

**Report to:** East Sussex Schools Forum

**Date of meeting:** 17 Sept 2021

**Report By:** Director of Children's Services

**Title:** Update on the outcome of the Department for Education (DfE) consultation on changes to the Sparsity Factor from 2022/23

**Purpose:** To provide an update to Schools Forum on the outcome of the DfE's Sparsity consultation

---

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**East Sussex Schools Forum are asked to note the outcome of the DfE's Sparsity consultation and that as a result the number of eligible schools could increase from 15 to 36 in 2022/23.**

---

### **1 Background**

1.1 The School National Funding Formula contains a number of funding factors, one of which is a Sparsity Factor. One of the main aims of this factor is to provide some additional funding to small rural schools.

1.2 In March '21, the DfE issued a consultation which reviewed the Sparsity factor, in preparation for financial year 2022/23, with a proposal to broaden the reach of the sparsity factor to a greater number of small schools. The current criteria for schools to be eligible for this funding is:

- The average year group size is below the appropriate year group threshold. This threshold is 21.4 for primary schools, 120 for secondary schools and 62.5 for All Through Schools
- and
- For all the pupils for whom it is the nearest compatible school, the average distance (currently calculated 'as the crow flies', using straight-line distances) from each pupil's home postcode to their second nearest compatible school is equal to or more than three miles (for secondary schools) or two miles (for all other schools).

### **2 Consultation Outcome**

2.1 The DfE have confirmed that, from 2022/23, some of the current criteria for eligibility will change. The criteria will be:

- The average year group size is below the appropriate year group threshold. This threshold is 21.4 for primary schools, 120 for secondary schools and 62.5 for All Through Schools (***This remains unchanged from the current criteria***).
- and
- The distance will be measured by road journeys rather than 'as the crow flies'.

2.2 The DfE have also confirmed that the maximum amount that an eligible school could receive will increase by £10k. This means that the maximum value will be £55k (primary phase) and £80k (Secondary Phase).

2.3 Using the DfE's consultation examples, the number of schools in East Sussex eligible for Sparsity funding could increase from 15 to 36.

### **3. Next Steps**

3.1 To help inform those schools potentially due to receive Sparsity funding in 2022/23, revised estimated future year budgets are to be issued by Schools Finance (Using estimated NOR provided by the schools).

3.2 Revised budget plans will be issued because the DfE's examples used historic pupil data (19/20) and therefore, given that it's the NOR that determine how much an eligible school receives, there could be some fluctuation between what schools can expect to receive and the DfE's exemplifications.

**Alison Jeffery**

**Director Childrens Services**

Contact Officer: Ed Beale

Tel. No. 01273 337984

Email: Edward.beale@eastsussex.gov.uk