**Sf 281123 – Schools in Financial Difficulty Funding – Appendix 2**

**Summary of School Forum member suggestions**

* 1. Calculate the % of deficit as total income for this year 23-24. Then run the numbers and try and divide the funds available to pay off everything over a set %.  This should be easy to model.
1. In view of deficit recovery plans look at which schools have deficits and which have ones that are currently static. E.g. They have historic debt that while they are not adding to it, they cannot afford to pay off as it has remained steady from one year to the next.
	1. I feel it would not be appropriate to allocate the proposed funds to schools in surplus only. This would feel counter to the purpose of supporting schools in financial difficulty. I do understand however we should not be looking to provide additional funds to schools where the mis-management of current budgets is known to be the cause of the financial difficulties.  I would propose two possible models for criteria:
	2. The first would be, to assess schools on three criteria. (1)If any deficit is long term (5+ years), this fund shouldn't be used to pay off historical deficits. (2)If the school can evidence if the difficulty is born out of either COVID or the cost of living crisis (inflation/energy costs/staffing ill health cover). (3)If the school has a credible plan to recover a reasonable proportion of the deficit. If schools can show they are meeting each of these three criteria they would get a share of the funds in proportion to the impact of their costs. All that seems like a nightmare to administer though.
	3. So a possible second simpler model might be to allocate it to schools in proportion to their PP numbers, on the basis they can say what additional costs they have carried over the past 3 years to support their PP students. All schools will have been doing this in some measure, additional breakfast clubs, increase uniform support, reducing some funded trips out that would have otherwise gone ahead,...
	4. Can I suggest that there is some recognition of schools that have lower deprivation numbers and therefore less Pupil Premium funding?
	5. Most schools with higher PP funding can use this to support some aspects of school life such as supplementing wages for learning mentors/ support staff, paying for whole school training, targeted programmes such as phonics programmes for whole school use etc, buying resources such as technology etc.
	6. These schools have much greater flexibility with a range of incomes than those with less PP and lower deprivation numbers.  I think that those schools with lower PP will struggle far greater moving forward.
	7. Access to these funds should be based on three factors:
		1. Taking up the Schools Resource Management Advisor visit offer from the DfE (or a similar independent scrutiny).
		2. Agreeing a financial recovery plan that eliminates the deficit over three years (exceptionally 5 years if the deficit is over 7% of income).
		3. Ensuring monthly accounts deadlines are met so that improvement is monitored openly and transparently .
	8. Distribution of the funds should be based on:
		1. Not forever – to bridge from now to financial recovery – ie a tapering support.   Accessing in the past is no guarantee of access in the future.
		2. Nil if there is an accumulated surplus balance held (ie only those with accumulated deficits accessing the fund).
		3. Be prioritised to solutions rather than just to prop the finances.  Ie – if roll numbers are causing the deficit – then use the funding to restructure back to the funding envelop available.
		4. Be conditional on ongoing delivery – ie not rewarding “head in the sand” but rewarding those who make positive changes.
		5. Build collaboration between schools to achieve critical mass, spread best practice and share solutions that use funding more efficiently.
		6. Be available to support long-term issues only where there is a clear community need (ie remote/isolated communities) – schools without these community needs should have to face their challenges and form partnerships to solve their issues.
		7. Be based on a points scoring system with points for the each of the above gaining more right of access to the funds – orientating schools to solution focussed behaviours.