



School Funding Briefing Paper – May 2018

F40's main argument continues to be about fairness of allocation. The group has fundamental concerns about the new national funding formula and there is unanimous recognition within our membership that there is still more work to do to tackle remaining locked-in inequalities.

Therefore, f40 will be campaigning for:

Schools

- A significant increase in the amount invested in education funding to meet the cost pressures facing all schools (f40 is awaiting access to Department of Education datasets in order to be able to calculate the shortfall).
- An index-linked activity led formula which can be used for ensuring sufficient funding in the system and to define what the proportion for additional educational needs should be and can be used to support policy changes in the system to enable schools to meet post-Brexit needs.
- One National Funding Formula (NFF) without the need for Minimum Funding Levels (MFL) and long-term locked in protections. If the MFL is to stay, then it should take account of the additional educational needs (AEN) of schools and be fairly applied to support the different levels of AEN.
- Continued flexibility to move funding to support specific local issues or organisational requirements.
- The setting out of plans for the funding formula from 2020 onwards. Schools need to know whether there will be sufficient funding in the education budget to achieve the aims of the formula and when the government will move to a system of direct funding to schools rather than via local authorities.
- The establishment of rolling three to four-year budget settlements for schools which are inflation-proofed and include funding for cost-of-living increases.

High Needs

- Appropriate quantum of funding for the high needs block (which should be index-linked). This needs to take into account the increasing demands of higher needs as medical improvements take place. It also needs to retrospectively support the increase in post-19 demand for education.
- An increase in capital funding to meet the additional demand for local specialist places at an affordable price.
- Promotion of inclusive behaviours in schools, to stop schools passing a problem on. This would include national support for making cultural change, with change to legislation where necessary.

Early Years

- A review of the early years national formula to make it fit for future use.
- Appropriate quantum of funding for early years providers to take account of the pressures of the living wage and the impact of 30 hours.

Central Schools Services Block

- Clarity on the way that the block will work and be increased in future.

1. Background

- 1.1. This Briefing Paper outlines f40's view of the current school funding situation.
- 1.2. The f40 group represents 41 English local authorities (see list at end of paper) with historically low funding for education. We have been campaigning for a fairer system for the allocation of funding for schools for over two decades.
- 1.3. Throughout this time, our primary objective has been to influence a change in the way the government allocates funding to local education authorities and schools, so f40 welcomes the introduction of the NFF and commends the government for honouring its manifesto commitment to take steps towards providing fairer funding for all children in state funded schools in England.
- 1.4. However, f40 continues to have fundamental concerns about the new formula and there is unanimous recognition that there is still more work to do to tackle continuing unfairness of funding allocation and remaining locked-in inequalities.

2. Schools Block

- 2.1. The NFF is a step in the right direction, but it is based on historical averages rather than on the real cost of running schools and is, therefore, still unfair. As part of the NFF an extra £1.3bn has been made available, which is welcomed. However, there was insufficient narrowing of the differential funding gap.
- 2.2. In f40's opinion, the NFF does not take sufficient account of the interaction between school funding and high needs funding – the 0.5% flexibility provided at present in 2018/19 and 2019/20 is only short-term and if the full "hard" NFF is implemented in 2020/21 as planned, this will provide significant challenges to many local authorities given the current pressures on the high need block and the under-funding position they are in. Each block should be funded sufficiently, thus removing any need to make transfers between them.
- 2.3. The inconsistencies in funding for individual schools with similar characteristics across the country remain too great as a result of the protection of schools that are better funded. We concede that an NFF, allocating the same funding for all mainstream pupils nationally, begins to resolve the problem of a child attracting very different levels of funding wherever they are being taught, but the implementation of the NFF has not yet achieved the desired outcome.
- 2.4. Following the government's consultations, f40 thought the case for fair funding for schools had been won. In advance of the announcement of the NFF, the government agreed that the former system was unjustifiable and unfair, but regrettably they have replaced one unfair system with another. Implementation of the NFF has more to do with stability and the protection of schools against loss, rather than creating a fairer funding system across all local authorities. We contend that an additional "F" is required to create a new NFFF – a National Fair Funding Formula.

3. Refinements to the NFF Schools Block sought by f40

- 3.1. F40 believes that the government's implementation of the NFF falls short of what was expected, does not deliver true fairness and is, therefore, in need of fundamental change. There are five key elements of the Schools Block NFF that f40 is unhappy about and will be asking the government to consider, namely:
 - The amount invested in education funding and the cost pressures facing all schools.

- The amount of funding for basic entitlement, relative to the educational additional needs.
- The provision of a 0.5% funding floor, which ‘locks in’ historical differences and acts as a “sticking plaster” for wider formula shortcomings.
- The lack of any activity-led analysis or definition of what exactly the government is buying with this funding, or how expectations have changed over time.
- Other issues – e.g. Brexit, Capital and MATs

3.2. F40 will be happy to work with the government and the Department for Education to improve the formula, and in particular to address our five main elements of concern.

4. The amount invested in education funding and the cost pressures facing all schools

- 4.1. F40’s main argument continues to be about fairness of allocation. But we recognise that quantum is increasingly central to the overall problem. In the past we had hoped that a fairer funding allocation should be achieved by redistribution from the better funded to the poorest funded, but we now realise that this is not something that the government is prepared to undertake. That leaves no alternative but to collaborate with other campaign organisations that have made the quantum of funding their main goal.
- 4.2. The WorthLess? campaign considers what schools can provide in reality, with the funding they have and how the funding is shrinking as costs rise at a much faster rate than the funding. Their campaign focuses on ensuring there is adequate funding for all schools, with high quality teacher supply to support radical improvement in social mobility and provide support to the most vulnerable children and families. For that we need quality teacher recruitment and retention.
- 4.3. Whilst these are not absolutely the same as the aspirations of f40 we fully agree that enabling schools in all parts of the country to have the ability to meet the needs of their pupils, to enable them to fulfil their potential without this being at the expense of others (either deprived pupil not receiving additional support or all pupils have the curriculum and enhancements squeezed to pay for the basics such as heating, books or teaching).
- 4.4. The Fair Funding for All Schools campaign is a parent led campaign. Parents are noticing the cuts in funding and the increased requests from schools for contributions to prop up the school budget. The campaign leaders recognise the changing nature of the needs of education establishments, particularly with regard to a need for competitive skills for post Brexit Britain. They feel that lack of funding is narrowing the curriculum and taking the fun out of education with the impact of disengaging too many learners at a time when we need our children to have the best opportunities.
- 4.5. Schools in low funded areas have inevitably had to prioritise meeting their core costs to a greater degree than better funded schools and, as a consequence, have struggled to improve outcomes for vulnerable pupils. The government’s failure to ‘grasp the nettle’ and fully implement the NFFF (the first F meaning Fair) means schools cannot be judged fairly on the outcomes their pupils achieve. It is unfortunate that the Department for Education is seeking further efficiencies from schools, particularly those in the lowest funded areas, which have already cut costs and achieved all the efficiencies possible. The fact is that it is the gap between school funding and schools’ costs – for example, pay awards, pensions, National Insurance and apprenticeship levy – that really needs to be addressed.

- 4.6 Any efficiency targets should therefore be used as a means of achieving redistribution. As most efficiencies have already been achieved in low funded schools, this increasing pressure is resulting in additional workload and pressure on teachers and school leaders exacerbating the already challenging issues with teacher recruitment and retention.
- 4.7 F40 is calling for an immediate injection of new funding and the introduction of an annual index-linked review of formula values to reflect the changing demand for school services, the underlying costs and changing priorities. F40 is awaiting access to the datasets held by the Department for Education, which it has been promised. Once we have these datasets we will be able to calculate the shortfall. We will also encourage the Department for Education to examine how annual reviews can be undertaken and what consultation should be associated with it.
- 4.8 The national funding formula for schools should be exactly that; it should provide all the funding that a school needs to for its pupils. Grant funding paid outside the national formula can be inefficient and distorts the fairness of the national formula as it simply retains opportunities for government to add additional funding for some schools. F40 believes that all universal grants paid to schools outside the national formula should be phased out during the national funding formula's implementation period. This should include a review of pupil premium and the PE and sports grant. F40 accepts that grants targeted at individual schools for example, teaching school funding cannot be paid through the national formula. However, f40 also holds the view that when funding is under so much pressure, the use of an amount for universal infant free school meals does not provide value for money for the public purse and the policy should be reviewed and the funding provided to support schools in funding the basics. Such policies are laudable when there is sufficient funding in the system, but an extravagance when funding is this stretched.

5 Basic entitlement relative to educational additional needs.

- 5.1 Without a clear understanding of what the government is funding it is difficult to determine the basic entitlement compared to the additional educational needs.
- 5.2 Whilst there has been a deliberate movement of funding into additional educational needs, partly to support those so-called "ordinary working families", we don't consider that the additional needs indicators support those families and therefore by reducing the basic element of funding this could be having the opposite effect to that intended.
- 5.3 F40 is concerned about the balance of funding to address additional needs at a time when schools are struggling to meet their core responsibilities, as evidenced by the National Audit Office report (December 2016) which indicated cost increases of around 8%. Whilst not looking to reduce additional needs spending, schools need to be able to meet core costs as a first priority. We consider that too much funding is directed towards deprivation and that when Pupil Premium is also taken in to account this could be considered as double funding. The basic funding under NFF is simply too low. It creates distortions which risk replacing one unfairness with another.
- 5.4 We seek more clarity regarding the funding for deprivation in the main funding formula and that contained within the pupil premium. Whilst reviewing the overall level of funding, we advocate the incorporation of existing levels of Pupil Premium into the main formula at the earliest possible opportunity. The use of the same indicator for several funding streams just multiplies funding disparities and causes additional work for schools.

6 The funding protections, which lock in historical differences

- 6.1 One of the key principles set out in the early NFF consultations, supported by f40, was that pupils of similar characteristics should attract similar levels of funding wherever they are in the country (allowing for the area cost adjustment).
- 6.2 Redistribution of funding has not occurred to any noticeable extent, and the NFF has not achieved what was expected. It continues to be the case that similar local schools are not funded on the same basis as others.
- 6.3 The NFF should be applied to all schools on a consistent basis. However, the protections applied 'lock in' some of the historical differences for those schools which have been comparatively well funded for several decades. Equally the cost of this protection limits the impact of the new formula and results in the continuation of different funding levels for pupils across the country. Stability for schools in funding is important, but not at the expense of never reaching a fair formula and outcome. In practice, schools in lower funded areas will be subsidising those in better funded areas who have gained.

7 Lack of activity-led analysis

- 7.1 f40 remains convinced that without an underlying analysis of the costs of running education provision, the NFF can only provide a short-term solution to funding schools and other providers. The historic averages that are currently used will inevitably lose all credence and there is nothing in the formula to replace them or to support any changes in government priorities.
- 7.2 The funding formula model developed by f40 and presented to the Department for Education two years ago attempted to do this based on analysis of staffing ratios and associated school level costs. We urge the Department for Education to look again at our modelling, to consider each element of that model to ascertain the true cost of operating a school and to ensure the funding rates are sufficient in any review of the NFF. We understand that implementation of an activity-led formula is politically difficult, but at the very least, there are parts of it that can be used to create a fairer system.
- 7.3 There are still elements of the NFF that rely upon historical spend and these must be addressed in the near future, e.g. premises related costs including business rates and sparsity. The link of pupil led funding and sparsity funding to the lump sum has also not been fully addressed. Some local authorities compensated for a low lump sum with a high sparsity (for example) and others used the factors in quite sophisticated ways. A formula based upon averages removes this nuance but doesn't necessarily compensate for it appropriately. More work needs to be undertaken to truly understand the costs of small rural schools.
- 7.4 f40 believes that a per pupil MFL is unnecessary and the NFF should undertake this role. We are surprised that the opportunity was not taken to ensure that this is the case. In the circumstances f40 believes the retained MFL needs to protect small schools with low needs and take account of deprivation and other additional educational needs, rather than simply a protection for some schools. At present a large school with low deprivation or additional needs can be supported by a significant amount of additional funding where a school with medium additional needs receives the same envelope of funding for a more challenging cohort of pupils. F40 has argued that the funding needs to support schools in low deprived areas, but not at the expense of other schools. The NFF needs to provide sufficient funding for all schools via the formula so that those with additional needs are appropriately funded too.

7.5 The purpose of the MFL is to provide a minimum funding per pupil at a school, but for small schools, the divisor in the calculation will automatically provide a per pupil amount that is above the MFL. This does not mean that a small school can operate as the fixed costs of such a school are higher than the MFL allows, but the MFL mechanism cannot be increased as it would be unaffordable and artificially protect too many schools. For the smallest schools, a different MFL needs to exist that is higher than the general value, or as stated in the previous paragraph the formula should take this into account for all schools without the need for an MFL.

8 Other important issues

- 8.1 The Department for Education must set out plans for the funding formula from 2020 onwards. Schools need to know whether there will be sufficient funding in the education budget to achieve the aims of the formula and when the government will move to a system of direct funding to schools rather than via local authorities.
- 8.2 The Department must also establish rolling three to four-year budget settlements for schools which are inflation-proofed and include funding for cost-of-living increases.
- 8.3 The UK leaving the EU is going to provide a new set of challenges for the education system and the funding formula needs to be able to react to them in a positive and proactive way. The government has clearly stated that the 'Brexit dividend' will be used to support the NHS and schools funding and we anticipate that the NFF will be used to distribute this 'windfall' funding to schools. But any such distribution must be undertaken in an objective way that is clearly linked to addressing the current underfunded needs of children and young people across the country.
- 8.4 In a period of austerity when funding is limited, f40 believes that it is imprudent to create additional school-place capacity that is not linked to basic need. Investment in new and additional school places where the need is unproven and often completely unnecessary, is inefficient and impacts on the viability of neighbouring schools.
- 8.5 F40 firmly believes that capital investment is needed to support growth in specific strategic areas. For example, where there is a proven basic need; where efficiencies can be placed in the system by capital means (e.g. adding classroom space to one school to enable the closure of another); and by providing capital to support capacity for SEND pupils in new resourced provision or free special schools enabling education closer to home for those pupils. The additional capital that has already been targeted at SEND is welcomed. However, the allocations at LA are insignificant in addressing the real pressures and increased demand many LAs are facing due to the increase of pupils with high needs.
- 8.6 Over time there has been a significant increase in the roles that schools are expected to fulfil, without any additional funding as a result of cuts in other public services. Schools are the end point in the process and now find that they are having to undertake counselling, support to mental health, social care and family support especially to those at risk of exclusion and also having to buy other therapy services such as speech and language therapy. This places enormous strains on school budgets as they have to buy in services, but do not receive funding for it.
- 8.7 F40 understands that MATs are different to maintained schools and are here to stay, but we would like to see MATs being held more accountable for some of the decisions that they make, especially with regard to pay and distribution of funding between individual academies in the MAT. The management of deficits in MATs is not transparent and MATs are not being treated equally with maintained schools. This is not an acceptable situation.

- 8.8 The concept of notional SEN needs to be national. For 2018-19 there is (in theory if not in practice) one formula for schools and yet there are 150 different definitions of notional SEN. Schools should not, but do, put reliance on these figures for their budgeting and there are different ways of supporting inclusive schools around the country. This is an aspect of the schools' block that needs to be consistent across the country and part of the national formula.
- 8.9 Home to School Transport remains an ongoing problem for rural authorities, particularly as more schools become academies. They are making decisions regarding the school day which impact on the local authority home to school transport arrangements and budgets. LAs have reduced levels of control, but are expected to fund in accordance with the legislation.

9 High Needs

- 9.1 The funding of high needs is not keeping pace with demand and medical diagnosis and the introduction of high needs NFF has done nothing to address the problems. F40 is calling for an immediate injection of new funding and the introduction of an annual index-linked review for this block. At this point we are unable to state exactly what level of new funding is required but we will undertake research to identify the amount of underfunding.

More specifically f40 has growing concerns about:

- 9.2 **Demand** – the demand for high needs funding is out-stripping the budgets available to local authorities across the country, resulting in serious deficits in the high needs blocks in over half of all local authorities. Many have no real plans to recover these deficits and cuts to existing high needs services and pupil top-up funding simply makes what provision that is available that much more unsustainable. There is an emerging crisis in high needs funding that f40 urges the government to address before permanent damage is done to very many vulnerable pupils. The Department for Education's attempts to fix the problem by permitting a 0.5% transfer from schools funding to high needs is too little too late: not only does it fail to address the size of the emerging funding problem, but it also hardens attitudes between schools (through their representatives on schools' forums) and local authorities (who advise schools forums). There has been no recognition of the increasing population since 2013-14 in the high needs block and if the funding blocks are to be ringfenced then there is a moral imperative that the high needs block is properly funded rather than permit small scale transfers from a schools' block that is already under considerable cost pressures.
- 9.3 **Complexity of need** – the complexity of the high needs services demanded by more and more children (and their parents) is far greater than was the case just a few years ago. And as medical assessment and methods of treatment improve and intensify, the demand for them increases. The increased demand again creates more workload and greater costs. This complexity makes it harder for the authorities to judge, involves more and more medical services and as a result creates greater work load and greater costs. Such increasing needs requires recognition through the national high needs formula through an annual increase in the high needs funding quantum
- 9.4 **Supply of places** - the provision of places that can handle increasingly complex cases is dwindling and where they do exist, the demand-led market place is driving up costs. This is often independent provision, at a distance from the LA and significantly more, frequently double, local authority provision costs. The independent sector is tending to dictate the costs associated with the supply and holding local authorities to ransom and consideration needs to be given to setting cost limits. Importantly parents and SEN professionals see increasing benefits in keeping children locally with access to family and local community services. Additional support to avoid family breakdown is

essential in avoiding high cost out county placements which increasingly are not in the child's best interests.

- 9.5 **Post-16 extension to 25** - local authorities are seeing a significant growth in the number of children they are funding post-16 as a result of recent policy changes. High needs funding was never provided to take account of this number of children and as such, additional funding needs to be found to meet this new demand.
- 9.6 **Harmonisation of elements 1, 2 & 3 in post-16 high needs funding with school funding** - Consistency is required between schools and colleges: the funding to meet the high needs threshold of £6,000 is included in the national school funding formula but for colleges the £6,000 high needs threshold, known as Element 2, is funded in DSG and transferred through individual local authority declaration to the ESFA. It would be much more efficient and simpler if post-16 Element 2 funding was included in the lagged learner post-16 national funding formula i.e. the same as schools. A one-off national transfer from DSG to FE funding would be all that is necessary
- 9.7 **Impact on SEN Transport** – there has been a major increase in post-16 to 25 transport costs as a result of policy changes introduced by the government. As the number of children with additional needs increases so does the cost of transport which is placing additional demand pressures on LA budgets already facing significant reductions.
- 9.8 **Impact on exclusions** – increasingly exclusions are occurring in primary schools and there is little provision available to meet the needs of these pupils. Evidence from primary headteachers is that behaviour is getting worse at much earlier ages and this may be linked to changes in society heavily influenced by inappropriate computer games and an inability for pupils to follow instructions and authority in schools. With funding being focused at AEN rather than basic entitlement, schools not in receipt are finding more and more that their only option is to exclude the pupils.
- 9.9 **Mental Health and links to health service (e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS))** - admissions to hospital schools/pupil referral units (PRUS) are increasing based on mental health needs and are approved by CAMHS. Annual increases are in excess of 10% per annum but funding remains static within DSG. New burdens for Tier 4 mental health placements have been transferred from health to education without additional funding. This is contrary to agreed custom and practice with government.
- 9.10 **Inclusion** - As the financial pressures increase on schools' budgets, the ability and willingness for schools to take on more complex children within a mainstream setting will be challenged which is resulting in more children being directed towards specialist provision and in more exclusions. If this continues to happen the full pupil funding in the schools' block, including the £6,000 threshold cost hidden within the national formula, will need to become more explicit and follow the pupil to the high needs block. It cannot be right that schools block funding is reduced by the primary or secondary unit of funding and this does not appear to transfer automatically to the high needs block.
- 9.11 There are currently no levers for LAs to apply to schools that do not act inclusively. Academies can refuse to accept pupils and it takes around a term for the Secretary of State to direct an academy leaving the Local Authority needing to find specialist provision for the pupil, when they should be in a mainstream school. There was discussion in the White Paper 'Education Excellence Everywhere' that schools should remain responsible (both financially and in terms of standards) for that pupil until they were back on roll at a mainstream school (or in specialist provision). This will also be a challenge for the system but must be better for the pupil than the current system

where pupils are effectively moved on as quickly as possible regardless of whether that is in their best interests.

- 9.12 Significant funding pressures are being placed upon local authority budgets and the DSG. The impact of this is to put pressure on schools as they are the group that have been relatively protected. Schools are being asked to take on more and more work that traditionally was undertaken elsewhere (e.g. youth work, parenting support) or was less of an issue in the past (e.g. mental health). Schools need to be suitably funded and trained for this work. The idea of the majority of pupils turning up at school, working happily in a class of 30 and skipping home at the end of the day is long gone. Schools are significantly more complex institutions than they were and the funding for this has not kept pace. It is recognised that austerity measures have limited government funding and that schools have been protected, but the amount of additional work they do, and cost pressures put upon them has more than removed any protection they had.
- 9.13 **Impact on special schools and pupil referral units** – both these categories of schools are funded entirely from the high needs block and thus are not in receipt of the additional funding that has been directed to schools. The high needs block is where the funding is most under pressure at present, and so local authorities are forced to squeeze these budgets. Yet, it is at these schools that the most vulnerable pupils are educated and where the greatest difference can be made to young lives for the future. This is where the reduction of future costs of supporting independence in adults or places in the judicial system happens. Investment in these schools is vitally important, but budget reductions (in real terms) are stopping these schools from having the flexibility to work with individuals and make a real long-term difference.
- 9.14 **Place funding of £10,000** – place funding provides typically 50% of funding for special schools and needs to be increased regularly to meet inflationary costs in special schools. It is unacceptable to require special schools to absorb increased staffing and premises costs and continue to provide the best provision for the most vulnerable pupils in society. Given the pressures on the high needs budgets local authorities are unable to increase top-up funding to compensate. Place funding for special schools is a much more significant contribution to the schools budget than the mainstream school lump sum and must be recognised as such.
- 9.15 The historic element of the high needs block will need to be better understood if it is to remain part of the formula for the long term. LAs made decisions about how much they used for the HNB based upon their needs at the time. To baseline this into the formula is clearly fairer, but it needs to be part of a review of the quantum of funding that is available for high needs block given what has been stated above.

10 Early Years

- 10.1 There have been no universal increases in funding rates for early years providers, yet the cost of introduction of the living wage is having a significantly greater impact on nursery sector costs than is the case for employers generally. Alongside this, providers are expected to provide more of their working week at the national funding rate (whereas before the introduction of the entitlement of 30 hours for working parents, the nursery had over 50% of the working week to make up the cost difference) and employer on costs have risen separately from the living wage. Thus, providers are finding it increasingly difficult to provide early education. F40 is calling for an immediate injection of new funding and the introduction of an annual index-linked review for this block. At this stage we are unable to state exactly what level of new funding is required but we will undertake research to identify the level of underfunding.

- 10.2 Almost immediately after the introduction of the Early Years National Funding Formula, a floor was introduced to prop up authorities at the lowest levels as it was recognised that the lowest funding values were insufficient. The underlying formula is clearly not working as it should, and the area that needs review is the business rates element which distributed the available quantum far more widely than it should compared to the actual rates paid. Some small amount of work on this part of the formula could make it fit for purpose in the long term.
- 10.3 With the pressures on the high needs block, some local authorities are using the early years block to fund the early years inclusion fund, leading to a reduction in the funding rate payable to providers.
- 10.4 There is limited interest or appetite in the sector to expand to meet demand for 30 hours as government has eroded their business models and reduced profitability.
- 10.5 There is a significant recruitment issue across the sector which is exacerbated through the increase to 30 hours which requires more qualified staff. Settings are reporting that they have to limit places due to recruitment issues which then impacts on the local authority sufficiency of places.
- 10.6 Many f40 nursery schools are outstanding and are set in areas of disadvantage. Nursery schools are required through regulation to have unique cost factors so moving to a single hourly rate across all providers will not be sustainable. The uncertainty of future plans is causing turbulence in our schools which is unhelpful.

11 Central Schools Services Block

- 11.1 It is still early days for the central services block. The Department for Education has provided no information on how it's going to work and how the quantum will be increased to cover inflationary costs in the long run. This applies equally to many other parts of the school funding system and f40 would welcome greater clarity. There is scope to use the CSSB to provide the missing flexibility for schools that just don't fit the formula, but this would need to be funded.
- 11.2 Additionally, f40 would welcome further information as to how the Department intends to manage and/or re-allocate funding that is current identified as "historical commitments" within each local authority's base funding.

June 2018

Notes

1.f40 is a cross-party group which has the support of MPs, councillors, education directors, governors, head teachers, parents and teaching union representatives. The group has 41 member authorities representing over 2.83 million pupils in over 9,000 schools.

2.The members are: Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Central Bedfordshire, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, East Riding of Yorkshire, East Sussex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, North Yorkshire, Northumberland, Oxfordshire, Plymouth, Shropshire, Solihull, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Staffordshire, Stockport, Suffolk, Swindon, Torbay, Trafford, Wakefield, Warrington, Warwickshire, West Sussex, Wigan, Wiltshire, Worcestershire and York.