

School Funding 2015-16 Consultation Responses

School	NOR (Oct13)	Q1 – Maintaining sparsity distance and NOR criteria	Q2 – Basis for determining value of sparsity funding	Q3 – Majority of Pupil-led basis	Q4 – Other formula factors	Other Comments
Adderley	41	No. As I do not feel this is reflecting the intention by government to support small rural schools. I would like to see the criteria to be as intended: for primary schools, fewer than 150 pupils and an average distance greater than or equal to 2 miles.	Yes as the basis does appear fair.	Yes as this would be fair to both larger and smaller schools.	Yes, however I also feel that the age weighted pupil unit should be discussed and clarified as governors may be unsure of this.	The issue for all schools is that costs keep rising and large schools should benefit alongside small rural school. I would however find it difficult to explain to parents that having fought hard as a county to secure better funding siting rural sparsity as a huge issue for Shropshire, that as a rural small school we are no better off as any additional funding would affect the mfg. There are very few small schools who will not have sustainability as a constant item on their governing body agendas. We know we are expensive and that larger schools can feel they are paying the price for keeping us open. However, we have an important role in our communities and in Shropshire as a whole.
St Mary's Westbury	51	Yes I agree it should remain at 3 miles.	Yes I agree with the tapered approach.	Additional Funding should be given to schools with the greatest needs. Percentage of FSM and SEN children.	Yes all of those factors should be considered.	I think it is important that the smallest schools are looked at in terms of the basic running costs and the need to retain their current Head teachers and the increased costs of doing so. Significant changes to the funding of Shropshire's smallest and most rural schools that result in an overall reduction to the budget will effectively result in that school becoming unsustainable and provide transport costs and pressures on other schools in the locality if the school were forced to close. Consideration should also be given to schools that are providing Early Years provision on their site so that that provision can also remain sustainable. Areas of social deprivation and need in rural areas should also be considered.
Norton in Hales	63	Agree with distance criteria but believe pupil thresholds quite high when you look at the number of schools with less than 150 on roll in Shropshire	Increase in funding to sparse secondary schools seems out of proportion going from 40k to 100k	Yes	No – fairer to keep on per pupil basis – there is already Pupil Premium etc which support other factors	The recommended increase per pupil will make a massive difference to the sustainability of small schools and will make it easier to put all the focus on learning rather than getting drawn into constant budget challenges.
Myddle	67	Yes, we don't see any issue with this.	No, would want to see what evidence shows that an increase is necessary, i.e. what the funding is required for. However, in the % of funding to provide to all schools, it is negligible.	In principle, yes, but the nature of operating small schools where financial stability and viability can depend on small fluctuations in pupil numbers, means that some overriding funding factors would be preferable should this be the case, obviously if this is allowed within the delegation rules. In the example shown of a school with static 72 NOR, the increase in pupil led funding and the resulting loss in MFG, meant a total funding position of less than the previous year. This should be mitigated by an increase in MFG to ensure that no school with static numbers, not a falling roll, is worse off after the additional funding is provided, than the previous year.	Yes, lump sums to protect small school's financial fluctuations based on very small awpu changes, as in answer to Q3	We would hope to see a 0% MFG as a negative % MFG would mean that our school would actually lose out.
Barrow	68	Yes	Yes	YES, but a mechanism should be found to ensure it does not impact MFG	YES - see comments below	Whilst recognising the benefit additional pupil funding will bring, we are disappointed that the method for allocation continues to discriminate against small schools. The process of giving with one hand (the additional per pupil; funding) but by implication also then taking away with the other (reducing MFG), means that small schools have no benefit from this. As your own worked example shows some small schools will be worse off. We would welcome consideration of this additional funding being distributed where SEN funding is not sufficient to meet a schools existing needs.

Church Preen	72	<p>My only concern here is that due to the way in which the qualification for sparsity funding is worked out, it is possible that with shifting school population, a school may fail to qualify for one or two years. Since a school will not know that it has failed to qualify until shortly before the financial year starts it could face a serious loss of funding with only a short time to react. It is also likely that this will be a temporary matter unless the initial qualify was a statistical fluke. I realise that this is beyond the scope of the LEA, since it is part of the national guidelines but consider that representations should be made to government to allow a phased wind down of funding if a school drops out of sparsity, or alternatively allow sparsity to continue to be given until, a school which once qualifies, fails for say three years in row. This will at least allow some certainty in funding. On the other side of the coin, a school should only be given sparsity if it qualifies for three years in a row, under the current criteria. I would also commend the council for getting a concession to allow the road distance for some schools that may otherwise have fallen outside the criteria. I myself live 2.5 miles from Rushbury school as the crow flies but 5 miles by road.</p>	<p>I disagree with the thinking behind the increase in funding. The deficit in core school funding of small primary schools applies to all small primary schools regardless of whether the school is sparse. This should be addressed by increasing the lump sum paid to all primary schools. Otherwise by accepting that the lump sum does not cover core expenditure, the LEA is accepting that it is underfunding small non sparse primaries which is a disguised way of seeking their self closure due to lack of funding over a number of years. Sparsity funding should more properly be used to help sparse schools cover the true costs of sparsity such as securing transport for children who are denied access to after school clubs because they cannot get transport home after the school bus has left and other similar issues. If Sparse schools were properly funded by the lump sum in the first place then a separate study should be carried out to ascertain the true additional costs caused by sparsity.</p>	<p>For the reasons set out above I do not agree that the additional funding should be allocated on a per pupil basis, it should instead be used to increase the lump sum to achieve what the government intended it to cover which is the cost of opening a school with no pupils.</p>	See above.	
Clive	74	<p>No. We think that the Governments original guidelines provide a better definition of 'sparse'. The criteria was established with the aim of providing additional support to small schools in rural areas, but as currently applied by the County, assists only a very small number of these schools. Moreover, we note that additional funds distributed by way of AWPU will lead to a corresponding reduction in the cases of schools in receipt of MFG. In many cases it will be the small schools who do not benefit from sparsity payments which will see their increase in AWPU funding offset by the reduction in MFG. Has the County a model showing the correlation between the schools which could benefit under the Sparsity factor as applied most widely, and those that are in receipt of MFG? We would like to see these figures. We suggest that the Sparsity factor is fully applied (the amount will need to be determined in the light of the number of additional schools qualifying), and that a corresponding reduction is made in the amount of uplift in AWPU. Shropshire has been lucky enough to obtain a significant increase in DSG funding, but the current proposals for distribution mean that many schools will see no benefit, and</p>	<p>No. Please see 1 above. The figures seem somewhat arbitrary.</p>	<p>No. Please see 1 above. The current proposals mean that many schools will see no increase at all.</p>	<p>Please see 1 above. In addition, we note that there is no mention of lump sum payments and no indication as to whether such payments were considered. Why is this?</p>	<p>In our view the many small schools of Shropshire are yet again being penalised. Given that additional funding of £297 per pupil is available, all schools should benefit.</p>

		could well be looking at a reduced budget. In our view this is wholly inequitable.				
Stottesdon	84	<p>We do agree that the sparse factor of some of our schools should be acknowledged as sparsity does present educational and financial challenges. We also acknowledge that the LA has a duty to identify the most sparse schools in the county in order to target this funding effectively. We acknowledge that doing this is not easy! However the crude nature of the measure (particularly the 'as the crow flies') is of concern. It is believed that the measure misses the sparse nature of some schools because it does not take into account the roads that need to be used. It also does not consider the geographical location or other challenging circumstances for some schools (for example the lack of hall facilities, in our case, which makes complying with statutory PE provision extremely difficult in the winter time without transporting children considerable distances.) We would support more 'bespoke' measures/criteria which acknowledged individual circumstances..... e.g. acknowledged location and real distance on the roads. As raised in the meeting, it would concern us if there was a correlation between schools who would trigger sparsity (over 2miles) and those who gain no net benefit from additional funding as a result of it being cancelled out by MFG. If this correlation is true we would request that the LA consider whether Funding Arrangements are in place to protect schools in sparse areas that WOULD be crucial to an sustainable network of schools.</p>	<p>Overall yes.....but..... We can see the logic of the tapered approach but would like to point out that the additional sparsity costings are equally significant if you are less than 50 (and fit on a coach) or less than a 100 (and fit on two coaches). Apologies for the simplistic analogy but we have experience of being less than 50 and less than 100 and neither seems easier! Therefore we wonder whether the tapered approach gives the impression of the smaller you are the harder it is.....? Being in a small school, which is in a geographically isolated area, has its challenges whether you are less than 100 or less than 50. It is hard to have a completely objective view but hope school's forum have debated giving a lump sum (if you meet the criteria) as an acknowledgement to all who meet the criteria, regardless of size within the criteria, of the challenges of being in a geographically sparse area.</p>	<p>Yes. This does seem the fairest and most simplistic way forward. There are other factors in place to support FSM/low attainment.....</p>	No – see above	<p>We would like to thank School's Forum, Gwyneth, Rob and the finance team for their hard work in this area. The presentation at Lord Hill was very comprehensive and thorough. We look forward to new budget modelling initiatives. I have always come away impressed with how the LA/School's forum seem dedicated to making objective decisions for the good of all and in the fairest way.</p>
Hinstock	99	<p>As a school that is 3.7 miles from our nearest school if you go by car and 3.1 miles if you walk, but 2.7 miles if you go as the crow flies, we do not agree in sparsity funding measuring distances in terms of crows. A child would have to be transported from Hinstock to our nearest neighbour and the route is over 3 miles and very tricky. The distance should be measured using mapping devices that can calculate the transport distance rather than the outdated 'as a crow flies measure'. A scaling measure from 0 - 150 is also slightly strange when a school would surely not be open if the NOR was zero, is there not a range which could begin at the smallest of our schools or the smallest number they can be open at?</p>	<p>A scaling measure from 0 -150 is also slightly strange when a school would surely not be open if the NOR was zero, is there not a range which could begin at the smallest of our schools or the smallest number they can be open at?</p>	<p>Fundamentally additional funding should be allocated on a per pupil basis however the gradual removal of MFG would be of concern to small schools. If this was continued to be balanced with AWPU anomalies that happen in small schools, such as mobility issues and yearly NOR changes, would be balanced out.</p>	No	None
Stoke on Tern	106	<p>Yes – it is not a large proportion of the total funding and it is directed at the schools with greatest need</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes I think that per pupil is the fairest method as it does not over protect small schools at the expense of larger ones. I think it is important to move away from</p>	No	

				previous formulas which worked on different criteria to one which is more equitable to all children.		
Whixall CE Primary	124	We agree in principle with sparsity criteria however we think that 2 miles is a more realistic criteria.	Yes we agree with the additional sparsity funding recommendation.	Yes we agree with this proposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age weighted – due to the additional costs of staffing. • Lump sum – would help small schools to protect services and essential Entitlements • Free School Meals - Ensures the maximum support for those children who most need it. 	
Minsterley	138	Yes	Yes	Yes	I agree with using all of the factors listed in para 8.	
Wilfred Owen	187	Yes. The sparsity criteria identifies those schools for which sparsity is a real issue where there potentially could be no alternative option in terms of provision without disadvantaging pupils. Due to the nature of the county in which a number of schools are located rurally it is wise to target additional funding to those who are in real need rather than a relatively short distance away.	Yes	Yes, whilst there are concerns around the impact of increased additional funding on a per pupil basis on the MFG which may lead to some schools seeing a decrease in their budget in real terms next year, I accept school forums recommendations that this is the fairest way to allocate.	Additional funding already comes into school based on a number of these other local funding formulas such as pupil premium for FSM, so I feel that a wider number of pupils will benefit from the AWPU allocation as recommended by Schools Forum.	
Mount Pleasant	229	Schools which are in remote locations should receive sparsity funding providing they do serve enough pupils to justify existence. I would suggest 10 pupils per year group in a primary and certainly no fewer than 5 per year group.	Yes, but see first box re. pupil numbers	Yes	Yes. Those which relate to giving additional funding to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are very important. The pupil premium does not go far enough to help these pupil who need so much support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.	We are still waiting for the LA to refund money taken in error from our budget for a pathway (£2810.50) to install CCTV and put in a damp-proof membrane for 2/3 of the building. It is unfair for the school's budget to be used for essentials promised as part of the amalgamation/refurbishment
Mereside	231	Yes, these criteria do really narrow things down to a structure that reflects need not historical preference and personal feelings	Yes. As the sparsity criteria mean that only those schools that are really needed are included in the calculation then it seems right that if additional funding is needed to maintain quality of provision it should be provided if possible.	Yes. This may mean hard times for many including my own school but it is the most equitable criteria.	No. I feel strongly that Schools Forum have selected the two most applicable criteria. AWPU means equitable distribution for the majority and Sparsity as applied using the 3 and 9 mile rule and the pupil numbers recognises our unique needs as a large rural county. All other factors are far less important to our pupils needs.	I would like to pass on my thanks to Schools Forum and finance for their hard work on this crucial matter. The solution that is suggested seems by far the fairest and will perhaps focus minds finally on the need to change our ways a little.
Ludlow Junior	262	Not really, but it is only a small amount of money. I don't understand why sparsity requires more money.	yes	yes	no	
Radbrook	287	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Thank you to SF for all the hard work on this
Greenfields	342	I agree. The Government have recognised sparsity as an issue in Shropshire and I feel the agreement is fair to recognise sparsity in terms of distance and numbers on role.	Yes	Yes, come in as per pupil amount from the government then it is only fair it comes to schools as a per pupil amount.	Yes all. Will reflect the number of pupils each school as giving us a fairer deal per pupil. Low attainment / FSM/idaci support pupils who need it most. Lump sum/rates will ensure schools can meet basic needs. Sparsity as before has been recognised so should apply for schools. Split site reflects local issues to individual schools.	I feel it is important to recognise that the differential per pupil in each school is a low as possible to represent a fair deal per pupil. I feel the group have worked hard to ensure fairness and flexibility in the funding formula. It is essential we finish with a group of schools that any changes in formula lead to them not being viable and this will be a major step in that direction. Thank you for the process so far.

Oxon	401	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Fully support the proposals
St Peter's Wem	403	Yes. It is important that real sparsity is not confused with all small schools. Much work was done over the last 24 months to clarify and identify sparse schools. The current parameters have already been considered fair as part of the larger reforms to Shropshire's local funding formula. Extra DSG should not impact on these parameters, when the parameters consulted on and in previous years are agreed to as being fair by schools through previous consultation and Schools Forum recommendations. To dilute the Sparsity factor within the formula by widening the parameters would impact negatively on those schools who have been fairly identified as sparse and potentially undermine the current work into the sustainability of Shropshire's Schools.	If extra DSG allows for the full implementation of the sparsity factor as it was intended then we agree.	We agree. Previous extensive consideration of school budgets have given factors in the funding formula such as Lump Sum and Sparsity which recognise that core funding needs to address core costs. As these factors already exist, and have been implemented fairly then it is correct that this 'new' DSG be distributed on a per pupil basis through AWPU.	As the current funding formula is fair we believe that this fairest allocation of this additional funding is AWPU in line with our answer to Q3. All schools benefit equally through an increase in AWPU, which can't be said if other formula factors are used.	
Coleham	403	I think it is fair to use these factors because it means that only the very small schools, that are truly sparse, are targeted. On the other hand though, I think the most important factor for delegating the money has to be on a per pupil basis so that the money follows the children and we have to perhaps, at some point, consider the viability and sustainability of some of the very small schools in the county. In the long run, would it not be more cost effective if some of these schools amalgamated and pooled resources/buildings/teachers etc? More money could then be directly spent on helping each child in each school to achieve his/her absolute best. I appreciate that this is a decision that cannot be taken lightly and that it is one that would evoke a lot of emotion. So in the meantime, for 2015-16, it seems fair to calculate sparsity funding in this way.	Yes, if we are looking to continue to provide sparsity funding, it seems fair to calculate the additional sparsity funding in this way considering that the very small schools will not see much of an increase in funds if their pupil numbers are so small.	We agree 100% with this statement. We have been underfunded at Coleham for many years and it has been a real struggle to manage the budget and afford all of the necessary resources to enable the children to make good progress and attain the standards that they should in readiness for secondary school. Benchmarking has shown that we are extremely underfunded compared to other schools of a similar size across the country. We have, for a long time felt that the funding system in Shropshire was unfair for larger schools like ourselves. We may represent relatively few schools but we represent a lot of children in the county and it only seems fair that each child should receive a standard amount of money and that this money should follow them if they move schools. It is definitely the fairest way of sharing out the money.	I do not feel it is necessary to consider other local formula factors at this stage.	
Lacon Childe	530	NO (in terms of distance- the real criteria for sparsity) It does not appear fair that the governments figures/recommendations for establishing whether a school is sparse have not been applied equitably in Shropshire. Primary schools saw an increase of just 50% in the governments recommended distance factor, whereas secondary school distance was increased 200% from 3 miles to 9 miles. The rules appear to have been manipulated so that the effect on the other schools in Shropshire was reduced. Distance from a second school for students set so great does not accurately reflect the notion of sparsity. Some schools, because of location have a 2square mile catchment area whilst others can have a 200square mile catchment. Under the current	YES It would appear that this is a fair way of allocating additional funding. For Primary Schools on a sliding scale. NO £100k flat rate, an increase of 150% is too great. Maybe restrict the flat rate to a 50% increase as this is additional funding (£60k) This could offset the cost of having more secondary schools receiving sparsity.	YES All schools benefit equally and it appears fair	NO All schools have these issues in a greater or lesser degree and would even themselves out when all factors are taken into account.	The introduction last year of additional funding on the basis of sparsity was the first time the difficulty of being a remote, inaccessible, geographically rural and small school were taken into account. In a county as rurally challenged as Shropshire, with the fact that some schools have catchment areas bigger than some education authorities, that so few schools benefitted from the additional funding. The sense of unfairness and inequality prevails. The Schools Forum have another opportunity to rectify this significant funding issue and for once acknowledge that the factors that go into sparsity have a direct impact on the resources and funding available to these schools. At less than 2% of the whole additional funding budget, making sure that our sparse schools benefit from the funding and once again are not penalised would be the most fair option.

	<p>Shropshire guidelines, how can this be fair or equitable?</p> <p>As a very remote, rural school which has less than 600 students and is 12 miles from its nearest school, we at Lacon are given no allowance to compensate for our geographical location. It all has knock on cost effects on our school budget. It costs more for our sports teams to visit other schools, our teachers to attend training courses,(most of which are in Shrewsbury), we try to put on transport so that our students can take part in extra curricular activities but this all has cost implications. The sparsity funding was meant to reduce this additional burden on schools in rural settings. We are judged and classed in the same category for sparsity as the schools in Shrewsbury, how can this be fair or equitable.</p> <p>Due to falling numbers in rural Shropshire we have tried to widen our pupil catchment area and have succeeded in attracting students from a wider area in South Shropshire and West Worcestershire. Parents see the choice of Lacon as a preferred option and we pick up many students who live a way from school. Our successful recruitment of students and the preferred choice of parents is now affecting our ability to claim any form of sparsity funding, even though we attract students from a wider catchment base yearly.</p> <p>It is difficult to believe that in one of the most rural counties in England, only 10 primary and 1 secondary schools are eligible for additional support funding. If the increase in distance were equal between primary and secondary it would appear to be more fair. For example if the secondary distance were increased by the same 50% as primary, the rationale for delegating additional funding would appear to reflect a more equitable process. It does, to those of us outside of Schools Forum, look like the model which costs the least was applied. When there was no additional funding this could have been seen as a necessary decision to take, however, the funding being set aside this year is additional funding and the criteria for awarding additional funding should therefore reflect this change.</p> <p>Of course, all schools in Shropshire will fight their particular corner, yet once again, small, rural and geographically isolated schools will not get fair funding, despite this being new money coming into the authority. Understandably, last year, there was no additional funding for allocation. This year there is and should</p>				
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		<p>reflect the characteristics of the county. Even by doubling the levels set by the DfES, schools would see the proposal as fairer for truly rural schools. The difficulties faced by schools that should be additionally funded are never fully appreciated in areas where simply taking a sports team to play at another school costs in excess of £250 per visit, where petrol claims for courses at STDC cost 20x what a school in Shrewsbury faces, where getting trainers and training companies to visit costs more in expenses. Not only is it unfair it discriminates against small rural schools who are trying to provide the best education and extra curricular programme they can for its students. Schools Forum should reflect the individual characteristics and difficulties schools like ours face before they agree, as I am sure they will, to maintain the current unfair distance criteria.</p> <p>YES (in terms of pupil number thresholds)</p> <p>It is difficult to understand why pupil numbers should reflect sparsity as the fact is still that small, rural geographically isolated schools face sparsity issues whether they have 50 pupils or 500. It is the geographical nature of the school which impacts on cost. However, we feel that the current application of primary schools less than 150 pupils and secondary schools of less than 600 is a nationally suggested limit and should be applied</p>				
The Corbet	682	Yes we agree that the threshold measures for sparsity are those proposed in the consultation document	Yes we agree with this	We very much support this and feel that this is the fairest way of distributing the additional funding	No we do not think other factors should be used.	We strongly support the schools forum recommendation for how the additional funding should be distributed to schools.
The Thomas Adams School	1050	Yes. We are happy for schools in the sparsest situations to receive additional support.	Yes. This seems fair.	Yes. Strongly agree. Pupil focused funding is the fairest and most effective means of distributing school income.	No. There are already sufficient factors in the funding formula.	This additional funding is welcome and overdue. We must continue lobbying to ensure that the National Funding Formula for Schools does not disappear from the Government agenda.
The Marches Academy Trust	1199	No. We agree with maintaining the sparsity criteria for primaries to ensure that the smallest, most rural community schools remain viable. However, we think that sparsity should not be used for secondary Schools who by their nature are sparse and bring in pupils from a wider area.	We agree to the basis for determining the primary sparsity funding. However, as per our answer to question 1, we disagree with secondary sparsity funding. The fact that there is only one School attracting this funding doesn't give you a large enough pool of schools to look at to determine the 'core expenditure' levels and it could be seen as that school being subsidised as a cost to others.	Yes. Using this additional funding to increase the AWPU and thereby remove the reliance of some Schools on the MFG is, we believe, the correct way to use the money and build a sustainable platform for Shropshire Schools to move forward with a transparent funding model and provide a positive step towards a national funding formula in the future	No	