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Dear Paul

DfES Review of school funding arrangements for EMAG from 2008

In our letter sent to Inderjit in September, we expressed our support for continued ring fencing of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. We also stated that there other points which we would like to raise and these are covered in this letter. We would be grateful if you would accept these as part of the consultation.

As we noted in our previous letter, the future funding of work specifically targeted at the achievement of minority ethnic pupils and especially of EAL learners is of particular concern to us. In order that some schools retain the focus needed to analyse and provide for the needs of minority ethnic pupils, NALDIC believes that it is essential that the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) is retained as a specific grant and additionally that the long term future of funding is assured.

As this year's recently released achievement figures show, raising achievement at a pupil and local level has had many successes. We feel that the specific focus provided by EMAG has played an important part in this through the effectiveness of local initiatives and the work of professionals in the field supported by the grant. However, until this focus is firmly established within schools and they routinely examine the impact of administrative, financial and pedagogic decisions upon the welfare and progress of minority ethnic pupils, we believe that it necessary to continue to provide guidance and constraints in the use of the grant.

NALDIC believes that schools should receive adequate funding to enable the language and learning needs of bilingual pupils to be met, in particular the development of English as an Additional Language, the maintenance of and support for first languages and access to the curriculum. It is NALDIC's contention that as well as their entitlement to the National

Curriculum, bilingual pupils ought to have an equal entitlement to appropriate EAL development.

It is important that schools should receive funding to meet the needs of bilingual pupils through the normal funding formula but the nature of the particular needs of these pupils requires more specific targeted funding.

This funding should be allocated on a needs-led basis while we believe a three year allocation would be preferable in order to encourage longer term planning, the grant needs to be set at an appropriate level to accommodate new developments or retain a degree of flexibility. The current situation in relation to new arrivals from Eastern Europe would be a case in point. Additionally, this issue would indicate the need for expertise and flexibility of response to be retained at Local Authority level. NALDIC strongly believes that a portion of the grant should continue to be allocated to Local Authorities. The current figures of 15% or £150,000, whichever is the greater, are barely adequate in many authorities to support schools particularly those with smaller numbers of EAL pupils.

The need for targeted provision has increased. PLASC data shows that the numbers of EAL pupils have now risen above 10% across the country. The need both for continued and increased targeted provision and greater mainstream expertise is essential if the education service is to continue to improve its response to minority ethnic pupils. Provision for minority ethnic pupils is now a much more complex issue than it has ever been and the grant has enabled LEAs to build up central teams with the expertise to support schools in an advisory capacity, through peripatetic support for isolated learners or through the provision of training courses. This area of work would be at risk if the Local Authority portion of the grant were to be removed.

NALDIC also believes that at a school level the removal of ring fencing would have a negative effect on minority ethnic pupils. The reduction in funding for many LEAs with substantial numbers of bilingual pupils following the move to a national formula for the distribution of EMAG has highlighted the problems that would be faced if the grant were to be no longer ring-fenced. The evidence of a recent national NALDIC/NUT survey would lead us to suggest that since large proportions of the grant have been devolved to schools directly, there has been a decrease in the employment of additional staff and a wide interpretation of the kinds of expenditure which relate directly to raising the achievement of ethnic minority learners. EMAG has been successful in enabling the provision of teaching and non-teaching staff to support EAL. However, it has been noticeable that, as the value of the grant has declined and in LEAs where funding has been reduced, there has been a gradual but significant decrease in the number of specialist teachers, a trend towards replacing qualified with unqualified staff and an increase in short term contracts.

EMAG funding is an effective means of supporting the acquisition of English of pupils with EAL, which is entirely appropriate and necessary if they are to reach their potential in learning and achievement through an English medium system of education.

The findings of the NALDIC/NUT survey also endorse our view that

- there should continue to be a separate DfES ring-fenced grant to meet the specific educational needs of minority ethnic pupils.
- LAs should be encouraged to hold back centrally the maximum allowed under the current arrangements – 15 per cent of the EMAG allocation or £150,000, whichever is the greater.
- there should be a funding regime which allows both long term planning and flexibility of response.

Therefore, we would urge the EMAU to recommend to ministers that the above recommendations are adopted and EMAG is retained as an effective means of raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils and meeting the language needs of EAL learners.

Yours sincerely

Ian

Ian Jones
On behalf of NALDIC