

**Results of Consultation 2025/26 - Comments Received****Comments****2.1.5 School Funding Formula Options**

We don't have a comparison of the two models like last year. However, based on previous data given, the majority of Merton schools will be worse off with the NFF factors. We would prefer to delay the inevitable as long as possible.

It is a good idea to follow the NFF early. This keeps things fair and ensure schools are ready when it becomes mandatory. It also helps us plan budgets better without big changes later.

We agree that it makes sense to take steps to align with the NFF so that schools are not exposed to any sudden shocks when the NFF is fully implemented. However, we need to be sure that Merton's formula is modelled carefully this year so that the impact on individual schools is understood fully and communicated clearly.

**2.2 MFG percentage**

Setting the MFG at 0% provides a safeguard against funding volatility. It ensures no school sees a big drop in their budget while allowing some flexibility to adjust for changes in pupil needs.

Agree that this should be as close to 0% as possible to assist schools with increased costs especially around staffing.

We agree with this approach but are concerned about the impact on our 3-year forecast if per pupil funding were to go down.

We understand the range set by the DfE (-0.5% to 0%) is an indicator of how tight finances are likely to be in the coming financial year. We agree in principle that the MFG should be set as close to 0% as possible but want to reiterate that the impact of this needs to be modelled and analysed at the level of each individual school. Despite the MFG being set at 0.14% last year, our school's income was cut by £50k in the initial allocation of budgets.

Broadly in support alongside the commitment to maximise this at 0% as far as possible

**2.3 De-delegation comments**

I am still of the view that a lower level of de delegated with a higher quality of SLA would encourage a more competitive market and accountability on LA departments and also schools who would also have to realise doing it yourself is hard.

Attain should be an SLA so that schools choose to buy in or not

Increasing the contingency fund will help schools facing financial or operational challenges, including falling rolls. It gives schools more support when they need it most. Keeping this full allocation as it will ensure schools continue to benefit from partnership work and shared resources. The additional funding will help maintain important support for schools after losing the LAMB grant.

For clarity, I feel the increase in School Improvement should come from the reduction in Attain

School budgets are so tight and whilst we absolutely believe in working as a collective group for the good of all schools; at the moment we need every penny we can possibly get in our school budgets.

We think certain services and options available to schools via attain, should be on a pay and demand ensuring only those schools who require support/resources. We do appreciate the impact on potential increases within the school improvement section but are concerned about any increase of costs to school budgets.

We believe that the local authority needs to be funded fully to undertake its school improvement work. Merton schools have a strong sense of shared identity. They have retained their relationship with the LA and overwhelmingly rejected academisation. LBM has remained committed to leading its schools. For this work to continue, it needs to be properly resourced so we vote for Option C under 'School Improvement and Brokering'.

**2.4 Education Services**

I can't comment as even with the table below I don't know the workings of the LA and the efficiency models set up. It seems a shame to have to take an extra 650k on top of the de delegated and SLAs already in place but maybe without it we would all suffer?

Maintaining the allocation at £650k is a prudent decision, it allows schools to continue receiving central services without extra pressure on their own budget.

**2.6 Transfer between blocks**

It is hard to say no with the difficulties SEND is in.

Both transfers are necessary to support the growing number of EHCPs and help reduce the High Needs Block deficit. These funds will make sure SEN services continue to meet the needs of schools and pupils.

We support the transfer of both funds because LBM has worked with integrity to meet the needs of pupils with SEN; in our experience, this has been a more ethical approach than in some of our neighbouring boroughs. The creation of additional specialist places in the Merton is welcome. However, we hope the LA will go further in finding bold solutions to address the increasing proportion of pupils with complex needs. More mainstream schools need to be supported/guided to taking higher proportions of pupils with complex needs: that has to be part of the long-term solution to his situation.

By supporting this we are mindful that our budget is impacted by the funding of our ARP and EHCP bandings, and although we have around average EHCPs, the size of the school means that we are challenged in supporting the 43 that we have.

**5.1.4 HN block - Targeted support to schools with high SEN pupil numbers**

This funding needs to be allocated in a timely way so that pupils can be appropriately supported.

The NFF and the EHCP top up rates should cover this, not other schools. Or even schools causing concern should get this, again not other schools funding.

Careful consideration needs to be given when allocating funds, Especially regarding the complexity of need. Not just the number of EHCPs but the complexity of the SEND need.

This funding needs to be allocated in a timely way so that pupils can be appropriately supported.

The funding is fair and will help those schools manage their higher costs.

This figure is not increasing however it is being allocated across a greater number of schools. I would ??? That an element of the Government's high needs boost could be used to increase this amount to support schools with high numbers of pupils with EHCP's. It should be noted that EHCP banding figures have been frozen again.

It is known that I feel that the number is slightly irrelevant for those of us that have high need EHCPs and that more needs to be done than just Band 6. There should be some kind of means testing and not just money decided on number of EHCPs.

This needs to be very transparent in how this is allocated and as to what more than average is

Will this include more funding for our ARP pupils?

We support the allocation of these funds but note that the figure has remained the same as last year - at a time when the number and proportion of pupils with EHCPs continues to rise. So we assume this effectively means a reduction in targeted support to the schools who are already accommodating high proportions of pupils with EHCPs. If the LA wishes to encourage more mainstream schools to accommodate higher proportions of pupils with EHCPs, then it would be wise to maximise funding for targeted support - i.e. is it possible to increase this figure?

Same amount since 2016 and we (although a lot of EHCPs) and a lot of other schools do not qualify

**Other comments**

I am very against funding or one-off payments for falling rolls or schools in difficult circumstances for falling rolls. It is prolonging a problem and schools should either be supported with redundancy costs to resize or to close schools/re open as SEND schools.

As difficult as it is, if your schools has falling rolls, it is usually a bigger issue and pumping 30k into them won't solve long term issues.

We understand that school funding is likely to be extremely difficult this year so we would be grateful to have any relevant information as quickly as possible – especially our actual budget figures. Thank you.