

Academy Funding Article

24th January 2012

This article is intended to alert parents to an issue of great concern which affects academies in Gloucestershire and therefore over 75% of the secondary school pupils in this county. In brief, academies in this county are almost certain to receive less funding as from September 2012 than they would in any other county in England and significantly less than in similar authorities.

As you will be aware, Cirencester Kingshill School converted to Academy status on 1st August 2011. This has resulted in very little difference in the day to day operation of the school however the conversion means that we now have a range of benefits including the opportunity to purchase services more flexibly which better match the needs of our pupils.

Our income from central government is divided into two main parts. The major part is known as the School Budget Share and this is the same as we would receive if we had not converted to Academy status. The other part is known as the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG). This is a grant which we receive to pay for those services which we no longer receive from the Gloucestershire County Council. It is the level of this grant which is the focus of our concern.

In Gloucestershire, this grant is allocated at the rate of £156 per pupil in secondary schools for 2011/12. For comparison, the rates in some other similar counties are as follows:

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| Dorset | £262 |
| Somerset | £319 |
| Shropshire | £232 |

This means that a school of 1500 pupils in Gloucestershire receives a grant of £234,000 while a school of the same size in Somerset would receive £478,500 even though both schools have to buy the same services at similar costs.

The per pupil amount of this grant is calculated by central government from information supplied by the Local Authority which lists how much the county spends on these services. This means one of two things:

- 1) Gloucestershire is actually spending far less on these aspects of children's services than other, similar, authorities, or
- 2) Gloucestershire has submitted the information to central Government in a different way from other authorities such that the spending on these aspects appears to be low.

Clearly something is very wrong here.

If (1) is correct, why is Gloucestershire spending so much less on key services for young people than other similar authorities?

If (2) above is correct, the effect of Gloucestershire submitting information in a particular way is to deny most secondary school pupils in this county significant funding. While the above may seem very critical of Gloucestershire LA, it could be that they have no way of knowing how other authorities complete their forms. If this is the case, it is incredible that central Government has not noticed the disparity between the LACSEG in Gloucestershire and other authorities and that it has done nothing to address the issue.

We have spoken to Gloucestershire MPs about this issue and they are very supportive but this has yet to translate into any action by central government to correct the situation. Letters to education ministers receive replies but, again, no indication that effective action will be taken. When we were considering conversion, we were fully aware that any financial benefit would be temporary and we have no wish to attract funding at the expense of Local Authority schools. However, the massive difference in this grant between Gloucestershire and other similar authorities is simply unfair. Our main concern now is that this unfairness will be allowed to continue into 2012/13 and beyond. We cannot believe that those in central and local Government are willing to see this continuing into the future and that, between them, a solution cannot be found.

In fact, we have offered a solution as follows. Given the clear inaccuracy of the current method of calculating the LACSEG, a floor should be established below which the LACSEG cannot fall to avoid the extreme relative under-funding of academies in a few counties. We have suggested that this floor should be around the average for the lowest funded 30 authorities at £250 per pupil.

You may wish to ask those representing local or central government why your child's secondary school is subject to this unfairness and what they intend doing to correct this.

If you require more information regarding the LACSEG please contact **Claire Minett, School Business Manager** at Kingshill School on 01285 651511.