

LGA Special Interest Group Annual Report to LGA Board

SIG Name:	f40 campaign for fair school funding
Lead Member:	Chairman: Cllr James McInnes, Devon County Council
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<p>Membership</p> <p>As of 31 March 2021, f40 had 42 member authorities. Namely:</p> <p>Bath & North East Somerset Buckinghamshire CC Cambridgeshire CC Central Bedfordshire Cheshire East Cheshire West and Chester Cornwall County Council Derbyshire CC Devon CC Dorset Council East Riding of Yorkshire Council East Sussex County Council Gloucestershire CC Hampshire CC Herefordshire CC Kent CC Lincolnshire CC North Lincolnshire Council North Yorkshire CC North Northamptonshire Council Northumberland Council</p>	<p>Oxfordshire CC Plymouth City Council Shropshire CC Solihull MDC Somerset CC South Gloucestershire Council Staffordshire CC Stockport MDC Suffolk CC Swindon Council Torbay Council Trafford MDC Wakefield MDC Warrington Council Warwickshire CC West Northamptonshire Council West Sussex CC Wigan MDC Wiltshire Council Worcestershire CC York City Council</p>
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<p>Aim</p> <p>To organise an all-party campaign for fairer and increased funding for schools across England. Also campaigning for increased SEND funding, and fundamental change to the SEND funding system.</p>
<p>Key objectives and activities / outcomes of work undertaken</p> <p>Fairness f40 seeks fairness and equal opportunities in education for all children, regardless of where they live, and wishes to see all schools properly funded to enable them to provide a quality education. The basic entitlement should be enough to run a school before extra money is added on.</p> <p>While f40 is made up of 42 of the lowest funded local authorities for education across England, it campaigns for education funding as a whole for all schools. Any improvement to fairness and funding will ultimately benefit every school and local authority.</p>

The Covid pandemic has shone a light on the current disparities and highlighted the plight of disadvantaged pupils. More funding should be given for all disadvantaged pupils – including those living in more rural areas, which are sometimes forgotten, as well as those in towns and cities.

Increased funding

The pandemic has placed greater stress on already tight budgets. For a number of years, education funding has not kept pace with inflation, while the demands on schools and teachers have grown rapidly. In real terms, school funding is at 2010 levels.

In April 2020, Schools Block increased by £1.7bn. With greater school costs and a rise in the number of pupils, this left a real increase of £430m – just £58 per pupil. However, we know that schools incurred considerable costs due to Covid.

Changes to the way Pupil Premium is being calculated this year has also left many schools with insufficient funding to support disadvantaged pupils – a shortfall they are having to meet themselves. This adds a further burden to their budgets.

Note: f40 carried out a survey, which showed that across the 42 f40 local authority areas, schools would lose around £36m in funding this year due to the changes in the way Pupil Premium was being calculated.

You can read the findings here: <https://www.f40.org.uk/pupil-premium/>

Note: In April 2021, f40 submitted a response to the government consultation on sparsity funding. You can read the response here: <https://www.f40.org.uk/responses-to-government-consultations/>

SEND

Special Educational Needs continues to be a major concern, with need outstripping budgets, while EHCP applications continue to rise. f40 has urged government to complete its review of SEND and to implement the recommendations at the earliest opportunity.

We believe schools nationally need support systems, guidance and additional funding to enable them to be properly inclusive of SEND pupils. Local authorities also need additional funding to settle the huge deficit SEND budgets they currently have.

Note: During 2020, f40 carried out a survey of all local authorities across England to ascertain their current SEND budgets and deficits. You can read the results here: <https://bit.ly/3h9kKEx>

Note: f40 also submitted a response to the government consultation on high needs funding in March 2021. You can read the response here: <https://www.f40.org.uk/high-needs/government-consultations/>

Covid

Schools have found it difficult to afford the additional costs and financial impacts of Covid.

Note: During 2020 we twice wrote to the Department for Education, highlighting some of the biggest challenges and urging government to provide assistance with additional costs and loss of income incurred.

What f40 is asking for

1 Changes to the National Funding Formula to make it fairer, more easily understood and transparent. We would like a minimum level of funding to meet the basic educational needs of all pupils, and the removal of historic inequalities and funding protections for Schools Block and High Needs Block. We do not wish to remove additional funding for deprivation, additional needs or realistic living costs.

2 At least £5.5b additional school funding nationally (above full inflation increases) in 2022/23, for Early Years, Primary, Secondary, 16-19, and High Needs up to age 25. A further £5.4bn is needed from 2023 to 2025 to ensure every child is taught by a qualified teacher in classes of no more than 30. These figures were estimated in 2019 and are currently under review. f40 is refreshing its funding model in 2021 to ensure our figures take account of the latest data and cost pressures in education. This work is ongoing.

3 A guaranteed rolling, three-year funding programme to enable education providers to budget ahead.

4 Schools recompensed for Covid expenses relating to additional teacher costs, a reduction in nursery attendance, heating and cleaning, PPE, and extra learning and catering resources, with 75% of lost income met.

During 2020-21, f40 Executive members met via conference call on five occasions, and the Finance Managers Research Team met three times. We also met with the DfE funding team twice and liaised with member MPs on numerous occasions. We also had meetings with our MP Vice Chairs, Sir Gary Streeter (Cons), Layla Moran (Lib Dem) and Matt Weston (Labour), who has recently stood down from f40 due to work commitments.