



Northumberland County Council

Wellbeing and Community Health

Agenda Item 8

SCHOOLS FORUM

20 November 2019

2020/21 Disapplication Requests to the ESFA

1. Purpose of the Report

To consult with Schools Forum of two disapplication requests to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in relation to the 2020/21 Schools Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). in line with the estimated overall DSG for 2019/20 and the proposed allocation of funds to Schools for 2019/20.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Schools Forum notes and supports:

- the disapplication request made in respect of Ponteland Middle School and Meadowdale Academy who are restructuring to become primary schools with effect from 1 September 2020;
- the disapplication request in respect of the inclusion of 6 further schools in relation to sparsity criteria as they meet the average year group size, and also the minimum average distance criteria if measured by road distance, as permitted by the ESFA.

3. Background

A disapplication request is generally required by the ESFA when a local authority is looking to disapply the relevant school funding regulations because it is believed that this will result in anomalous or inequitable distribution of funding, if the standard practice of relying on lagged funding was applied.

In order to receive approval by the deadline of 21 January 2020, we are required to make any disapplication request to the ESFA by 20 November 2019. It is recognised that these deadlines are extremely challenging but this is acknowledged by the ESFA as a result the late release of funding information by the ESFA:

We appreciate that the later than usual funding announcement will have affected the time authorities have to plan for their local formulae, and that therefore local consultations may be shorter or involve fewer meetings than usual.

ESFA Schools revenue funding 2020 to 2021 Operational guide, September 2019

Nevertheless with the approval of Schools Forum we will be able to meet the deadline.

4 Specific Disapplications:

4.1 Middle School Reorganisation

The position of Ponteland Middle School and Meadowdale Academy is that they are restructuring as primary schools, however the fact the schools concerned are admitting numbers not simply into the respective Reception classes but all throughout the primary school years makes pupil planning particularly problematic.

The default position would be a reliance on lagged data but the respective information shared with the respective schools demonstrates that this may not be appropriate method, due to the potential fluctuation in numbers. The disapplication therefore requests that final funding is agreed in the 2020 summer term following national offers day, when a clearer picture of pupil numbers should be available.

4.2 Inclusion of 6 additional schools under the Sparsity criteria as an exceptional factor

Given Northumberland's geography, the sparsity factor is a significant issue for us, and one we need to emphasise the importance of. Using 2019/20 data, we had 48 schools who between them received £709,104. The disapplication request, a copy of which is attached at Appendix B, demonstrated how the crow flies was not an appropriate measure. While approval has been received by the ESFA, the application indicated that this was to be reported to the Forum on 20 November 2019.

5 Summary and Conclusions

In the distribution of school funding it is important that the approach taken is both fair objective and transparent, while reflecting the actual positions of our schools. It is therefore felt that the disapplication requests are appropriate and fair both to the specific schools concerned and the wider Northumberland school population. Any resulting financial changes arising from these disapplication requests will be subject to affordability, once Northumberland's final Schools Block Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2020/21 is known in late December 2019.

School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations Local Authority Application to Disapply Regulations Form General Requests

Please complete this form to apply to the Secretary of State for Education to disapply the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations, or to vary conditions in the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Please complete all fields. **If sections are not satisfactorily completed, we may request further information or REJECT YOUR REQUEST.**

Return the completed form along with any supporting documentation to LA.DISAPPLICATIONS@education.gov.uk

Any supporting documentation which is attached separately, for example spreadsheet calculations, should be referenced in the relevant box on the form.

Local Authority number	929
Local Authority	Northumberland
Funding year request relates to	2020/21
Type of request	Vary Pupil Numbers
Which requirement in the Regulations, including the regulation number, is your request made pursuant to?	Disregard regulation 13 (pupil numbers)
Which requirement in the conditions of grant does this request relate to?	5.2

Number of schools directly affected	2
Have the schools directly affected by this request been consulted?	Yes
What are the views of the schools directly affected by this request?	

Has the schools forum been consulted?	Yes
Does the schools forum agree with this request?	Yes
Has the schools forum voted?	Yes
Which groups of representatives voted? <small>(maintained schools, academies, etc)</small>	all forum members present
What was the split in votes?	
What was the date of the schools forum meeting?	20-Nov-19
Was the meeting quorate?	Yes
Please provide link(s) to the minutes showing schools forum agreement, or details of where this can be found in attached documentation.	https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Professionals/Forum.aspx
If this has not yet been discussed with Schools forum, what date will this be?	

Assessment of the equalities implication	
<p>Please provide us with your detailed equality analysis demonstrating your compliance with the public sector equality duty in s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to your request. If attached separately, please provide details of where this can be found in supporting documentation. Should we consider your analysis to be inadequate we may request further information or REJECT YOUR REQUEST. Stating that there are no equality implications will generally be deemed to be inadequate. Section 149</p>	
<p>Previous equality impact analyses of education in the areas affected indicate there are no likely adverse equality impacts arising from these proposals. The impact will no be disproportionate compared with the overall Northumberland school age population.</p>	

Detailed information about the request not included above.

For any references made to documents supplied separately, please provide details (e.g. page numbers) of where relevant information can be found within the supporting documentation.

You should include, where appropriate:

- What is the rationale for the proposal?
- What is the impact on the schools concerned? Do they benefit from the proposal?
- What is the potential impact on other schools in the area?
- Will maintained schools and academies be affected in the same way?
- What is the potential impact on other educational functions and services in the area?

Northumberland is recognised as one of the most sparsely populated counties in England. 97% of its area is classed as rural, it has an average of 63 people per km². Half of the county's population live in 3% of the land found in the south east corner. Due to this profile, we have a large number of small and rural schools, and consequently school balances are significantly lower than the England average. Table 11 of the 2017/18 School Level revenue balances published in December 2018, showed that average revenue balance for a maintained school, in England was £103,704; in Northumberland the equivalent figure was £17,213.

Given the rurality of the County the "as the crow flies" measures used by the ESFA do not accurately reflect the challenges reflected in actual routes in Northumberland, where distances can be significantly extended by the physical geographical barriers such as rivers, forest, minor roads etc. Using the DfE average distance to second nearest compatible school as a starting point, we tested the equivalent road distances for a number of our schools rather than relying on the DfE data within the 2019/20 APT.

We found that an additional 6 schools who satisfied the average number of pupils per year group criteria and had average distances measured by road of more than 2 miles. A schedule of these schools, the average distance from the 2019/20 APT data, the revised average distance if measured by road, and the nearest alternative school, is attached (please see attached file "Exceptional Sparsity application to the ESFA". Additional notes and images of routes are provided within this file.

We therefore request that these schools be included in the DSG calculations as qualifying under the sparsity criteria as an exceptional application, in line with para 73 of the Schools Revenue Funding Operational Guide 2020/21.

Name of requestor	Bruce Parvin
Job Title	Education and Skills Business Manager
Telephone number	01670 623431
Email address	bruce.parvin@northumberland.gov.uk
Date	11 October 2019

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Request number	
ID	929Nor20/21_1
Decision outcome	Approved
Details of the Decision (including any conditions)	

Approval for these schools be included in the DSG calculations as qualifying under the sparsity criteria as an exceptional application, in line with para 73 of the Schools Revenue Funding Operational Guide 2020/21.

Name	Katrina Ryan
Date	29 October 2019
Type of Notification	Intention to approve
If this notification type is listed as 'intention to approve' the Department will notify you when the regulations are laid.	

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Local Authority number	929
Local Authority	Northumberland
Funding year request relates to	2020/21
Type of request	Other
Which requirement in the Regulations, including the regulation number, is your request made pursuant to?	Alter the operation of paragraphs 14 (primary sparsity) and 15 (secondary sparsity) of Schedule 3 in respect of particular schools
Which requirement in the conditions of grant does this request relate to?	5.2

Number of schools directly affected	6
Have the schools directly affected by this request been consulted?	Yes
What are the views of the schools directly affected by this request?	They are supportive of the application

Has the schools forum been consulted?	No
Does the schools forum agree with this request?	
Has the schools forum voted?	
Which groups of representatives voted? (maintained schools, academies, etc)	
What was the split in votes?	
What was the date of the schools forum meeting?	
Was the meeting quorate?	
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