

WORCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

The Schools Forum has met twice during the Autumn term, on 5 October 2004 and 7 December 2004.

FUNDING ISSUES 2005/06

The Forum considered papers from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in relation to:

- The 4% per pupil guarantee for secondary/special schools and 5% per pupil guarantee for nursery/primary schools

The Forum expressed concern that the cost pressures in schools may be greater than the DfES' estimate of 3.4%. In particular, they identified that the costs of implementing the workforce reform in the primary sector and the fact that the government were not fully funding the costs of the Upper Pay Spine would put considerable pressure on school budgets in excess of the 4% per pupil guarantee.

In relation to the Standards Fund, the Forum noted that the overall value of the Standards Fund grants would not reduce in 2005/06. This was considered a positive development.

However, the Forum was dismayed that the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) Standards Fund had been reduced by 40% from £187,000 to £113,000 in order to redistribute the funding to those authorities with a greater proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups. The effect of this is to move funding from Counties and smaller cities to Birmingham, Manchester and a range of London Authorities.

LMS CONSULTATION

Whilst the meeting of the Forum on 7 December was not quorate they considered the detailed results of the LMS consultation and following discussion supported the following responses in respect of the school funding arrangements for 2005/06: -

Question 1 - that there would be no further delegation of services in 2005/06;

Question 2 - to increase the AWPU weighting for Year 5 pupils in 2005/06;

Question 3 - not to re-base all the AWPU weightings as proposed;

Question 4 - to increase the capital limit % from 25% to 33% for 2005/06;

Question 5 - to use the Forum as the main source of additional consultation for the 2005/06 budget;

Question 6 - to introduce alternative attainment ranges for EBSD special schools in the SEN Matrix in 2005/06;

Question 7 - not to introduce indicative budgets for all schools in January 2005;

Question 8 - to introduce Fair Funding scheme provisions for the management of surplus balances from April 2006.

GENERAL FUNDING ISSUES

The Forum received some provisional analysis of the County Council budget forecast following receipt of the provisional settlement for 2005/06. It was agreed that the Forum would welcome confirmation from the Cabinet of the passporting intentions of the County Council for 2005/06. The Forum recommend that the County Council fully passport the increases from 2004/05 to 2005/06 in the SFSS and the LEAFSS.

The Forum also re-confirmed the position held in 2004/05, that they would not support allocating any available resource in the headroom for 2005/06 to schools in financial difficulty.