

Lancashire Schools Forum

eNewsletter

• Issue 113 • March 2021 •

Fair Exchange?

Welcome to Issue 113 of 'Fair Exchange?' a Post-Forum Edition of the eNewsletter of the Lancashire Schools' Forum.

Schools Forum March 2021

Due to the current COVID-19 situation, the Schools Forum has continued to operate through virtual meetings. The spring term cycle of meetings culminated in a full Schools Forum on 18 March 2021, and some of the key issues discussed are set out below

Updated Growth Fund Policy

Lancashire has commissioned almost 4000 new primary school places since 2010, mainly as a result of rising birth rates. These places have been provided in existing schools. Whilst the birth rate has now stabilised or started to reduce in many areas, there are pockets across the county where significant housing development is creating a further need for places.

Whilst the County Council's School Place Provision Strategy aims to provide additional places at existing schools, wherever possible, it acknowledges that it may be necessary to consider the establishment of new schools.

The new school option is now being considered due to the anticipated need for additional primary school places in Ribble Valley, and in response, the Schools Forum has agreed an amendment to the current Growth Fund policy, to enable the start-up costs and diseconomies of scale costs associated with establishing a new school to be supported.

A copy of the revised Growth Fund Policy is available [here](#).

Inclusion Hub Funding

The de-delegation of Primary Inclusion Hub funding for 2021/22 has been previously agreed by the Forum, following a consultation with schools.

Information was provided at this round of meetings from the Inclusion Hub Steering Group to keep Forum updated on the work of the Hubs, including the key challenges, for example, operation in the pandemic, and the vision, successes and indications of impact going forward.

High Needs Block Termly Redetermination Process

During the summer and autumn terms 2020, the Forum has supported the application of protections for special schools and pupil referral units in the termly budget redeterminations, to provide some mitigation against NOR reductions caused by COVID-19.

Forum again supported HNB redetermination protections being applied in spring 2021 and agreed some additional adjustments to the PRU pay and pensions methodology for 2021/22 to further mitigate the COVID impact on this calculation.

DfE Consultations

The DfE have issued a number of consultations that may impact on school funding in 2022/23. The Schools Forum have considered these consultations and will submit responses. Details are provided below and individual schools and academies are encouraged to respond, where they feel it is appropriate:

Mainstream schools national funding formula: changes to the sparsity factor in 2022-23

On 2 March 2021, the DfE issued a consultation on Schools national funding formula: changes to the sparsity factor in 2022-23. The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on how the DfE propose to provide greater support to small, remote schools through changes to the national funding formula's (NFF) sparsity factor in 2022-23.

The DfE's consultation overview indicates that they recognise the challenges faced by small schools in rural areas due to limited opportunities to attract more pupils or to achieve efficiencies, and that such schools often play a significant role in the rural communities they serve. However, in Lancashire, there are a number of examples where small schools exist in close proximity to another small school, potentially because at least one of them is a church school. The DfE proposals will not generate any additional funding for schools in such circumstances.

The full consultation documentation is available [here](#), and includes a link to the online response form.

The consultation closes on 9 April 2021.

Review of national funding formula for allocations of high needs funding to local authorities: changes for 2022-23

On 10th February 2021, the DfE launched this consultation. It is fairly limited in scope and seeks views on some possible changes to two specific factors in the high needs national funding formula for 2022/23. The DfE indicated that this consultation forms the first stage of the review of the high needs national funding formula, and that future consultations will cover further proposals for changes to the formula and to the arrangements for the funding for SEND and AP

The consultation documentation is available [here](#) and closes on 24 March 2021.

DfE Consultation Changes to the payment process of schools' business rates

The DfE launched this consultation on 10 March 2021. The consultation proposal is basically for DfE to top slice funding and pay all school and academy business rates centrally before DSG allocations come to LAs. The costs for schools and the LA should be the same under this new arrangement and its introduction will reduce the administrative burden for schools and pave the way for the introduction of the DfE's hard national funding formula.

Full details of the proposals are available [here](#) and the consultation closes on 5 May 2021.

WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING?

The coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce fund for schools and colleges

The online form enabling schools to claim against the DfE's coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce went live on 10 March 2021. Detailed guidance and criteria around how to submit a claim for eligible costs is available [here](#). Claims can only be made for staff absences during the period 1 November 2020 to 31 December 2020, that meet the DfE's criteria

Claims must be submitted by 23:59 on **31 March 2021** and the claim form is available [here](#)

Copyright licences for state schools in England

The DfE top slices Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations each year to purchase copyright licences for all state-funded schools. The licences mean that schools can copy, re-use and share content from a wide range of sources within your school for non-commercial, educational purposes.

School leadership teams are asked to ensure that :

- all intended activities are covered adequately by the licences
- all staff follow the terms and conditions

Further details of all the licenses purchased by DfE are available [here](#)

School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme

The deadline for notifying us of any changes to School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement requirements for 2021/22 has now passed and letters confirming the level of cover chosen from April 2021 will be issued shortly.

If schools have any last minute queries or changes to cover for 2021/22, please contact schoolsforum@lancashire.gov.uk before the end of March 2021.

FORUM MEMBERSHIP

New representatives were welcomed to the Forum in March 2021:

- Jane Eccleston, from Acorns School, representing PRU headteachers
- Stephanie Carter, from Coal Clough Academy is the new Alternative Provision Academy representative
- Bill Mann is the new CE diocesan representative

A full list of Schools Forum members as at March 2021 is available [here](#)



QUESTIONS?

Remember, if you have any questions about the Schools Forum, please contact Paul Bonser, Forum Clerk, 01772 531815, or email schoolsforum@lancashire.gov.uk