

Rugby High School National Formula Funding Draft Consultation Response

1. 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?
No. The new proposal is unfair and does not improve the position of England's poorest funded schools (those with very few students with additional characteristics). It is right that schools should be given additional funding to meet additional needs but not if it means that some students' basic needs are left unmet.
2. Do you support our proposal to set the primary to secondary ratio in line with the current national average of 1:1.29, which means that pupils in the secondary phase are funded overall 29% higher than pupils in the primary phase?
Yes.
3. Do you support our proposal to maximise pupil-led funding so that more funding is allocated to factors that relate directly to pupils and their characteristics?
Yes.
4. Within the total pupil-led funding, do you support our proposal to increase the proportion allocated to the additional needs factors (deprivation, low prior attainment and English as an additional language)?
No. Whilst we agree that these are factors for which schools incur additional costs in meeting students' needs, funding for deprivation already exists in pupil premium and the effect of the proposal as it currently stands is to increase funding for it to the point where students who attend schools with relatively low numbers of students who attract additional funding will not have sufficient funds, no matter how financially efficient they are, to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. This isn't fair. All students wherever they live whatever their family's socio-economic background should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum funded from taxation. It is the 'adjustment' to the proportion allocated to additional needs factors that is causing schools like Rugby High, which is already one of the worst funded schools in the country, to lose a further 2.5%. Our expenditure on staffing is currently running at 88%. This is the only budget area left where any savings can be made. The result is that some languages (German and possibly Latin), Design Technology (Food and Textiles), Computing and Music will disappear from the curriculum at KS4 and also from KS3 in the case of Design Technology.
5. Do you agree with the proposed weightings for each of the additional needs factors?
No. The weightings should be reduced. In many cases there is an overlap between these factors e.g. the same student may attract low prior attainment funding and come from a deprived background and have English as an additional language. Whilst students like these need additional funding, it is questionable as to whether they need more than twice the funding that a student classified as having no additional needs requires.
6. Do you have any suggestions about potential indicators and data sources we could use to allocate mobility funding in 2019-20 and beyond?
7. Do you agree with the proposed lump sum of £110,000 for all schools?
Yes.
8. Do you agree with the proposed amounts for sparsity funding of up to £25,000 for primary schools and up to £65,000 for secondary, middle and all-through schools?
Yes.
9. Do you agree that the lagged pupil growth data would provide an effective basis for the growth factor in the longer term?
Yes.

10. Do you agree with the principle of the funding floor that would protect schools from large overall reductions as a result of this formula? This would be in addition to the minimum funding guarantee.
Yes.
11. Do you support our proposal to set the floor at minus 3%, which would mean that no school would lose more than 3% of their current per pupil funding level as a result of this formula?
Yes.
12. Do you agree that for new or growing schools the funding floor should be applied to the per pupil funding they would receive were they at full capacity?
Yes.
13. Do you support our proposal to continue the minimum funding guarantee at minus 1.5% per pupil? This will mean that schools are protected against reductions of more than 1.5% per pupil per year.
Yes.
14. Are there further considerations we should be taking into account about the proposed schools national funding formula?
Yes.

More thought should be given to the level of basic per pupil unit funding that is necessary to run a secondary school. The National Association of School Business Managers (NASBM) calculates that at the moment it is £4,800. Under the proposal Rugby High School will receive just £4,297. All students whatever school they attend, in whatever part of the country, and whatever their social background, should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. From 2019 if this proposal goes ahead, students at Rugby High School will not have access to a broad and balanced curriculum as there will be some subjects that we simply will not be able to afford. A slight tweak to the proposal (reconsidering the percentage given to basic per pupil funding or creating a floor so that no secondary school receives less than an average of £4,800 per student) would address many of the issues facing poorly funded schools.

A minimum funding level for students in KS 3-4 of £4,800 would produce a funding increase based on student number of just under £204,000. This would be sufficient to:

- Preserve the teaching of Food and Textiles at KS3
- Preserve the teaching of some (but not all) minority subjects at GCSE: German, Music, Computing
- Provide smaller classes (less than 30) for students with lower attainment in English, Maths and Combined Science at KS4.
- Provide a part-time librarian to manage the library.

In the last six years we have reduced expenditure on all items that are not staffing by 25%. Although we have reduced our staffing costs by 9% over the same period at a time when the school has been expanding, they now make up 88% of our total expenditure. There are no big savings left to make by clever purchasing or combining our support services with those of another school. The only option left is to further increase class sizes, reduce the curriculum (by removing any subjects that cannot be taught in classes of 30) and reduce choice for students at KS4.

Low prior attainment is being treated as a proxy measure for Special Educational Needs. The impact of this is that schools like Rugby High which have high achieving students on the autistic spectrum have no additional funding to support their often quite complex learning needs. In theory, we ought to be able to fund a level of need up to £6,000 per annum from current income. We are not in a position to do this because the average level of income that we receive per student is so low. Some of our students have complex social, emotional and behavioural needs that impact on their well-being and ability to learn and on the well-being and learning of their peers. At times they need additional help to engage with their learning and to stay on task. At times they need help managing their levels of anxiety or the behavioural expectations made of them in social situations. Sometimes they need support provided by a traded service or they need someone with them or on hand ready to intervene and offer support in the classroom or to supervise them if they are unable to cope with remaining in the whole class setting and need to withdraw.

The funding reductions that the school has already experienced (as a result of changes made to school funding over the last six years) mean that we can no longer employ a full-time SENCo. We have a single part-time learning mentor for KS3 and KS4. This means that very often senior staff have to juggle meeting these students' needs themselves with running the school. This is not an effective use of our skills but there simply isn't anyone else to pick them up. This is taking hours of time that should be focused on leadership tasks. There is a progress and also an attainment gap for SEN students which we are working hard to close. If this proposal goes ahead, that gap is likely to widen.

We do not support the suggestion made by some headteachers that parents should be asked to make up for shortfalls in what is needed to fund their child's education through voluntary charges. We think these will deter applications from poorer families and decrease social mobility.

15. Are there further considerations we should be taking into account about the impact of the proposed schools national funding formula?
Yes. See the answer to Q14.
16. Do you agree that we should allocate 10% of funding through a deprivation factor in the central school services block?
No.
17. Do you support our proposal to limit reductions on local authorities' central school services block funding to 2.5% per pupil in 2018-2019 and in 2019-2020?
Yes.
18. Are there further considerations we should be taking into account about the proposed central services block formula?
No.