about the implications the proposals have for High Needs funding and require more assurance than has so far been provided that they will not bring about further consequences for our most vulnerable pupils. Whilst we agree that block transfers are not a solution to the crisis in high needs funding, we also think it unwise to limit them without first putting forward a clear strategy for tackling the underlying causes of cost pressures (in the high needs system). There is a strong case for delaying the second stage consultation on the NFF until the much delayed review into the SEND system has been published along with a clear road map for future high-needs funding.

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September 2021