

NALDIC Response to the DfES Consultation on new school funding arrangements from 2006-07

The new Single Standards Grant

25 *Do you agree that we should retain a small number of grants to offer targeted support and for activities that require support on a continuing basis? (Paragraph 154 in the full consultation document; 83 in the summary)*

Strongly agree

Comments:

NALDIC believes that it is essential that the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) is retained as a specific grant in the new grants structure and additionally that the long term future of funding is assured. Raising achievement at a pupil and local level has had many successes, but the effectiveness of local initiatives and the work of professionals in the field has been undermined by an inadequate and inconsistent funding regime.

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 EAL 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.

In our response to Aiming High, the government's consultation on its strategy for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, NALDIC 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 should be allocated on a needs-led basis and be subject to a 3-year review in order for adjustments reflecting changes in practice, findings from research, etc.

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. There is a recognition in 'Aiming High' of increased needs in recent years, but the small amount of extra funding added to the EMA Grant since then has been absorbed by LEAs gaining as a result of the move towards a new funding formula. 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. PLASC data for 2005 shows that the numbers of EAL pupils have now risen above 10% across the country. The need for this resource has been recognised since 1966. Since 1966 the number of minority ethnic pupils and bilingual 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 has ever been. 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.

NALDIC believes that following the move towards a national formula for the distribution of EMAG, the impact of the reduction in funding for many LEAs with substantial numbers of bilingual pupils has highlighted the problems that would be faced if the grant were to be no longer ring-fenced. Local data would lead us to suggest that EMA 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. However there needs to be a recognition that since the change from Section 11 to EMAG, the remit of the grant has been widened considerably and little account of increased employment costs has been made. The negative impact of this has been commented on consistently in research reports in the area. There is also evidence that since large proportions of the grant have been developed 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.

In light of this experience we would therefore argue that in the longer term what is required is a nationally coherent and systematic approach to EAL learners' needs. Pupils who enter the school system with English as an additional language should have an entitlement to additional and appropriate support for their learning which is defined in a code of practice. This code of practice would define the learners' entitlement to additional provision as they acquire English. In this way we could ensure that funding allocated to schools for support of such pupils is used directly to equitably meet their learning needs.

We recognise that this pupil entitlement to appropriate support is some way from realisation. In the interim we would argue that the EMA grant should continue as a separate grant and that local authorities should be encouraged to retain a percentage of the grant to support schools to ensure that pupil need is equitably met. This would provide much needed stability in the forthcoming two year period as well providing schools with experienced support concerning raising the achievement of EAL and ethnic minority pupils until such time as the role of SIP is fully realised.

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. Bilingual staff have been particularly affected. Bilingual staff have played an important role in supporting the development of pupils' first languages which helps with access to the curriculum for new arrivals and early stage pupils and research has shown that the development and maintenance of LI important for acquisition of English and learning. In addition, the appointment of black and minority ethnic staff has also enabled the development of innovative approaches and a degree of accountability. It would therefore seem likely that the incorporation of EMAG within the Single Improvement Grant would further reduce the provision for minority ethnic pupils and would, in the long term, have an adverse effect on the language development and the

achievement levels of bilingual pupils

The grant has also 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 also be at risk.

For these reasons, we believe that the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant should be retained as a ring fenced targeted grant.