

NALDIC

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CURRICULUM

working for pupils with English as an additional language

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Dear Annabel,

Re: EMA funding 2005/6-2007/8

Thank you for your invitation to attend the recent discussion forum concerning EMA. We found the day extremely useful and look forward to further discussions to safeguard the essential support currently provided for EAL learners. At this point however we would like to share with you our very grave concerns regarding the future of EMA funding over the next three years.

In our response to the 'Aiming High' consultation last year we argued that

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. The funding would be subject to a 3-year review in order for adjustments reflecting changes in practice, findings from research, etc. 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. A nationally developed programme of training and support should be funded through an additional source.

We have welcomed both the continuation of the ring fenced discrete grant, the slight increase in EMA funding overall and the moves taken by the DfES to develop a funded programme of training and support. We also welcome the proposed increase in funding stability offered through the adoption of a 3 year allocation. However whilst we are broadly supportive of formula based funding, we are opposed to any moves to fully implement funding allocation based on the currently adopted formula which we believe to be seriously flawed.

In our view, the adopted formula based on the numbers of EAL learners and learners from nationally 'underachieving' groups factored by an indicator of social and economic deprivation (FSM) does not recognise the distinctive language and learning needs of bilingual and ethnic minority pupils within the education system and fails to direct additional resources to their needs. The count of EAL learners, whilst simple and transparent, is insufficiently refined to accurately target EAL need which we believe requires a national measure of English language fluency. We would ask the department to consider how the EAL information currently available through PLASC could be developed to more accurately reflect the very differing needs of pupils at different stages of their English language development.

In practice, the impact of the pupil headcount coupled with the FSM factor appears to direct resources away from pupil need in a whole variety of circumstances and redirect it towards social and economic deprivation. The outcome of the application of the formula nationally is the redistribution of resources on a massive scale from authorities facing a host of challenging circumstances in relation to the needs of EAL and ethnic minority learners to urban highly multiethnic authorities with high overall levels of economic deprivation, eg many London authorities, Birmingham and Manchester. Whilst we would not dispute that many of these authorities face challenging circumstances in relation to the education of all their pupils, it is clear that the formula allocation does not effectively distinguish between challenges arising from social and economic deprivation and the particular needs of EAL and ethnic minority learners. We would therefore argue that the formula fails to direct funding to EAL and ethnic minority learners' additional and distinctive needs and simply replicates funding which is already directed through central government initiatives to combat the influence of social and economic deprivation on educational outcomes.

As a national association, we do not represent the interests of any particular geographical area or type of local authority. We aim to represent the interests of **all** our members and of **all** EAL and bilingual learners. We cannot agree that a formula which results in massive losses in funding to support the education of EAL and ethnic minority learners in areas as diverse as Kent, Blackburn, Hertfordshire, Slough, Bradford, Oldham, Luton, Kirklees, Coventry, Leicestershire, Gloucestershire, Lancashire, and Buckinghamshire can be in the interests of EAL and ethnic minority learners nationally. We are fully aware of the challenges faced by EAL and ethnic minority learners in these authorities and whilst they may be different to those faced by learners in say Southwark, they are no less real and no less worthy of our support.

In our response to the 'Aiming High' consultation we argued that

Clearly, the criteria for allocation of funding would require considerable further discussion and modelling of the effects of various options on allocation. NALDIC would be happy to engage with the DfES in working through these ideas.

Although we were not advised of the effect of the adopted formula prior to its announcement, we have subsequently become aware of the effects nationally should the formula be adopted in full. The impact of adoption nationally would be catastrophic for EAL and ethnic minority learners in the very many 'losing' authorities and would include; wholesale reduction in support to EAL and ethnic minority learners at a time when need is increasing faster than ever before and expanding into areas with relatively little experience; wholesale redundancies of EAL and EMA funded staff at a time when the profession is facing a crisis in attracting and retaining professionals to the field; huge and sudden reductions in school level support and expertise; and the decimation of many effective local authority teams which OFSTED and others have noted are essential to the maintenance of high standards in this area and are crucial to the success of the department's welcome mainstream training and development programme. In addition, increases to many 'gaining' authorities under the formula are of such a scale they are unlikely to lead to the focussed improvement of provision for EAL and ethnic minority learners which the department desires. The sums involved are simply too large and too short term to be used appropriately in line with accepted good practice in the vast majority of cases.

When we initially raised our concerns with Stephen Twigg in March 2004, he assured us that the implications of the funding formula had been carefully considered and that other funding streams may in fact compensate many of the 'losing' authorities. However our concern is not with overall LEA and school budgets but in ensuring that adequate funding continues to be available to safeguard essential provision to meet the distinctive needs of EAL and ethnic minority learners at LEA and school level. This issue will continue to be of concern in the likely move towards a single school improvement funding stream.

We would urge the department most strongly to reconsider the adopted formula and most particularly to consider reassessing the impact of the FSM factor on allocations nationally. If a reassessment of the formula in light of the above concerns is not a viable option for the department, we would urge

that no steps are taken to further implement the formula for the likely life of the discrete Standards Fund allocation. We would additionally urge the department to work with professional associations such as ourselves to safeguard and enhance provision for EAL learners under the proposed single funding environment.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Ian Jones
Chair of NALDIC