



Department
for Education

Fairer schools funding

Arrangements for 2015 to 2016

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Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter one – Fairer funding for schools	5
Chapter two – Long-term reform of high needs and early years funding	10
Chapter three – Refinements to arrangements for funding schools serving sparse areas	12
Chapter four – Simplifying the administration of academies funding	16
Chapter five – Carbon reduction commitment	20
Chapter six – Changes to high needs funding for 2015-16	22
Next steps	26
Annex A – The 2015-16 minimum funding levels	27
Annex B – Changes to local authority funding for 2015-2016	29
Annex C – Changes to schools funding: combined impact of MFLs and CRC.	32

Introduction

There is widespread recognition that the current schools funding system is unfair and out of date. We are committed to addressing this so that, across the country, schools have a fair funding allocation that equips them to provide a world-class education.

Over the past three years, we have introduced a number of important changes to how local authorities distribute funding to schools. These changes have led to a more transparent funding system with more money being allocated based on the needs of pupils. For 2014-15, local authorities are allocating around 90% of schools funding based on the needs of pupils, compared with 71% in 2012-13.

While we have introduced these changes, we have protected schools from unmanageable changes to their budgets through the minimum funding guarantee (MFG). We will continue to provide this protection in 2015-16 and as we confirmed in March, we will retain the MFG, which has been in place over several years and which dictates that for the vast majority of schools, funding per pupil cannot drop by more than 1.5% per year¹.

This document sets out a number of further reforms that we will make to the schools funding system for 2015-16.

In March, we consulted on a proposal to provide additional funding to the least fairly funded authorities in 2015-16. Our proposal was first to ensure that all local authorities will be funded at least at the same cash level per pupil as in 2014-15; then to allocate an additional £350m for 2015-16 to fund schools in the least fairly funded authorities.

We have listened carefully to the full range of views expressed during the consultation period, and are now confirming how we will allocate additional funding for 2015-16.

This is a big step towards fully fair funding. The approach set out in this document will mean that, for the first time in a decade, funding is allocated to local areas on the basis of the actual characteristics of their pupils and schools rather than simply their historic levels of spending.

Through the additional funding we are making available, every local area's allocation of funding will reflect a minimum basic per pupil amount and minimum amounts reflecting other pupil and school characteristics. In every local area, this will mean for example that the most deprived pupils in primary schools will attract at least £4,454; in key stage 3 at

¹ Some funding is excluded from the calculation of the minimum funding guarantee. Details of this are in [Schools revenue funding 2015 to 2016: operational guide](#).

least £5,820; and key stage 4 at least £6,372, and this will continue to be supplemented by further direct funding through the pupil premium.²

In chapter one of this document, we confirm how we will provide additional funding to the least fairly funded local authorities in England by ensuring that every local authority attracts a minimum funding level for the pupils and schools in its area. We will allocate an additional £390m to the least fairly funded authorities using this approach – £40m more than the £350m we proposed in March. This chapter should be read alongside the [Government response](#) to the department's recent consultation on fairer schools funding.

In chapter two, we outline our intentions for future reform of the systems for funding high needs and early years pupils.

In chapter three, we set out the findings of our recent review to understand how effective the sparsity factor has been in helping local authorities to target additional funding to small schools that are needed in sparsely populated areas. We describe two changes to the operation of this factor.

In chapter four, we set out how we will move to a single system for the funding of academies and how we will amend the funding of local authorities for pupils in free schools. We consulted on both these issues in May. This chapter should be read alongside the [Government response](#) to the department's consultation – Academies Funding: Simplifying the Administration.

In chapter five, we describe how we will make minor technical changes to how schools will contribute towards meeting obligations under the Government's carbon reduction commitment.

Finally, in chapter six, we describe a small number of changes we are making to high needs funding arrangements for 2015-16.

² These amounts are for any pupil who is eligible for free school meals or has been at any time in the past 6 years and lives in an area covered by IDACI Band 6.

Chapter one – Fairer funding for schools

The Government's consultation on [Fairer Schools Funding in 2015-16](#) was launched on 13 March 2014.

We have considered carefully to the views of 578 respondents and to the views of members of the Education Select Committee and other stakeholders before finalising our approach for 2015-16. We have welcomed the debate that this proposal has generated.

We set out here our approach to allocating the additional funding we have available for 2015-16. This should be read alongside the [Government response](#) to that consultation, which sets out a summary of the views we have heard and our response to concerns that have been raised.

Making school funding fairer

Our proposal in March was to allocate an additional £350m to the least fairly funded areas by setting minimum funding levels that every local area should attract for its pupils and schools in 2015-16.

We proposed that where a local authority already attracted at least these minimum funding levels, we would not make any change to the amount of funding per pupil that it received. If a local authority attracted less than these minimum funding levels for the pupils and schools in its area, we would increase its budget so that it met those levels.

We proposed to set a minimum funding level for five pupil characteristics. The characteristics we identified were those we believe matter most to the attainment of pupils. They were:

- a basic per pupil amount ('age weighted pupil unit');
- pupils who are from deprived backgrounds;
- pupils who have been looked after³, for example in foster care;
- pupils with low attainment before starting at their primary or secondary school; and
- pupils who speak English as an additional language.

In addition to these pupil characteristics, we proposed setting a minimum funding level for two school characteristics currently used by local authorities to allocate money to schools:

³ Pupils who are being looked after on 31 March 2013. This is the same measure that has been used in local formulae in 2014-15.

- a minimum funding level for each school on top of its per pupil funding ('lump sum'); and
- a minimum funding level for small schools that are essential to serving rural areas ('sparsity sum').

We also proposed to raise the minimum funding levels for local authorities in areas with higher salaries in line with a 'hybrid area cost adjustment'. This takes account of both teacher salaries and the general labour market.

We proposed to set the minimum funding levels for the basic per pupil amounts ('age weighted pupil units') at the average that local authorities allocate to schools through the age weighted pupil units in their local funding formulae at present. We then proposed to set the minimum funding level for each of the other characteristics as close as we could afford to the respective local authority average.

In our consultation, we used data from 2013-14 to provide indicative values for the minimum funding levels and an indication of how individual local authorities' budgets might change. We used 2013-14 data because the right 2014-15 data was not available at that time. We were very clear that it was our intention to use 2014-15 data in our final allocations and that, as a result, the distribution of additional funding to local authorities would almost certainly be different from the indicative allocation set out in the consultation.

Our proposal in March was not a national funding formula. We intend to implement a national funding formula when the government has set spending plans over a longer period of time, allowing us to give schools and local authorities more certainty about how the formula will affect them over a number of years.

Views from the consultation

The consultation has confirmed that there is an overwhelming consensus that the allocation of schools funding to local authorities across England is unfair.

We asked whether there was agreement that our proposed methodology was fair and that each of the minimum funding levels was set at an appropriate value. The majority of respondents (excluding those 'not sure') agreed that we had selected the right characteristics to which to apply minimum funding levels. For each question about the value of the minimum funding level for a particular characteristic, a majority of respondents (excluding those 'not sure') agreed that the proposed level was correct.

Despite the many positive responses to our proposal, we recognise that there are mixed views on some aspects of the proposed methodology. Our responses to concerns are set out in full in the [Government response](#) to the consultation.

A particular concern regards our proposal to apply minimum funding levels only to the schools block unit of funding, rather than across the entire dedicated schools grant (DSG), which also includes funding for high needs and early years pupils.

We understand this concern, but, after careful consideration, we continue to believe that it would be wrong for us to alter the allocation of high needs and early years funding without sufficient evidence on how the need for funding varies between different areas. We say more in the next chapter about our next steps to getting this evidence.

Approach for 2015-16

After careful consideration of the views we have heard through the consultation, we have concluded that the methodology we proposed is the fairest way of distributing the funding we have in 2015-16.

In March, we said that we would be able to allocate an additional £350m to the least fairly funded areas in 2015-16. We are pleased to say that we can now allocate £390m.

The list of pupil and school characteristics that will attract minimum funding levels is the same as we proposed in March. However as set out in our consultation, the size of each minimum funding level will be based on 2014-15 data rather than on the 2013-14 data we used to produce indicative minimum funding levels in March⁴.

The minimum funding levels for 2015-16 will be:

- a per pupil amount ('age weighted pupil unit') – primary: £2,880; key stage 3: £3,950; key stage 4: £4,502;
- deprivation – between £882 and £1,870 – full breakdown in Annex A;
- looked-after children – £1,004;
- low prior attainment – primary: £669; secondary: £940;
- English as an additional language – primary: £466; secondary: £1,130;
- a lump sum for every school – primary: £115,797; secondary: £125,155;
- additional sparsity sum for small schools vital to serving rural communities – primary: up to £44,635; secondary: up to £66,656; and

⁴ In order to calculate the minimum funding levels we have used final 2014-15 data – [Schools block funding formulae 2014 to 2015](#). To calculate the average per pupil amounts for a particular characteristic, we have only included local authorities that allocated funding to that characteristic. The average amounts are calculated as a pupil weighted average.

- an [area cost adjustment](#) to increase minimum funding levels in areas with higher labour market costs⁵.

The list above includes seven of the characteristics used in local formulae. As we made clear in our proposal in March, local authorities will not be obliged to use all these factors in their local formulae in 2015-16 (with the exception of the basic per pupil amount and the deprivation factor, which are mandatory). Nor will a local authority that chooses to use any of these seven factors be obliged to set that factor at or above the minimum funding level. It will remain for the local authority, working with its schools forum, to decide how best to design its local formula to meet local circumstances. Local authorities will have the same freedom to set local formulae for their schools in 2015-16 as they did in 2014-15 (with the exception of the minor revision to the sparsity factor described in chapter three). Individual schools should therefore not expect that their funding will necessarily be at or above the minimum funding levels.

The minimum funding levels set out above are based on the average amounts that local authorities allocated to these characteristics in their 2014-15 local formulae. The minimum funding level for each of the basic per pupil amounts ('age weighted pupil units') is the same as the respective current local authority average. We have then set the other minimum funding levels as close to the current local authority average as we are able to afford.

In order to calculate whether a local authority will attract additional funding to reach the minimum funding levels, we have applied the same methodology as we proposed in March. First, we have looked at what each local authority will receive in 2014-15 (schools block unit of funding only). We have then applied the minimum funding levels described above (and in more detail at Annex A). This has been done by:

1. multiplying each of the minimum funding levels by the relevant number of eligible pupils or schools in the local authority⁶;
2. summing each of the totals in (1) to create a new funding amount for the local authority;
3. applying the area cost adjustment to the total in (2);
4. dividing this total by the number of pupils in the local authority⁷;

⁵ We will use a hybrid area cost adjustment. This is described in full at [Annex C](#) of the consultation document we published in March. In calculating an area costs adjustment in the methodology for 2015-16, we have updated the calculation so we are using the most up to date data that is available. We are now using the autumn 2013 school workforce census for teacher pay (we previously used the 2012 census) and the 2012-13 section 251 data on local authority expenditure on education for split between teacher and non-teaching staff pay (we previously used 2011-12 data).

⁶To identify the relevant number of eligible pupils or schools, we have used the [2014-15 schools block dataset](#).

5. if the result of (4) is more than the local authority's per pupil funding in 2014-15, increasing the local authority's funding to reach this new level;
6. if not, keeping the level of funding per pupil the same.

The table at Annex B confirms the new level of funding per pupil for 2015-16 for those local authorities that currently attract less than the minimum funding levels⁸. No other local authority's level of funding per pupil will change as a result of minimum funding levels. They will receive the same cash level of funding per pupil in 2015-16 as in 2014-15 (other than very minor adjustments to reflect the decision on the carbon reduction commitment set out in chapter five⁹).

We are fixing the schools block unit of funding for 2015-16 for every local authority now, so that local authorities can begin to develop their local formulae for 2015-16 with certainty about how much they will receive for each pupil in their area. We are not confirming total funding allocations yet for every local authority. To do this, for each local authority we will use the schools block unit of funding we have set out at Annex C of this document and multiply this by pupil numbers taken from the October 2014 schools census.

⁷ For the calculation at 4, the number of pupils in the local area is also taken from the [2014-15 schools block dataset](#)

⁸ The table at Annex B shows local authorities that will gain more than £1 per pupil. Final allocations in December will be calculated to the nearest penny.

⁹ A table setting out all these changes, by local authority, is provided at Annex C.

Chapter two – Long-term reform of high needs and early years funding

The dedicated schools grant (DSG) is divided into three blocks: the schools block, the high needs block and the early years block. Our proposal in March on fairer schools funding was concerned only with the schools block. However, almost a third of responses to the consultation expressed the view that the funding system can only be considered truly fair when reform is carried out across the entire DSG.

We agree that this is a vital next step. We are determined to move as quickly as possible to a fully fair allocation of the whole DSG. We cannot do this for 2015-16 because we do not know enough about the genuine cost of high needs and early years provision and how this varies between different areas. This chapter sets out how we will get that knowledge.

High needs funding reform

The current high needs block funding levels are based on past allocations and local spending decisions. We know that there is wide variation between different areas in how much they spend on high needs pupils (and probably also in how they identify high needs pupils) but we do not yet have reliable information on the degree to which that variation in spending reflects genuine variation in need and incidence. Consequently, we have not been able so far to reach a conclusion about how to identify those authorities that are the least fairly funded for high needs pupils. If we tried to make adjustments without such information and understanding, we would have no reason to believe that the allocation was any fairer than it is now.

This means that we do not have sufficient evidence to make any substantial change to the distribution of high needs funding in 2015-16. It will of course remain the case that local authorities can move funds between the three funding blocks of their DSG allocation if they consider that local priorities are best served by such transfers.

Our longer term aim is to move to a more formulaic way of distributing high needs block funding as soon as this can be done on a basis of adequate knowledge and understanding. We are undertaking a substantial research project, which will help to fill some of our information gaps, inform a wider debate, and contribute to the ultimate decisions on how to move forward in this direction. This research will begin this autumn, starting with a review of all the available data and including some fieldwork with a representative number of local authorities and providers. It will also look at potential formulae for distributing high needs funding. We hope to have conclusions from this research by spring 2015.

Following the research, and informed by its conclusions, we expect to conduct a very wide and deep consultation exercise on the way that high needs funding should be distributed, both from central government to local authorities and from local authorities to institutions.

We are not planning significant changes to high needs funding arrangements for 2015-16 because we want the reforms we introduced in 2013 to embed fully in all local areas. We are though making a small number of minor changes for 2015-16 that we think will help local areas as they continue to implement the place based system. These changes are set out in chapter 6.

Early years funding reform

We also want to look carefully at the distribution of funding between local authorities for government funded early education for three and four year olds. As we said in 2012¹⁰, a fair distribution of early years funding would be best achieved by putting in place a national early years funding formula and we remain committed to achieving this.

As is the case with high needs funding, we cannot make progress with this until we have done further work on how to introduce a formulaic approach, including giving careful consideration to how this would be implemented, the transitional protections that would be required, and how to minimise disruption for early years settings. We also need to know more about the different approaches local authorities currently take over discretionary spend, for example early years services delivered by local authorities and funding for additional hours over and above the statutory entitlement.

For 2015-16, we will be providing additional funding for early years, through a new early years pupil premium – an additional £50m to provide nurseries, schools and other providers of government funded early education with additional funding for disadvantaged three and four year olds. We published our consultation on this – [Early Years Pupil Premium and Funding for 2 year olds](#) on 25 June 2014.

¹⁰ [Next Steps Towards a Fairer System](#), Department for Education, March 2012.

Chapter three – Refinements to arrangements for funding schools serving sparse areas

Funding small schools in sparsely populated areas – the sparsity factor

In June last year, we introduced a new sparsity factor for local authorities to use in their local formulae for school funding in 2014-15. The purpose of this factor is to enable local authorities to provide an additional sum to small schools serving sparsely populated areas where those schools may not be able to operate on the basis of per pupil funding alone.

Schools that are eligible for sparsity funding meet two criteria: first, they are located in areas where pupils would have to travel a significant distance to an alternative should the school close; and second, they are small schools.

A sparsity distance is calculated by the department for every school in England. To calculate this value, for every school we look at the pupils for whom the school is the closest, and measure the distance (as the crow flies) from their postcode to their second nearest school. A school's sparsity distance is the average of these distances.

A school attracts an additional sum where:

- it has 150¹¹ or fewer pupils in primary or 600 or fewer pupils in secondary, middle and all-through schools; and
- it has a sparsity distance of two miles or more for primary, middle and all-through schools and three miles or more for secondary schools.

Local authorities can choose to apply the sparsity sum as either a fixed lump sum, up to a maximum of £100,000 (separate amounts can be set for primary and secondary) or an amount that is tapered in inverse proportion to school size¹².

Prior to the consultation, we had heard specific concerns from local authorities about the school size criteria and that, for example, an infant school of 140 pupils in three year groups could meet the school size eligibility criteria, while a primary school with 160 pupils in seven year groups would not. We asked through the consultation whether an approach that used average year group size, rather than the total number on roll, would be helpful.

We had also heard specific concerns from a small number of local authority areas about the funding that very small secondary schools can currently attract. The concern was that

¹¹ Local authorities may narrow the criteria for the sparsity factor in their local formulae by setting a lower pupil number threshold or a higher sparsity distance threshold.

¹² The way in which the current factor operates is set out in full the [operational information for 2014-15](#).

even after applying the maximum lump sum and the maximum sparsity sum, these schools might not attract enough funding to guarantee their long-term viability. These concerns relate to the very smallest secondary schools in England that serve particularly sparsely populated areas.

Views from the consultation

The Government's response to the points raised by respondents on changes to the sparsity factor is included in the [Government response](#) to the fairer schools funding consultation, which should be read alongside this chapter.

For school funding in 2014-15, 24 local authorities have chosen to use the sparsity factor while 34 local authorities that have eligible schools have chosen not to include the factor in their local formula. We wanted to understand how helpful local authorities had found the sparsity factor in targeting additional funding to small schools if they are essential to serving sparsely populated areas. We also wanted to understand whether small changes to the operation of the factor would be helpful. Responding to the concerns that had already been raised, we also wanted to seek views on using average year group size criteria, in place of the current approach that looks at the total number on roll in a school.

Of the respondents that had a view on how useful the sparsity factor has been, around half suggested that it has been helpful in their authority or for their school. Of those that had a view on whether moving to a year group size approach would be helpful, just less than half thought it would. Of those that thought the year group size proposal was unhelpful, more than a third of the responses were from within a local authority area where the sparsity factor is not used. Those respondents said that the proposal added too much additional complexity, and that local discretion to identify small schools could avoid the need for this change.

We also asked for suggestions for other changes. The most common suggestion was moving away from using distances as the crow flies and instead using a measure that reflects road travel time. Other suggestions included: reducing the sparsity distance criteria so that the factor supports more small schools; measuring the distance between schools rather than between pupils and schools; and requiring the sparsity sum to be applied using a tapered approach rather than as a single lump sum.

Changes for 2015-16

We have carefully considered the views expressed during the consultation and have discussed them with a number of local authorities.

We received over 30 responses that expressed concern at the use of distances as the crow flies in the sparsity calculation. We recognise that using distances as the crow flies causes some anomalies in areas served by poor road infrastructure, and with natural obstacles such as hills and rivers, but there is no dataset currently available to us that can perform the sparsity calculations for every school in England using road travel distances. We have permitted local authorities to apply to the Education Funding Agency

(EFA) to include, on an exceptional basis, schools where the actual road travel distances are likely to exceed a school’s sparsity distance using the crow flies measure and the school would not otherwise be eligible. We will apply a light touch approach in reconsidering applications approved for school funding in 2014-15.

We have carefully considered the other suggestions for change that we have heard. Our response to these suggestions is set out in the [Government response](#). We have been particularly mindful that a number of respondents do not want to see further complexity added to the operation of this factor. Taking into account all these views, we are proposing two minor changes for 2015-16.

Average year group size

We think it is right to move towards a size measure that assesses school size relative to school type.

For 2015-16, local authorities will be required to use new average year group size thresholds in place of the number on roll criteria that apply for school funding in 2014-15. This change will enable local authorities to target sparsity funding to the schools in their area that are small relative to their school type. The average year group sizes that will apply for 2015-16 will be:

Phase	Average year group threshold	Rationale
Primary	21.4	Current total number on roll (NOR) threshold of 150, divided by 7 (the number of year groups in a primary school)
Secondary	120	Current total NOR threshold of 600, divided by 5 (the number of year groups in a secondary school)
Middle ¹³	69.2	A weighted average of the primary and secondary average year group thresholds in middle schools ¹⁴ .
All-Through ¹⁵	62.5	A weighted average of the primary and secondary average year groups in all-through schools ¹⁶ .

Table 1: Average year group size thresholds in 2015-16

¹³ Defined as all schools that provide for at least one primary and one secondary year group but are not all-through schools

¹⁴ Average number of primary year groups (2.48) and secondary year groups (2.33) in all middle schools, each multiplied by respective average year group threshold (21.4 and 120) and then divided by average total year groups (4.81)

¹⁵ Defined as all schools that provide for at least 12 year groups

¹⁶ 7 x primary average year group threshold + 5 x secondary average year group threshold; then the total divided by 12

These are maximum thresholds. A local authority will be free to choose to set lower (though not higher) thresholds. A school will meet the size criterion for the sparsity factor where the average number of pupils in its year groups is equal to, or less than, the relevant local threshold. Where a local authority chooses to apply the sparsity amount as a tapered sum, this will be calculated in inverse proportion to the relevant year group size.

For 2015-16, local authorities will be permitted to set a differentiated sparsity amount for each of the school types in their area (primary, middle, secondary and all-through schools). Each amount must be no higher than the current maximum of £100,000.

Full details on how the average year group thresholds will work are provided in the 2015-16 [operational guide](#) published alongside this document.

Small secondary schools serving sparsely populated areas

We recognise that there is a small group of secondary schools that stand out both because they are significantly smaller than the average secondary school and because they serve very sparse areas of the country. We are aware that local authorities have experienced difficulties in ensuring that these schools attract sufficient additional funding, while also ensuring that less rural secondary schools do not, as a consequence, attract an inefficient amount of lump sum funding.

For 2015-16, we will allow local authorities to make an application to the EFA to include an exceptional factor for these schools, and, where that is approved, will allow local authorities to apply an additional sum of up to £50,000 for each school. Local authorities will only be able to apply for an exceptional factor where schools have:

- pupils in years 10 and 11;
- 350 pupils or fewer; and
- a sparsity distance of 5 miles or more.

Implementation

The full details of how these changes should be implemented are set out in the 2015-16 operational guide published alongside this document.

Chapter four – Simplifying the administration of academies funding

Funding for most academies is currently included in the dedicated schools grant that we give to each local authority to fund its schools. As the Education Funding Agency (EFA) funds academies directly, it recoups the academies' share of the dedicated schools grant from each local authority. However, funding for around 10% of academies – known as 'non-recoupment academies' – is not included in each local authority's dedicated schools grant allocation and is therefore not recouped.

The arrangement for free school funding is similar to that for a non-recoupment academy: funding is not recouped from a local authority's dedicated schools grant when a free school opens. Free schools are funded directly by the EFA based on estimated pupil numbers. This is because new free schools would not have completed a census, as they would not have been open at census time, and census data on expanding free schools would only show pupils in year groups that were present at the time of the previous census. To overcome this, during the period of expansion free schools provide estimates of the pupil numbers they expect to be in the school in each year and are funded on those estimates. This means, until the following pupil census is complete, the department funds a local authority and a free school for the same pupils for seven months.

We consulted on two proposals in May: a) turning non-recoupment academies (including free schools) into recoupment academies, bringing together our two different approaches to funding academies; and b) amending the funding of local authorities for pupils in free schools to reduce the amount of double funding the department pays.

Views from the consultation

There was generally a positive response to our proposals to convert non-recoupment academies into recoupment academies, with 57% of respondents in favour. However, a number of respondents were concerned that our proposed method for working out how much extra dedicated schools grant each local authority should receive for former non-recoupment academies did not include central expenditure (such as funding for high levels of pupil number growth) on those academies.

The majority of respondents did not agree with our approach to amend the funding of local authorities for pupils in free schools. Respondents were critical about the impact this would have on local authority budgets and that they were being asked to fund pupil growth that was not necessary to meet basic need.

Concerns were also expressed about schools close to a border between local authorities. Some pupils could leave a school in one local authority to attend the free school in a neighbouring local authority. Then in the first year after the pupil moves, funding would be recouped from the free school's local authority even though those pupils were not in the pupil number count used to calculate that local authority's dedicated schools grant.

Other concerns expressed were about the use of free school estimates: if free schools over-estimated pupil numbers, that would result in incorrect funding being recouped from the local authority. However, respondents generally acknowledged that, if we were going to proceed with amending the funding of local authorities for pupils in free schools, our proposal not to recoup funding for the first year of a free school was helpful

Our response to the points raised through this consultation are set out in detail in the [Government response](#).

Approach for 2015-16

We have listened carefully to the views expressed through the consultation and we will make two changes for 2015-16.

Converting non-recoupment academies to recoupment academies

We have modified our approach from the one on which we consulted to reflect the additional burden for local authorities of central expenditure on former non-recoupment academies.

As in our original proposal, we will:

- work out how much the EFA would recoup for former non-recoupment academies in 2015-16 if the local authority's formula remained the same as in 2014-15;
- increase this amount in line with the local authority's percentage gain from minimum funding levels.

Then, as a modification from our original proposal to reflect concerns about central expenditure, we will add to this the greater of:

- the amount of central expenditure¹⁷ the EFA paid to non-recoupment academies in the local authority's area in 2014-15;
- the amount of central expenditure the local authority pays to former non-recoupment academies in 2015-16.

We will add the resulting total to the local authority's dedicated schools grant in 2015-16¹⁸.

¹⁷ A list of the relevant items of central expenditure is set out in [Calculating schools block units of funding 2015 to 2016: technical note](#)

¹⁸ We will publish further details later this year of the mechanism for calculating and paying this additional funding for central expenditure. For the purposes of this calculation central expenditure includes only spending that EFA pays to non-recoupment in 2014-15, but local authorities will pay to former non-recoupment academies in 2015-16. A list is in the technical note which accompanies this announcement.

This means that, unless a local authority changes its local funding formula in 2015-16 in a way that is especially favourable to the former non-recoupment academies, the local authority will receive at least as much addition to dedicated schools grant in 2015-16 for its former non-recoupment academies as it will then pay out in respect of them through recoupment or directly to the academies.

The table below shows an example of how we will calculate funding, including the new policy on central expenditure.

Academy X is the only non-recoupment academy in local authority Y.

On the basis of local authority Y's 2014-15 funding formula and academy X's pupil numbers and characteristics from the October 2014 census, the Education Funding Agency calculates initial funding of £1m.

Local authority Y is due an increase of 5% to its schools block unit of funding in 2015-16 due to minimum funding levels, so this £1m also increases by 5% to £1.05m.

Academy X received no central expenditure from the EFA in 2014-15 but receives £40,000 in 2015-16 from local authority Y. The EFA takes the greater of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 spending, in this case £40,000. It adds this to local authority Y's 2015-16 funding.

Therefore in total local authority Y receives an extra £1.09m added to the schools block of its dedicated schools grant in 2015-16 census.

The [operational guide](#) and [technical note](#) set out detail on the operation of converting non-recoupment academies to recoupment academies.

Amending the funding of local authorities for pupil in free schools

Our proposal was to recoup what the relevant local authority would have provided in funding for the pupils in the free school if it had been a maintained school or a recoupment academy, except in the first year of opening for a new free school.

The purpose of this change was to ensure consistency with all other schools. Currently a new recoupment academy is funded on estimated pupil numbers and recoupment is calculated on the same basis: this will be true for all new academies when we have implemented the change discussed above that all academies should be recoupment academies.

We have considered local authorities' concerns that free schools places may not be meeting basic need. On balance we do not think that this justifies continuing to fund free

schools differently from other schools. Free schools are making a major contribution to delivering basic need and are delivering good quality places in areas where these are needed. Seven in ten open mainstream free schools have been set up in areas where there was need for additional school places.

Following consultation, we have therefore decided to implement our proposal – with one modification. Many respondents objected that it would be unfair to local authorities to base recoupment on pupil number estimates made by the free school itself. We now propose instead to recoup based on free school pupil numbers estimated by local authorities, on the same basis as they would use for other new schools.

This modification will not have an impact on the way free schools are funded by the EFA. The calculation of funding by the EFA and the calculation of a notional budget for recoupment purposes by the local authority are two separate processes.

We will also, as originally proposed, allow local authorities to make retrospective adjustments the following financial year to address any variation between estimated and actual pupil numbers. We will consult shortly on how this should be done as part of our consultation on the School and Early Years Finance Regulations for 2015-16.

This change should make it easier for local authorities to plan for the amount of recoupment to expect from the second year onwards.

We understand the concern about cross-border movement, but we are satisfied that our decision maintains consistency with the rest of the schools system. At present, where pupils move from a maintained school or recoupment academy in one local authority to a maintained school or recoupment academy in another, funding follows those pupils in the year after they move. This is because a local authority's funding for each financial year is calculated using the school census from the previous October. We are not planning anything different for free schools.

Apart from the changes set out above, the detail of our final policy on converting non-recoupment academies to recoupment academies and on amending the funding of local authorities for free schools pupils is as in the consultation. The [operational guide](#) and [technical note](#) set out this final policy detail.

Chapter five – Carbon reduction commitment

The carbon reduction commitment (CRC) scheme is a UK-wide trading scheme, introduced in April 2010. It is designed to reduce emissions in the public and private sectors by incentivising the uptake of cost-effective energy efficiency opportunities. Before 2014-15, local authorities bought CRC allowances for their schools directly from the scheme.

Following the Department for Energy and Climate Change's consultation in 2012 on the simplification of the scheme, the Government removed schools from the main scheme for 2014-15. Instead, the Department for Education reduced each local authority's dedicated schools grant (DSG) in order to pay for schools' contribution to the CRC scheme. We calculated the deduction for each local authority on the basis of their spending in 2013-14 on CRC allowances for schools, as declared in their 'section 251' returns to DfE¹⁹. These deductions totalled £51m – around 0.15% of the DSG.

Approach for 2015-16

For 2015-16 we will revise this method. We will deduct funding for the CRC scheme from the DSG on a simple per pupil basis. We will first adjust per pupil funding to take account of minimum funding levels (as set out in chapter one), then we will reduce each local authority's per pupil funding by £7.51. This will reduce the cost of the dedicated schools grant by £51m, the same as the amount by which DfE reduced local authorities' DSG in 2014-15.

The table below shows an example of this:

2014-15	2015-16
Local authority X has a total dedicated schools grant (DSG) of £10m before deductions for CRCs.	Local authority X has a schools block unit of funding of £5000 after its increase from minimum funding levels. It has 1000 pupils.
On the basis of 'section 251' on its 2013-14 CRC spending, data EFA calculates that local authority X should contribute £10,000 to CRCs.	To reflect CRC reductions, we reduce LA X's schools block unit of funding (SBUF) by £7.51 per pupil. Its final SBUF is £4992.49. In total the LA therefore receives £7510 less as a result of CRCs (£7.51 multiplied by 1000 pupils).

¹⁹ Details of how EFA calculated each local authority's contribution on the basis of section 251 data are in annex A of the [technical note](#) for 2014-15 dedicated schools grant allocations.

Local authority X receives £9,990,000 of dedicated schools grant in 2014-15.	We do not make any further reductions to local authority X's dedicated schools grant: unlike in 2014-15 the CRC deduction has been reflected in the SBUF.
LA's contribution to CRCs: £10,000	LA's contribution to CRCs: £7,510

Table 2: Example of funding deductions for CRC

We are changing to this approach in 2015-16 because we do not want to continue to rely on data on local authorities' CRC spending in 2013-14, while actual levels of carbon emissions change over time. (2013-14 is the last year in which schools were part of the main scheme and therefore the last year for which data is available on each local authority's CRC spending for schools). Pupil numbers are a simpler and fairer way to work out a local authority's CRC contribution.

The impact of this change, for every local authority, is set out at Annex C.

Chapter six – Changes to high needs funding for 2015-16

In chapter two, we set out our aims for the next stage of reform of the high needs and early years funding system. We have started to plan for this now. We do not want to make other major changes to the high needs funding arrangements while we do this work, but in this chapter we describe minor changes we will make for 2015-16 to improve the operation of the current system.

In 2013, a new system of funding was introduced for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in schools, academies and alternative provision and for students in colleges and other post-16 institutions. This was intended to achieve more consistency, to replace the previous funding mechanisms that varied considerably between local authorities and institutions, and ensure a more efficient use of limited resources. High needs funding is predominantly for children and young people who need a higher level of additional support to participate in education, and where the costs of that support are high.

Since 2013 high needs funding has consisted of:

- ‘Place funding’ – funding for places in specialist institutions where the vast majority of pupils have high level needs (maintained and non-maintained special schools, special academies, pupil referral units and alternative provision academies) and for students aged 16 to 25 with high needs in all institutions. This place funding provides a base budget for institutions which gives them a greater degree of certainty on a proportion of their income for the year.
- ‘Top-up funding’ for institutions that follows individual pupils and students, reflecting how much it costs to meet their needs in the institution, and taking into account the funding already in the institution’s base budget.
- Funding for SEN support and other high needs services provided centrally by the local authority. We do not differentiate between this funding and top-up funding in the allocations we make to local authorities.

We believe the arrangements for place funding and top-up funding achieve a reasonable balance for institutions: some guaranteed funding for the year, and some funding that is more closely aligned to the needs of actual pupils and students, for the period they are on roll.

It is taking time for both local authorities and institutions to adjust to these new arrangements, depending on how different their funding arrangements were before 2013. We are therefore not proposing to make significant changes for 2015-16. However, there are a small number of improvements that we think will help the system work better.

Distribution of high needs funding to local authorities

When we knew that we were in a position to distribute more funding in 2014-15 than we had distributed in 2013-14, we decided to use it first to meet the additional demand for high needs places, and then to allocate the remainder to local authorities by distributing a flat rate amount per capita of population aged 2 to 19. We saw this as the simplest and fairest way of distributing additional funding without making any premature judgement about whether the current distribution of high needs funding between different local authorities was right. We adopted a different approach to the distribution of additional high needs funding in respect of students in colleges and post-16 institutions other than schools – as explained in the EFA’s technical guide – [Dedicated Schools Grant 2014-15](#).

In 2015-16 we expect to distribute some high needs funding in addition to the funding allocated in 2014-15 and in doing so, we will use the same methodology as in 2014-15 and do so for both pre- and all post-16 funding. We will first allocate funds for additional places identified as a result of the process outlined below, and then distribute what is left to local authorities using a flat rate per capita calculation in the same way as we did in 2014-15. We will confirm the amount to be allocated when the schools block allocations are notified to authorities in December 2014.

As in previous years, the amount of additional funding available will be limited, and if more additional places are funded than are needed, this will mean we have less to distribute on a simple per capita basis. We intend to conclude this process in time for the December 2014 DSG allocations, which will give more certainty to local authorities at an earlier stage than was possible in the previous two years.

Funding for high needs places

The following principles will apply to the process that the EFA will operate to determine the number of places for which funds will be allocated:

- **The place numbers used for the academic year 2015/16 will be the published numbers for 2014/15, subject to the exceptions indicated below.** We are aiming in future to update the place numbers on the basis of the number of high needs pupils and students occupying the places in the prior academic year. But we are not confident that the quality and timeliness of the data that will be available from the school census and individualised learner record (completed by colleges) in the autumn of 2014 will allow us to make accurate and timely allocations for 2015-16. We will continue to seek improvements to the quality of this information so that we can use it for funding purposes in future years;
- **Local authorities and institutions will be able to identify significant changes in SEN places that require more place funding,** including places in new special free schools. We will put in place a process for this in the autumn term, and a similar process in respect of hospital education.

- **The scope for changes to local authorities' high needs allocations on account of changes to alternative provision will be more limited.** There is a wide range of locally determined approaches to the operation and funding of alternative provision. Whereas in future we expect pupil data to drive the SEN place funding, so more places in one institution will be matched by fewer elsewhere, it is unlikely that we will be able to rely on pupil data to the same extent in calculating funding for alternative provision places, because the pupil population in this type of provision is much more fluid. Our view is therefore that the fairest approach is for changes to the scale and nature of alternative provision to be met by local authorities, schools and academies within their existing funding envelope. This will mean that local authorities and their schools bear the cost of any increase in alternative provision places for pupils who would otherwise be in mainstream schools but for the placement decisions they have made.
- **Alternative provision places in free schools will be funded from a central departmental budget for the first and second year the free school is open.** From the third year the cost of the place funding will be met by deductions from the relevant local authorities' DSG, in the same way that their DSG bears the cost of all other alternative provision places, so that the alternative provision offered by free schools is fully integrated into local planning and funding arrangements.

Place funding for alternative provision

When we introduced the new high needs funding arrangements in 2013 we said that we would keep the level of funding for alternative provision places under review. Two years on we have reflected on whether the current level of place funding provides the right balance between stability for providers of alternative provision places and flexibility for commissioners to identify the right provision for an individual pupil. We have concluded that changing the balance of place and top-up funding in favour of the former will give pupil referral units, and academies and free schools offering alternative provision places, more stability by increasing their guaranteed budget for the year.

Accordingly, we will consult over the summer on draft regulations, which will include an increase in the funding of alternative provision places from £8,000 to £10,000 per place per annum from September 2015. If this change is confirmed in the final regulations, it will be applicable to all alternative provision places, and must include those that schools can commission directly as well as those that the local authority can commission. We will also expect to see reductions in the top-up funding for alternative provision, so that this adjustment is cost-neutral for local authorities and schools.

Independent special schools and other post-16 institutions

We are planning to bring some independent special schools and new special post-16 institutions within the high needs funding system of place and top-up funding. Those on a

new list of approved institutions, established under section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014, will be in scope, and the EFA will provide more information about the next steps to those institutions and local authorities.

Further details of all these changes are set out in the 2015-16 [operational guide](#).

Schools forum changes

The changes set out above will be supported by small changes to the regulations on the operation of schools forums to increase the representation of special and alternative provision academies and ensure that important issues concerning SEN and alternative provision funding are discussed in the forum. We will consult over the summer on amendments to regulations to effect these changes in time for 2015-16.

Next steps

Authority Proforma Tool (APT) and timing

In the previous chapters, we have outlined important changes to school funding for 2015-16. These changes are likely to mean that many local authorities, working with their schools forum, will need to undertake a further review of their local formula, drawing on the information in this document and the supporting [operational guide](#).

We will shortly issue the Authority Proforma Tool (APT), which will enable local authorities to model formula changes before submission. Local authorities should submit their provisional formula to the Education Funding Agency at the end of October, with a final return due in January. The full timetable for 2015-16 is provided in the accompanying operational guide.

Where necessary, we will consult over the summer on amendments to regulations to effect these changes in time for 2015-16.

Minimum funding guarantee

We confirmed in March that we will retain the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for 2015-16, which has been in place over several years and which dictates that for the vast majority of schools, funding per pupil cannot drop by more than 1.5% per year²⁰.

For local authorities that will receive a higher amount of funding for pupils and schools because of the changes set out in chapter one of this document, the operational guide provides further details on how this additional funding should be taken into account in MFG calculations.

Delegation

We want school leaders to have maximum choice over how they spend their budgets. For this reason, most services in the notional schools block and the funding for them should be delegated to schools in the first instance. The purposes for which local authorities can centrally retain funding will not change for 2015-16 and are re-stated in the operational guide. Our expectation is that local authorities look to delegate any additional funding they receive for 2015-16 to schools and academies²¹.

²⁰ Some funding is excluded from the calculation of the minimum funding guarantee. Details of this are in [Schools revenue funding 2015 to 2-16: operational guide](#).

²¹ Academy budgets will reflect the impact of any additional funding provide to local areas from September 2015. This is because academies are funded from September to August. Similarly, maintained schools budgets will reflect the impact of any additional funding provided to their local area from April 2015 because maintained schools are funded from April to March.

Annex A – The 2015-16 minimum funding levels

		Minimum funding levels		
		Primary	Secondary	
Age weighted pupil unit		£2,880	Key stage 3: £3,950 Key stage 4: £4,502	
Pupils who have been eligible for free school meals in the past six years		£882	£1,052	For a pupil who is both eligible for free school meals and lives in an IDACI band 1 to 6 area, the local authority will attract both the FSM and relevant IDACI band minimum funding levels
Pupils who live in an area that is in one of the income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) bands	IDACI 1	£209	£289	
	IDACI 2	£260	£379	
	IDACI 3	£347	£470	
	IDACI 4	£422	£554	
	IDACI 5	£477	£614	
	IDACI 6	£691	£819	
Looked-after children		£1,004	£1,004	The same measure will be used as is currently set out in the 2014-15 school funding arrangements. The minimum funding level will apply to the children who are reported to the department through the annual children looked after return and who are looked after children for one day or more at the census point.

Pupils with low prior attainment	£669	£940	For the primary measure, this will apply to pupils who did not reach the expected level of development on the new Early Years Foundation Stage Profile or who achieved fewer than 78 points on the old EYFSP. For secondary pupils the minimum funding level applies to pupils not reaching level 4 at key stage 2 in either English or maths.
English as an additional language	£466	£1,130	This minimum funding level will apply to pupils with EAL who entered the English state school system in the past three years.
Lump sum	£115,797	£125,155	Middle schools will attract a minimum lump sum weighted by their ratio of primary to secondary year groups in the school. All-through schools will attract the secondary amount.
Sparsity sum	£44,635	£66,656	A taper will apply, whereby the size of the sum is in inverse proportion to the size of the school. The criteria for attracting the minimum funding level are the same as the criteria for the sparsity factor in local formulas for 2014 -2015. Details of this are in Revenue funding arrangements for 2014-15 .

Table 3: Minimum funding levels

Annex B – Changes to local authority funding for 2015-2016

The following table shows changes to schools funding as a result of distributing an additional £390m using the approach set out in chapter one of this document. This table does not reflect deductions of funding for the CRC scheme from the dedicated schools grant, which are shown at Annex C for every local authority. In this table we have estimated total funding, and the total increase in funding, by using 2014-15 pupil numbers. We will apply pupil numbers from the October 2014 census when final allocations are made in December.

Local authority	Actual 2014-15 funding		Fairer schools funding 2015-16		Increase in funding	
	Funding per pupil	Total funding	Funding per pupil	Estimate of total funding (based on October 2013 pupil numbers)	Percentage	Estimate of total increase in funding (based on October 2013 pupil numbers)
Bromley	£4,082	£169.6m	£4,553	£189.1m	11.5%	£19.5m
Cambridgeshire	£3,950	£294.3m	£4,261	£317.5m	7.9%	£23.2m
Sutton	£4,360	£124.7m	£4,678	£133.8m	7.3%	£9.1m
Northumberland	£4,244	£166.2m	£4,551	£178.3m	7.2%	£12.0m
Shropshire	£4,113	£143.6m	£4,410	£154.0m	7.2%	£10.4m
Merton	£4,534	£98.6m	£4,832	£105.1m	6.6%	£6.5m
Buckinghamshire	£4,040	£275.4m	£4,305	£293.4m	6.5%	£18.0m
Croydon	£4,559	£208.6m	£4,837	£221.3m	6.1%	£12.7m
Leicestershire	£3,995	£339.7m	£4,237	£360.2m	6.1%	£20.6m
Brent	£5,066	£190.7m	£5,357	£201.7m	5.8%	£11.0m
South Gloucestershire	£3,969	£137.5m	£4,196	£145.3m	5.7%	£7.9m
Warwickshire	£4,079	£281.3m	£4,302	£296.7m	5.5%	£15.4m
Cheshire West and Chester	£4,129	£173.6m	£4,351	£183.0m	5.4%	£9.4m
Surrey	£4,096	£548.8m	£4,308	£577.1m	5.2%	£28.4m
Bury	£4,230	£111.1m	£4,441	£116.7m	5.0%	£5.6m
Poole	£4,007	£68.3m	£4,194	£71.5m	4.7%	£3.2m
Devon	£4,156	£358.1m	£4,350	£374.8m	4.7%	£16.7m
Norfolk	£4,334	£432.9m	£4,514	£450.9m	4.2%	£18.0m
Derbyshire	£4,245	£405.0m	£4,417	£421.3m	4.0%	£16.3m
Rutland	£4,087	£20.9m	£4,250	£21.7m	4.0%	£0.8m

Local authority	Actual 2014-15 funding		Fairer schools funding 2015-16		Increase in funding	
	Funding per pupil	Total funding	Funding per pupil	Estimate of total funding (based on October 2013 pupil numbers)	Percentage	Estimate of total increase in funding (based on October 2013 pupil numbers)
North Lincolnshire	£4,316	£95.0m	£4,483	£98.7m	3.9%	£3.7m
Gloucestershire	£4,203	£316.0m	£4,365	£328.2m	3.9%	£12.2m
Westminster	£5,663	£88.3m	£5,872	£91.5m	3.7%	£3.3m
Central Bedfordshire	£4,144	£145.7m	£4,297	£151.0m	3.7%	£5.3m
Swindon	£4,102	£117.7m	£4,251	£121.9m	3.6%	£4.3m
Windsor and Maidenhead	£4,325	£77.5m	£4,464	£80.0m	3.2%	£2.5m
Herefordshire	£4,306	£90.9m	£4,443	£93.8m	3.2%	£2.9m
North Yorkshire	£4,338	£316.5m	£4,473	£326.4m	3.1%	£9.8m
Cheshire East	£4,083	£187.0m	£4,209	£192.7m	3.1%	£5.7m
Redbridge	£4,668	£199.7m	£4,806	£205.6m	3.0%	£5.9m
Cumbria	£4,449	£269.2m	£4,577	£276.9m	2.9%	£7.8m
Suffolk	£4,241	£370.1m	£4,362	£380.6m	2.8%	£10.5m
Stoke-on-Trent	£4,507	£145.1m	£4,622	£148.8m	2.5%	£3.7m
Northamptonshire	£4,189	£395.2m	£4,293	£405.1m	2.5%	£9.9m
Bracknell Forest	£4,187	£62.6m	£4,291	£64.2m	2.5%	£1.6m
Bournemouth	£4,154	£79.2m	£4,254	£81.1m	2.4%	£1.9m
Salford	£4,551	£131.2m	£4,657	£134.3m	2.3%	£3.1m
Wiltshire	£4,213	£249.1m	£4,310	£254.8m	2.3%	£5.7m
Worcestershire	£4,231	£291.5m	£4,328	£298.2m	2.3%	£6.7m
Torbay	£4,305	£69.8m	£4,399	£71.3m	2.2%	£1.5m
Blackpool	£4,459	£80.2m	£4,538	£81.6m	1.8%	£1.4m
Somerset	£4,278	£273.2m	£4,351	£277.9m	1.7%	£4.7m
Cornwall	£4,397	£285.0m	£4,472	£289.9m	1.7%	£4.9m
Hertfordshire	£4,320	£670.3m	£4,392	£681.5m	1.7%	£11.1m
Durham	£4,573	£281.1m	£4,648	£285.8m	1.7%	£4.7m
Telford and Wrekin	£4,367	£97.0m	£4,435	£98.5m	1.6%	£1.5m
Dorset	£4,167	£202.3m	£4,230	£205.4m	1.5%	£3.1m
Solihull	£4,188	£130.2m	£4,237	£131.8m	1.2%	£1.5m
Lincolnshire	£4,329	£392.0m	£4,379	£396.6m	1.2%	£4.5m

Local authority	Actual 2014-15 funding		Fairer schools funding 2015-16		Increase in funding	
	Funding per pupil	Total funding	Funding per pupil	Estimate of total funding (based on October 2013 pupil numbers)	Percentage	Estimate of total increase in funding (based on October 2013 pupil numbers)
Oxfordshire	£4,274	£333.1m	£4,320	£336.6m	1.1%	£3.5m
East Riding of Yorkshire	£4,258	£177.9m	£4,301	£179.7m	1.0%	£1.8m
Isle of Wight	£4,489	£69.6m	£4,531	£70.3m	0.9%	£0.6m
Wokingham	£4,125	£88.2m	£4,158	£88.9m	0.8%	£0.7m
Bedford	£4,466	£101.0m	£4,501	£101.7m	0.8%	£0.8m
Peterborough	£4,490	£124.7m	£4,520	£125.5m	0.7%	£0.8m
Plymouth	£4,364	£140.1m	£4,389	£140.9m	0.6%	£0.8m
Bath and North East Somerset	£4,336	£95.9m	£4,356	£96.3m	0.5%	£0.5m
Warrington	£4,219	£119.7m	£4,236	£120.2m	0.4%	£0.5m
West Berkshire	£4,359	£95.2m	£4,375	£95.6m	0.4%	£0.4m
Milton Keynes	£4,440	£167.3m	£4,455	£167.9m	0.3%	£0.6m
Medway	£4,352	£161.1m	£4,365	£161.6m	0.3%	£0.5m
Hillingdon	£4,820	£187.0m	£4,832	£187.5m	0.2%	£0.4m
West Sussex	£4,196	£414.5m	£4,206	£415.4m	0.2%	£0.9m
Nottinghamshire	£4,351	£436.2m	£4,360	£437.1m	0.2%	£0.9m
Barnsley	£4,459	£126.9m	£4,468	£127.1m	0.2%	£0.2m
Bolton	£4,536	£188.1m	£4,541	£188.3m	0.1%	£0.2m
Trafford	£4,232	£139.4m	£4,235	£139.5m	0.1%	£0.1m
Sheffield	£4,429	£290.8m	£4,430	£290.9m	0.0%	£0.1m
Staffordshire	£4,310	£455.7m	£4,311	£455.8m	0.0%	£0.1m

Annex C – Changes to schools funding: combined impact of MFLs and CRC



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