



THE STANDARDS FUND SUPPORT FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ETHNIC MINORITY AND TRAVELLER PUPILS 2002-2003

INFORMATION AND ADVICE FOR NUT DIVISION SECRETARIES

Background

The recently published DfES circular LEA/054/2001 on The Standards Fund 2002-2003 sets out the arrangements for the Standards Fund generally, including for the achievement of ethnic minority and Traveller pupils. In summary, the DfES circular outlines the arrangements which are set out below.

Changes in 2002-2003

There are no significant changes to the operation of the Standards Fund arrangements in 2002-2003, to allow for consolidation of the changes made in 2001-2002. From 2003-2004, the DfES will be introducing a new LEA funding system which will impact on the Standards Fund.

Individual Categories

Allocations will continue to be grouped in six broad categories and almost all will be allocated by formula, not by bidding. Allocations will be made in the six broad categories as set out below.

- ❑ Schools Improvement;
- ❑ Inclusion;
- ❑ Standards and Curriculum (including ethnic minority and Traveller achievement);
- ❑ Diversity and Excellence;
- ❑ Teachers and Support; and
- ❑ Capital and Infrastructure.

Freedom for schools to determine spending priorities

Schools will continue to be able to vire money freely between allocations (including allocations in different categories) at any time.

One of the exceptions will be that schools must spend at least the full amount of any allocation for ethnic minority achievement for the defined purposes.

Monitoring via objectives/outputs

LEAs are expected to encourage schools to focus on the intended outcomes, through light-touch monitoring integrated into schools' and LEAs' strategies for raising pupil achievement and other key priorities.

Grant Rate

Allocations to LEAs will be made either at 100 per cent or at a composite grant rate of 52 per cent (as compared to 53 per cent in 2001-2002).

Formula Allocations

Allocations to LEAs will normally be formula-based, for example according to numbers of schools or pupils, as at January 2001. The basis for allocating the grant to LEAs for ethnic minority pupils' achievement will be notified to LEAs, along with their allocations in November 2001. The grant for traveller children achievement will be allocated to LEAs taking account of historical patterns.

Virement of Allocation

At LEA level most allocations will continue to be ring-fenced and LEAs will be expected either to spend the money themselves for the specified purpose or to devolve it to schools under the same heading. Where an allocation is specified as being limited to a particular purpose, this requirement can be satisfied by a statement that this condition has been met within reasonable tolerances (to within 5 per cent or £10,000 whichever is less). There will be no separate audit certification of Standards Fund expenditure, or any other accounting requirement beyond what would apply to an LEA's other public spending.

At school level, with limited exceptions, schools will be able to vire money freely between allocations at anytime. The exceptions include the requirement that LEAs must make it a condition of grant to schools that they will spend at least the full amount of any allocation for ethnic minority achievement on raising attainment for ethnic minority pupils.

Consortium Arrangements

As in previous years, cross- LEA consortia will be encouraged, including for traveller children.

The Standards Fund 2002-2003 – EMAG and Traveller Education – Advice to Divisions

The NUT's priority consistently has been to protect EMAG and traveller education posts and to press the Government to protect and increase funding to meet the specific educational needs of minority ethnic pupils, including traveller and refugee pupils. Further advice may be provided to divisions on other aspects of the Standards Fund Circular once the rest of the Circular has been analysed.

It is important to note that all LEAs will be in receipt of funding under the Standards Fund for ethnic minority pupils. All divisions, therefore, are advised to seek meetings with their LEAs. It is essential that divisions seek advice from their regional offices about the application of the guidance in this circular.

Following pressure from the Union and others, the DfES has continued the arrangement for the ethnic minority and Traveller pupils' achievement elements of the funding to remain ringfenced.

For the achievement of ethnic minority pupils, the DfES intends to notify LEAs the basis for allocating the grant, along with their allocations in November 2001. Of the total, 15 per cent or £150,000, whichever is greater, may be retained to provide central services. LEAs are expected to devolve the balance by a needs-based, fair and transparent distribution mechanism which may be varied at local discretion. The DfES will consult interested parties in the autumn on options for moving to a needs-based funding formula for 2003-2004.

Divisions are advised to press LEAs to:

- i. maintain the current levels of funding, provision and staffing;**
- ii. consult teacher organisation representatives on the local formula for the devolution of the grant;**
- iii. ensure that they hold centrally the maximum of 15 per cent of the grant or £150,000, whichever is greater, allowed in the arrangements; and**
- iv. consult teacher organisation representatives, staff in EMAG services and minority ethnic communities prior to responding to the DfES's consultation on the formula for funding allocation to LEAs.**

LEAs and schools will be expected to integrate their targets and strategies for ethnic minority and Traveller pupils' achievement into Education Development Plans and School Development Plans respectively.

Divisions are asked to press LEAs to provide guidance to schools on integrating ethnic minority and Traveller achievement strategies within School Development Planning.

As the ethnic minority achievement grant is one of the few grants which is specifically earmarked, it may be appropriate for LEAs to request schools to provide specific information on the operation of this grant.

Following consistent pressure from the Union, the DfES has retained the requirement for LEAs to hold centrally the Traveller children achievement grant. This allocation must be spent at LEA level on services and activities related to the identification, placement, assessment, attendance and progress of Traveller pupils, together with systems for maintaining and passing on records to any other LEA.

The allocation for ethnic minority achievement must be spent, whether at LEA or school level, on activities directly related to the raising of standards for ethnic minority and EAL pupils. Only 5 per cent of the allocations may be allowed for cross virement to other Standards Fund priorities at either LEA or school level.

Divisions are urged to press LEAs to ensure that they:

- i. meet the DfES's requirement for non-vireability of this particular grant; and**
- ii. provide clear information to schools that this element of the grant must be used for the purpose intended.**

Although not specifically mentioned in the Standards Fund circular, in most LEAs arranging buy-back services for the funding which has been devolved to schools will be the best option. This will enable to protect members' jobs and to provide a flexible service to schools which meets the needs of minority ethnic pupils.

Divisions are asked to press LEAs to continue their existing buy-back arrangements as the best option

The latest proposals may lead to some changes in LEAs' current arrangements.

Where necessary, having consulted their regional offices, divisions are asked to call meetings of members whose jobs may be at risk to brief those teachers on the steps being taken by the Union to protect them and to seek information from them which would assist the Union's efforts to provide full support.

On the issue of salary safeguarding, divisions are advised to be guided by the Union's success in the Bristol Employment Tribunal.

The Union will continue to give the highest priority to resisting job-losses. It is essential division secretaries co-ordinate with, and seek the advice of, regional offices at every stage of the development of LEA plans for distributing the grants.

This advice is based on the information currently available. Divisions are asked to relay to the Education and Equal Opportunities Department at NUT headquarters, information on the application of the DfES circular. Following feedback from divisions, further guidance will be issued, as appropriate. Any queries on this circular should be addressed to 'EMAG 2002-2003' in the Education and Equal Opportunities Department at Headquarters.