

NALDIC Briefing Paper on Funding for the support of pupils learning English as an Additional language

2006

National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) is the subject association for English as an additional language (EAL). It is dedicated to promoting the learning and achievement of bilingual pupils in schools and draws its membership from those who work in this field in schools, universities and other educational institutions. At present, learners of EAL in our schools have no National Curriculum entitlement to EAL teaching and learning. Their needs are therefore additional to the National Curriculum in schools in England. As long as this situation persists, our position is that these pupils' additional needs require additional and clearly defined funding.

An invitational government consultation on the future of funding sent to local authorities and school funding forums in April 2006 questioned whether specific grants (such as the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant), should be merged with the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) from 2008-09 onwards. A further possible alternative outlined was to merge the School Development Grant and School Standards Grant into a single standards grant. The responses to the consultation were largely in favour of merging all grants into the DSG. A minority of respondents argued for continuing discrete grants and the continuance of a separate and ring-fenced EMAG grant. As the government is poised to make decisions relating the future funding of work with learners of EAL, we would like to bring the following points to the attention of members and others interested parties:

- After several years of effectively reducing EMAG funding levels by making no allowances for inflation or increased on-costs of employing staff, increases in funding announced in September 2004 promised to begin to address the historic under-funding of work in this area. The announcement also offered a level of stability in contrast to the annual uncertainty of funding levels for local authorities and schools which have beset this field of education for many years. However, **reductions in EMAG for many authorities followed the full implementation of the national formula and the impact of this has been felt at the classroom level.** Some county and urban authorities with large numbers of bilingual pupils have been particularly hard hit with some schools and authorities looking at redundancies. Since the implementation of formula funding, many gaining authorities are experiencing difficulties where tight Local Authority budgets make it difficult to find the matched funding required to obtain the increased grant.
- At the same time, there are considerable numbers of new pupils, particularly from new EEC countries, with little or no experience of English entering the education system in both rural and urban local authorities. This has led to **an increasing demand for support for EAL learners** to levels which have not been seen since the 1970s. Without adequate funding it is proving difficult to maintain consistent development of effective work with EAL learners at later stages whilst the more visible and immediate needs of new arrivals require increasing time and attention from the dwindling pool of expertise available in schools and local authorities. Indeed, **it is clear that there is inadequate provision available to meet the needs of many 'beginners' enrolled in both urban and rural schools** with little or no history of working with bilingual youngsters and no access to additional funding. Funding changes have, by and large, led to increased funding being directed towards urban schools and authorities with large, established minority ethnic communities.
- Our **concern for the well being of these young people in our education system continues to grow**, particularly with the possibility that funding will no longer be ring-fenced to be used particularly to meet their needs. The recent experience in Northern Ireland is that the removal of ring fenced funding led to the collapse of the EAL services in four of five of the local boards with the consequent loss of support

for EAL pupils in those areas. Questions have been asked about the equality impact of these changes with reference to the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This has heightened our concerns that future similar policy changes in England may have far-reaching negative implications for the well being and achievement of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is particularly worrying at a time when the government is anxious to maintain community cohesion by ensuring that all young people do well in our schools. **Fluency in English, acquired in a timely manner, is a key requirement for educational success within the UK education system.**

- If EMAG were discontinued as a separate and ring-fenced grant and added to the Direct Schools Grant, spending on EAL would become the direct responsibility of schools with the possibility of local authority blocks being subject to different local priorities and financial constraints. Whilst many schools have made great strides in developing their capacity to support EAL learners, this is most usually where there are large numbers of these pupils in a school. **Direct school funding does not necessarily support isolated pupils learning EAL around the country.** Their teachers often have little or no experience of working with such pupils and require considerable support with resources and expertise. The skills and knowledge of local authority staff are needed to train mainstream staff and work closely with LA school improvement teams so that all bilingual pupils can learn English and access the curriculum to achieve their full potential. The continuing uncertainty and instability of funding for this area has already resulted in the loss of specialist expertise in both schools and LAs which is sorely missed. There is little incentive for younger teachers to specialise in a field which appears to offer no short or long term prospects.
- Given that inter-country migration between EU member countries is a daily reality and that the UK will continue to recruit health, transport and construction industry workers from other countries, **our position is that, in the short term, an increase in additional funding through a discrete ring fenced grant is urgently required to begin to meet the needs of pupils learning EAL in our schools.** We believe that this should continue as a LA administered grant in order to ensure that central services can develop schools' expertise and provide the support that is so desperately required. In the longer term we urge the Government to establish a coherent long term policy which will address both the needs of pupils from established communities as well as those who are arriving and will continue to arrive in the future

In considering future funding arrangements, NALDIC would urge the DfES to be mindful of the following principles and alternatives:

- The use of the term 'achievement' with respect to the funding of minority ethnic pupils does not adequately distinguish the differing needs of pupils. The needs of EAL learners are primarily, though not solely, linguistic. Meeting linguistic needs supports 'achievement', but is also distinct from 'raising achievement'. **The way in which provision is made should take account both of the distinction and the relationship between EAL and achievement.**
- **Pupils who enter the school system with English as an additional language have an entitlement to additional and appropriate support for their learning.** A code of practice which defines the **learners' entitlement to additional provision as they acquire English** is key to a nationally coherent and systematic approach to EAL learners needs which has been lacking in school provision in the UK to date. Pupils are entitled to be supported by EAL specialists who have additional knowledge of their educational needs. The whole continuum of need across the system needs to be addressed.
- **Funding for pupil achievement should remain ring-fenced and the level of funding to support pupil achievement should be increased.** Since the change from Section 11 to EMAG, the remit of the grant has been widened considerably, little account of increased employment costs has been made, and the negative impact of this has been commented on consistently in research reports in the area. Whilst there is a recognition of increased needs in recent years, there has been limited progress in meeting those increased needs with additional funding. It seems apparent that there should be distinctive

strands of funding to recognise these differing needs, and to ensure that the needs of isolated EAL learners are fully taken into account.

- **The need for targeted provision has increased, as has the need for improved response and greater expertise in the mainstream. Any suggestion that one can be replaced by the other would be an evasion of responsibility.** There are no logical grounds for reducing the level of funding or for allowing it to be used for other purposes. The need for this resource has been recognised since 1966. Since that time the numbers of minority ethnic pupils in schools has increased sharply as has the range of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Provision for minority ethnic pupils is now a much more complex issue than it ever has been. The need for continued and increased targeted provision and greater mainstream expertise are both essential if the education service is to improve its response to minority ethnic pupils.
- In 1987, the CRE's Investigation into Calderdale Authority found that it was discriminatory to make separate provision for pupils learning EAL on the grounds that they should be entitled to the same curriculum as others pupils. By contrast, in the U.S, placing pupils at an early stage in their learning of English in mainstream classrooms without a special programme of additional support was found to be discriminatory. There are grounds for arguing that both positions are legitimate. Just as it has long been accepted in England that pupils learning EAL are entitled to access the full curriculum, **it should also be recognised that they are entitled to the additional provision necessary to enable them to learn English to access the curriculum. Failure to recognise such an entitlement could be considered discriminatory.**
- In light of the above, NALDIC advocates the need for a comprehensive teacher training and support programme alongside an increased and stable funding regime which directs additional resources to pupils on the grounds of recognised curriculum entitlement. **Funding to support the entitlement of EAL learners should be distinct from funding for achievement.** The additional funding should be allocated through a ring-fenced and discrete grant with a commitment to long-term sustainability. Funding should be allocated on a needs-based formula based on an entitlement to support and on indicators of English language fluency coupled to a framework designed to guide local authorities and schools in how to make the best use of funding in the light of current best practice and research.