

Statement by the Schools Forum 10 December 2003

The Schools Forum would like to make the following comments to the Cabinet about the Proposed Schools Budget for 2004/5:

- The Schools Forum feels that if schools had received an adequate budget in 2003/2004 then the proposed 6% increase in funding for 2004/2005 would probably be sufficient to meet the pressures in the coming year and to maintain standards in schools. However the budget set for 2003/2004 was wholly inadequate in meeting the cost pressures associated with the increases in pay and other on-costs.
- The Schools Forum therefore strongly objects to the setting of the budget for 2004/2005 at 6% and supports the Headteacher's view that an increase of 8-9% is required to meet the challenge of the Government's standards agenda. The proposed level of funding at 6% means that cuts made to staffing levels, equipment, staff development and building maintenance in 2003/2004 can not be restored. Whilst it is possible to reduce expenditure in these areas for one year this is not a sustainable position and will result in further cuts to staffing levels in future if this level of funding continues.
- The Schools Forum asks the Cabinet to write to the Secretary of State and to local MPs to request an increase in funding nationally to adequately address the level of funding schools received in 2003/4 so that the cuts which had to be made can be restored.
- The Schools Forum does not believe that remodelling of the school workforce can be achieved from within existing resources and that this is a totally unrealistic view. The Government has raised staff's expectations which if schools can not then meet through inadequate funding is damaging to morale.
- The Government's failure to provide adequate funding or appropriate criteria for pay progression raises expectations and puts schools and headteachers in an impossible situation. Schools are going to have to find the funding for pay progression otherwise staff morale will be further damaged.
- The Schools Forum feels that all schools are in difficulty and therefore supports maximum funding for all schools rather than targeted support to individual schools.
- The Schools Forum is supportive of the proposal for the calculation of the minimum funding guarantee for Special Schools.