

Academies Pre-16 Funding: Options for the 2012/13 Academic Year

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 25 May
2011

Your comments must reach us by that date.

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online response facility available on the Department for Education e-consultation website (<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>).

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Reason for confidentiality:

Name	Doug Allan, Secretary
Organisation (if applicable)	F40
Address:	C/o Bank Chambers Market Place Guisborough North Yorkshire TS14 6BN
	Tel: 07785 223707

If you have an enquiry related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact either:

Annie Raw (telephone: 020 7340 8143) or Victoria Ismail (telephone: 020 7783 8682)

e-mail: AcademiesFunding.CONSULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk

Please mark ONE box that best describes you as a respondent

<input type="checkbox"/> Academy	<input type="checkbox"/> School applying for academy status	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintained School
<input type="checkbox"/> Academy Sponsor	<input type="checkbox"/> Schools Forum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Campaign Group
<input type="checkbox"/> Union/Professional Body	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor Association
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Please Specify:

1 Do you agree with our analysis that the current system is not appropriate to fund an increasing number of Academies in a fair and transparent way? (see section 2 in the consultation document)

X	Yes	No	Not Sure
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The current system is unfair in both obvious and obscure ways. There is a clear financial advantage for schools converting to academy status. In the final analysis this advantage is at the expense of both schools remaining in local authority (LA) control and to wider LA budgets.

The mechanisms involved in operating the LACSEG grant are clearly beyond the capacity of those charged with doing it in the light of the number of academy conversions occurring.

Media coverage of academy funding issues demonstrates that the LACSEG grant mechanism and basis are poorly understood at best and more usually perceived to be utterly impenetrable.

2 Do you agree with the principles for an alternative method of funding Academies in 2012/13? (see section 3 in the consultation document)

All	X	Some	None
Not Sure			

F40 agrees that an alternative method is needed for 2012/13 because the current system is clearly unsustainable. It is also clearly unfair, but this is a separate issue.

The aim of having a smooth transition to a new system is one f40 fully supports but we fail to see how this has any meaning unless the system to which one is moving is clearly defined. F40 supports the view that the current system is unfair and that a fair system is needed. It is not axiomatic that a fair system can be found and no one will know if there is such a thing until one has been devised and tested. In broad principle we support the sentiment expressed but would comment on the wisdom of having a clear target in mind before discussing the transition.

Whilst f40 supports the view expressed in the second principle, it is clearly the case that the concepts of localism, academy independence from LAs and fair funding across all schools, may contain a degree of mutual exclusivity meaning that not all of those aims can be realised at the same time. If LAs have any

responsibility over redistribution of even a small element of funding, which we believe they should if such issues as split sites, higher than average premises costs and small rural schools are to be supported, then any school operating above or below the LA mean will be financially advantaged or disadvantaged through academy conversion.

If it is the political view that the majority of schools should be academies or free schools or other forms of independent state funded school, then it seems to us that the only sensible and fair decision to sort out the current mess is to take all schools out of LA control and declare them academies in one step. This is almost certainly an unrealistic idea. In a sense, therefore, the rapid development of the academy programme has produced a set of mutually intractable issues, and a clearly unexpected set of consequences.

The current mess does not have the type of simple solution implied by the principles listed in the consultation document. Whilst not rejecting the admirable sentiments expressed in the principles, we suggest that there are only eventually two stable states for the system: either all state funded schools are under LA or similar control, or all schools are funded as independent state schools.

In the second case, whether or not schools federate into independent or LA managed groups is a separate matter which may or may not follow. How one ends up in either of these states, or whether the system remains in a degree of unfair chaos, is beyond the scope of this response. It is trivial but also true to state that we would not choose to start from here.

The third principle concerning transparency is in our view desirable but not essential. What is essential is that the base line funding for all schools is fit for purpose. The mechanism should not be obscure but that does not mean it will necessarily be simple either to explain or to understand. The key issue is that it produces a fair result and that it can be justified at a higher level. This is clearly not the case at present where schools are clearly seeking academy status for the temporary financial advantage it will bring and in effect penalising those that remain in LA control by doing so.

3 Are there other aims we should have for the Academy funding system in the absence of cross-system reform, such as a Fair Funding Formula? If yes, what are they?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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In the absence of cross system reform the overriding aim for the academy funding system is that the funding for all schools must be sufficient for purpose in that all schools have equality of opportunity to deliver the standard of education required no matter what their status.

LAs need the funding system to have a significant degree of predictability and also to be free of step changes given that the timescale for sensible adjustment to funding changes in a maintained school is of the order of two years.

4 Do you agree with the broad analysis of how each option might work? (see section 4 in the consultation document)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/> Some	<input type="checkbox"/> None
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Comments: None.

5 Which option do you think is the best way of funding Academies in 2012/13? (see section 4 in the consultation document)

Roll forward		Fair funding formula for Academies only	X	Local authority based calculations
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We are in favour of the LA based calculation. This, to our mind, is the most sensible option on the table. This method of calculation would make use of the same data for academies and maintained schools so it is most likely to meet the key principle of fairness with no advantage or disadvantage to LA or academy schools. It would provide a better reflection of what's needed locally, and would certainly be a more accurate and up-to-date method of calculation

We appreciate that implementing this option relies on the LAs having the capacity to do the relevant work but we believe they are well able to manage this task.

The issue of what is a fair and accurate non-DSG LACSEG addition still needs to be resolved.

The option to roll forward – which appears to be being heavily promoted by the government in the supporting documentation – will perpetuate funding problems and will not create the fair and equitable system we are intent on achieving.

6 Are there potential advantages and disadvantages in implementing each option that we have not considered? If yes, what are they?

X	Yes	No	Not Sure
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Please see comments in answer 5.

7 Are there changes you think we should consider to the way the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) is calculated for FY2012/13? If yes, what are they? (see section 5 in the consultation document)

X Yes	No	Not Sure
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Although f40 would support the government considering the way LACSEG is calculated we would only support a change if it did not produce significant turbulence and if it is notified in sufficient time for its implementation to be managed sensibly.

The reality of the current academy conversion process is that the schools that have initially converted have been outstanding schools and they are receiving an element of funding for behaviour support based, we believe, on an average value, when the schools themselves have very few students to whom this funding is relevant. This is just one example of the inherent unfairness of the current situation. Similar issues arise with FSM eligibility in the Centrally Retained Budget and pupil support and education welfare in the notional 'LEA' Budget. The topslicing of the LA budgets to fund the academy programme is also, in our view ill defined and therefore obscure and, as a result, almost certainly unfair.

The majority of students for whom the funding is intended remain in LA schools. The funding available for the LA to support the students has reduced whilst academies have gained a small bonus. This and similar issues should be addressed.

8 What factors would you want us to take into consideration if we were to make changes?

Timescale and turbulence (see previous comments).

9 Have you any further comments?

Comments: None

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply **X**

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

X Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Donna Harrison, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 738212 / email: donna.harrison@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 25 May 2011

Send by post to: Annie Raw, Academy Funding and Finance Team, Department for Education, Level 3, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Send by e-mail to: AcademiesFunding.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk