

SCHOOLS FORUM INITIATIVE FOR FAIR FUNDING OF CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

To: Cambridgeshire Schools Forum

Date: 20 April 2018

From: Dr Alan Rodger
Vice Chairman, Cambridgeshire Schools Forum

Purpose: To advise the Schools Forum of the outcome of the Working Group's discussions about fair funding for education in Cambridgeshire and to recommend next steps.

Recommendation:

Schools Forum is recommended to:

- a) Consider the outcome of the Working Group's discussions;**
- b) Discuss and agree the next steps set out at paragraph 2.3 of the report;**
- c) Consider the draft letter to Cambridgeshire MPs and the Minister of State and table at Appendix 1 and agree any revisions required.**

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following the National Funding Formula (NFF), the setting of the Cambridgeshire schools funding formula for 2018/19 caused significant concerns even though about two thirds of Cambridgeshire schools received some increase in funding, and the High Needs Block had a small uplift.

Schools Forum found budget setting for 2018-19 extremely difficult as each of the funding block is under severe pressure. This arises because of pay inflation and national salary increases pension increases, the Apprentice Levy etc. In addition, the High Needs Block is having to fund more children with every increasing complexity of need. The Early Years sector is also under pressure, in particular due to the increasing demand for 2-4 year olds places and the under-funding of the increased entitlement of 30 hours for eligible families.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 At its meeting on 19 January 2018, Schools Forum asked a small working group to develop the case for increased funding for education in Schools.

After an oral report from the Working Group on 9 March 2018 Schools Forum decided that the Working Group should hold a further meeting and bring back recommendations to a meeting of the full Schools Forum.

The guiding principles of the Working Group were:

- Forum should have an agreed position on what were the most immediate priorities for additional funding so a coherent, well-argued case can be developed to address the severe pressures on the Schools, High Needs and Early Years Blocks.
- With the National Funding Formula in place, significant changes to the formula were unlikely to be possible in the short term, but may be possible in the medium term.
- Recognising the November 2018 budget discussions are being developed, Forum's initial focus should be towards the local MPs and the Ministers and Officials in the DfE seek changes.
- Forum should take account of the position of F40 recommendations.
- Forum accepts the principle that additional funding should be targeted to pupils who are disadvantaged or have additional needs, thus the National Funding Formula is not designed to deliver equal funding for all schools.

2.2 Working group actions

The Working Group held a meeting on 28 March 2018 with subsequent interchanges by email about the priorities and issues around fair funding.

The output of the Working Group is a draft letter for MPs and ministers, together with a one-page summary of the challenges, impact and possible solutions in the short and longer term.

2.3 Next Steps

The next steps could include:

1. To send a personal letter to each of Cambridgeshire's MPs, topped and tailed appropriately;
2. Send a letter to the Minister of State with an invitation to visit Cambridgeshire and meet with children, teachers and the Schools Forum;
3. Seek to meet with the best placed officials at the Department for Education (DfE) to influence their thinking;
4. Send a copy of the letter to all head teachers and chairs of Governors and chairs of Multi Academy Trusts for information only at this time;
5. Depending upon the outcomes of the above decide how and when to engage parents, children and the media.

| Source Documents | Location |
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| Minutes of the Cambridgeshire Schools Forum meetings on 19 January and 9 March 2018. | https://cmis.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ccs_live/Committees/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS_CommitteeDetails/mid/381/id/22/Default.aspx |