

SCHOOLS FORUM

3rd December 2024



2025-26 Mainstream Schools NFF

Lead Officer	Richard Morgan
Contact details	e-mail SchoolsStrategic_FinanceTeam@BATHNES.GOV.UK
Forum asked to decide / steer / be informed	Decide and to recommend
Time Needed	15 Minutes

Introduction

Following the 2025-2026 B&NES Mainstream Schools Funding Consultation – Autumn 2024, that was completed on 15th November 2024, the forum is asked to comment on schools' responses and to decide on planned actions for the National Funding Formula (NFF) for 2025-2026. As the DFE have yet to publish the funding allocations to Local Authorities the Forum is asked to consider the approach to be adopted and provide a steer to the LA on how to allocate funding to mainstream schools in 2025-26.

Recommendation

The Forum is asked to:

- 1) Comment on the responses to the consultation and recommend to the cabinet member the preference the forum would like to take with regard to the details of the NFF.
- 2) Decide on the request to support the continued 0.5% contribution from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2024-2025

Report

The 2025-26 B&NES mainstream schools funding consultation document was emailed to schools on the 14th October 2024 in order to communicate proposed formula changes for 2025-2026 and covered the following 2 main topics.

- A. Proposed changes to the school's formula for 2024-2025 that will be used to fund all mainstream schools and academies.
- B. Continuation of utilisation of school block resources to support High Needs

Set out below for each of these topics is the decision-making powers and the required actions by the schools Forum.

The Formula for 2025-2026 and LA's moving to a 'direct' NFF.

As in previous years, each local authority will continue in consultation with maintained schools and academies, to set a local schools funding formula in 2025-26, in order to calculate the distribution of funding available for mainstream schools.

Local authorities will be required to move their local formulae factors 10% closer to the NFF values, compared to where they were in 2024-25, unless they are already mirroring the NFF. B&NES is deemed to be mirroring the NFF.

The B&NES Autumn 2024 consultation document set out the DFE confirmed technical changes in the NFF, announced in September 2024, and the LA proposed changes in the local authority school's formula for 2025-26 that will be used to fund all B&NES mainstream schools. the consultation also discussed the continuation of the utilisation of school block resources to support the high needs block.

The consultation responses can be viewed at **Appendix 5.1**

The Forum is asked to recommend a course of action to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People for the following two areas.

A. Proposed changes to the school's formula for NFF for 2025-26

If you look at **Appendix 5.1** you will see all the schools' responses to the questions in the consultation and some have shared their opinions.

The school's forum is asked to steer LA officers with regard to the detail of the formula as follows:

1. Following the responses received from the consultation the Forum is asked to steer officers to follow the NFF in line with the allocations provided by the DFE.
2. If the final schools block allocation by the DFE for 2025-26, is not sufficient to support the allocation of the NFF in full, do the forum agree that LA Officers should scale back the eligible NFF factor values by a relevant percentage to balance the overall schools funding formula allocation to the resources available. In Line with the methodology used in the past 3 years.

B. Utilising Schools Block funding for High Needs

For 2025-26 Local authorities will continue to be able to transfer up to 0.5% of their school's block funding into the high needs block with school's forum approval. Transfers above 0.5%, or any amount without school's forum approval will require Secretary of State Approval even if ministers agreed the same amount in the past two years.

The LA consulted on the transfer of 0.5% from the school's block to the High Needs Block from 2018-19 to 2024-25 and, following consultation, which the school's forum agreed. The resources that transferred in 2024-25 were approximately £659k.

The LA consulted with schools in autumn 2024 to ask if they agree to extend the current arrangement to transfer 0.5% of the school's block to the high need block for 2025-26 and **100% of the schools** that responded to the consultation **agreed to this proposal**.

The autumn 2024 consultation responses can be viewed at **Appendix 5.1**

The Forum is asked to decide whether to approve a 0.5% transfer of school's block funding to the High Need Budget for 2025-2026. The actual amount to be transferred cannot be accurately calculated as we have not been given our allocation for 2025-26

If the Forum turns down the proposal to transfer any funding from the school's block to the high needs block the LA can request Secretary of State Approval under the Financing of Schools Regulations.