

Our ref: Schools Forum 18.10.23

The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP,
Secretary of State for Education
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Dear Secretary of State,

SCHOOLS BLOCK AND NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA 2024/25 REVISION

I am writing as the Chair of Bradford Schools Forum to express our Forum's extreme disappointment and dissatisfaction with the Department's revision of the 2024/25 Schools Block and National Funding Formula settlement for 2024/25, which was published on 6 October. A significant amount of working hours has been spent on preparing detailed documentation to inform school / academy leaders and other providers to support the critical decision-making process from the start of September. Our Schools Forum met for the second time of this academic year, on 11 October, and I am writing on behalf of its members to ask for a response on the following points:

- We understand (from the webinar that was held on 12 October for local authority officers) that the Department knew about the error in September and that it has taken "a month" to publish the revision. On this basis, we conclude that the Department identified this error at least by or at the beginning of September. The Department must be well aware that September is a key month, when local authorities move on formula funding modelling, discussions with their Schools Forums and wider consultation. We suggest that the Department must be very well aware that the notification of a revision at the beginning of October will cause difficulties and additional work for local authorities, Forums, schools, academies and other providers that an alert in September (an alert - not necessarily providing all the revised information, which we accept would take time to produce) would have avoided. Why did the Department not take steps to alert local authorities to this error sooner than 6 October?
- As a result of the revised settlement, Bradford's estimated (based on our estimate of October 2023 pupil numbers) Schools Block funding in 2024/25 is reduced by £4.583m on the 19 July announced settlement. In per pupil terms, we estimate that our Schools Block settlement, now reduced from the 2.44% announced to Parliament through the 19 July 2023 settlement, results in a 1.55% increase on 2023/24. There are already far-reaching consequences to this including but not limited to ten more schools and academies in Bradford being placed on the Minimum Funding Guarantee at 0.5%. Therefore, the revision, is very much **not** impact neutral on our schools and academies; it represents a significantly lower per pupil settlement. Our Schools Forum is now concerned about the material impact of this settlement on school budgets next year, in the light of continued high levels of inflation and pay awards. Please can you provide a copy of the Department's assessment of the sufficiency of the revised 2024/25 Schools Block and



National Funding Formula settlement and the impact that this settlement is expected to have on school budgets?

- We understand that the revision of the National Funding Formula has been necessary to absorb additional cost relating to missed pupil numbers. Although the Department has announced that the quantum has not changed, the per pupil amount will change adversely. This creates additional cost pressures for schools, academies and providers in meeting the needs of all learners. Why has this not been managed by the Department without revising the National Funding Formula allocations for all local authorities, schools, academies and providers? What approaches has the Department made to the Treasury for the allocation of additional funding to ensure the 19 July settlement is maintained for the benefit of children and young people? What other alternatives has the Department considered (and rejected) for identifying funding to avoid having to make this correction?
- Please can you explain what specific new procedures and checks have been put in place by the Department to ensure that such substantial errors in the National Funding Formula calculations are not made in the future?

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Morrel
Headteacher, Titus Salt School
Chair of Bradford Schools Forum

cc.

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