

Lancashire Schools Forum

eNewsletter



• Issue 109 • October 2020 •

Fair Exchange?

Welcome to Issue 109 of 'Fair Exchange?' a Post-Forum Edition of the eNewsletter of the Lancashire Schools' Forum. This issue deals with matters considered at the Forum meeting of 20 October 2020

De-delegations 2021/22

Following the consultation process undertaken with schools early this term, the Schools Forum decided that the following services would continue to be de-delegated in 2021/22 in primary and secondary schools:

- Staff costs – Public Duties/Suspensions; (in line with consultation responses, this de-delegation will continue using the same policy as 2020/21);
- Heritage Learning Service – (Primary Schools Only);
- Support for Schools in Financial Difficulty, including the enhanced schools financial health check arrangements;
- Inclusion Hubs (Primary Schools Only)

Funding relating to these services will be delegated to schools and academies in the first instance, however, it will then be de-delegated from maintained primary and secondary school budgets so that the services can be provided by the LA. The final net delegated budget available to each primary and secondary school would then exclude these amounts.

These services will be offered as group buy backs to schools in other phases, as appropriate.

Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) 2021/22

The autumn term consultation also sought views on the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied in Lancashire for 2021/22.

Consultation responses favoured the proposal to provide the maximum level of protection allowable by the DfE from April 2021 and supported the MFG being set at +2%.

The positive +2% MFG figure will be used in the finalising 2021/22 school budgets in Lancashire, which will be issued in February 2021.

This means that primary and secondary schools will receive at least 2% more pupil-led funding per pupil compared to 2020/21.

Scheme for Financing Schools in Lancashire

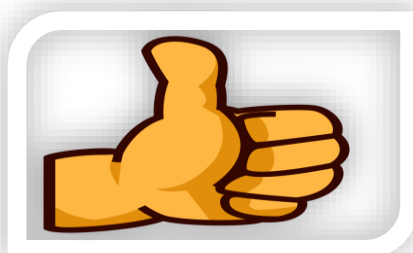
Following an update of Statutory Guidance from the DfE and a consultation with schools, the Forum approved a revised Lancashire Scheme for financing schools.

A copy of the updated scheme is available [here](#)



Thank You!

168 responses were received in the recent de-delegation and MFG consultation. The Schools Forum would like to pass on a big thank you to all the schools that responded, as these views are crucial in assisting the Forum in making de-delegation decisions. Thanks also to PHiL and LASSH colleagues for promoting the consultation



Future Consultation on Schools Block Transfer

In recent years, headroom has been available in the Schools Block once the NFF methodology has been implemented in full. After consultations, this headroom has been transferred to other funding blocks to help mitigate funding pressures in other block (High Needs Block and Early years Block).

Detailed modelling of the 2021/22 Schools Block allocations has not yet taken place, so there are currently no transfer proposals to transfer any available headroom to other funding blocks.

If modelling reveals that headroom is available in the Schools Block, schools and the Schools Forum will be consulted on any proposals before the 2021/22 Schools Budget is finalised.

Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) Categorisations

In order to evaluate and monitor the ongoing financial health of Lancashire schools, a school categorisation approach is utilised by the county council. This approach assesses available financial data on each individual school and links them based on a snapshot of this data to one of the four Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) categories.

The LA has recently reviewed the SIFD categories in light of the publication of the DfE's response to the financial transparency consultation and the Forum supported some minor adjustments to the categorisation criteria.

When school categorisation information is published in Forum or County Council reports, requests are often received from individual schools asking which category they have been placed in.

In the interests of openness and transparency, the SIFD categorisation information, including the financial indicators, are now published on the Forum website [here](#).

This information will allow schools to calculate their categorisation from their own in school data, which should be more up to date and more accurate than the data frequently accessible by the county council.

Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

There is a statutory requirement on all maintained schools to complete the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) each year and to provide a copy of the completed return to the authority, by 31 March each year.

A formal core agenda item is included on the autumn term governors meetings and governing bodies must formally discuss the SFVS annually with the head teacher and senior staff and ensure that the standard is completed in full. The approved SFVS spreadsheet should be uploaded on the 'Forms' section of the Schools Portal. This can be accessed via the schools portal home page under Forms > Finance > Schools Financial Value Standard.

Whilst some flexibility was allowed around 2019/20 returns due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, all schools will be required to complete and submit their 2020/21 SFVS return, by 31 March 2021.

In addition, the DfE are introducing stricter compliance checking for 2020/21 at local authority level, to ensure that all maintained schools complete and submit this statutory return, which means that the authority will be increasing vigilance on school compliance to the deadline.

The latest SFVS template is available on the DfE website, together with supporting notes for the checklist and the dashboard. The website is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-financial-value-standard-sfvs>

If you have not already done so, we urge you to commence the SFVS process to ensure your school can submitting your approved return prior to the DfE statutory requirement deadline of 31 March 2021 .

SFVS Training

We recently sought views on SFVS training requirements and there was strong demand expressed from schools to have access to SFVS courses that could be delivered virtually, during the pandemic. Virtual SFVS training is being developed and further details will be shared in the near future.

What's Happening Nationally

Information: grants to reduce carbon emissions, save energy and reduce bills

Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

As part of a wider plan to upgrade the nation's buildings, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has launched the £1 billion [Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme](#) (PSDS).

The PSDS will help public sector organisations in England, maintained schools, academies and free schools, to install energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures, reducing energy bills and carbon emissions. The deadline for application for the PSDS is 11 January 2021.

Low Carbon Skills Fund

To support this scheme, BEIS also launched the [Low Carbon Skills Fund](#), providing funding for developing bids and delivering projects. The deadline for application is the 4 December 2020.

For details on how to apply and further guidance, visit [Salix Finance](#).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Schools Fund

The DfE have now issues a second payment related to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Schools Fund. These payments are for schools:

- who submitted claim within their limit for the total of the three standard categories of additional costs and were not part of the payment to local authorities on 28 August 2020 because they had also claimed other costs.
- who submitted a claim above their limit for the total of three standard categories, but which have been assessed and approved by the ESFA for payment.

For maintained schools, allocations should have appeared on October oracle prints that were are received in early November. Bank account schools will see payments in their accounts in mid-November.

Academies should receive any allocations directly from the ESFA.

Who's Who? - Forum Membership

A number of new members were welcomed to the Forum from September 2020, including:

- Kathleen Cooper, Academy Governor (Kathleen has been a long serving Forum member in other categories);
- James Keulemans, Academy Headteacher;
- Matt Eastham, Academy Headteacher;
- Keith Wright, Primary School Headteacher
- Ian Watkinson, NEU, Branch Chair
- Sarah Troughton, NEU, Branch Secretary
- Phil Hart, ASCL Regional Officer for the North West

The Forum also thanked a number of other colleagues who were leaving/left the Forum, including:

- Lorimer Russell-Hayes, secondary governor
- Tim Warren, RC Diocese
- Julie Gordon, NEU
- Les Ridings, NEU
- Liz Laverty, ASCL
- Andrew Good, Head of Service for Development and Schools at Lancashire County Council.
- Christine Hurford, School Forum Finance Support Officer who is to retire shortly.

A current Schools Forum membership list for the new academic year is available [here](#).

A number of nominations have been received for the primary governor vacancy on the Forum and an election process, in which all maintained primary school governing bodies are entitled to vote, will take place to determine the appointment. If you are the chair of governors at a maintained primary school, look out for a voting information which will be issued on the Schools Portal shortly.

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