

I am would like to share my support for the Leicester Special Schools Banding Proposal.

The words '**Fair and Equitable**' are being questioned by some of my colleagues with the assertion of winners and losers instead. I would like to offer my views of how the current system is one of winners and losers and how in fact the proposed system will indeed offer a **fair and equitable** system across the city.

The current system we can all agree is not fair or equitable for the following reasons:

- All students within a school are funded at the same level in spite of their needs.
- A students' needs may be met effectively in more than one school. Why then should they attract more funding at school A rather than school B?
- Since the current 'flat rate' system was put in place, some schools, Ellesmere in particular, have changed designation. I'm sure everyone will agree that SLD and primary aged students cost more to educate than secondary MLD students, yet Ellesmere College is still funded for secondary MLD.
- Under the current system schools are penalised for being flexible and welcoming to the complex young people we now have in our city. By taking these children we automatically spiral towards a deficit budget.

Therefore I would argue that the current system is one of winners and losers and the new proposed system is in fact '**fair and equitable.**' Outlined below are the reasons why.

The banding concept:

Over the past 18 months the CLASS group of headteachers have worked together on writing banding descriptors. It was agreed that the top row should include a staffing element as this is the main indicator for costs. However, below this sits a detailed description of need at each band. It is my understanding that these are the banding descriptors used by LCC within their proposal exactly as the CLASS heads requested.

It is also my understanding that LCC have accepted the bands as decided upon by each individual school. Therefore we are all being funded for the students within each band, exactly as we specified under the new proposal. These individual bands are then equated into a weighted average for ease of budgeting but the average is based on the individual students as identified by each individual head.

It is also my understanding that the system is fairer still, in that our bands will be moderated every 12 months and our weighted average updated to reflect changing cohorts.

We have had rapidly changing cohorts at Ellesmere over the last 5 years and this has never been reflected financially in the past. Therefore I whole-heartedly welcome a process that actually reflects the needs and complexities of the students who walk through our doors.

Implications of the banding review on Ellesmere College:

Under the banding rates review, Ellesmere will still be the lowest funded special school per pupil in the city. Yet I am still in full agreement with the rates review. That is because the bands allocated to each individual student are fair and accurate:

Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6
0	132	81	47	27	1

The above is a true reflection of the level of need as a spread across the college. As clarified in the FAQ in relation to the review. I quote the answer to Q23 below:

Within the comparator table we have tried to use schools which best fit into these categories, however, the Ellesmere example was difficult as the cohort is split significantly due to the breadth of the need the school meets. For example within their current cohort of children 34.8% is ASD (£23.2k – £23.5k) 8.62% is SEMH (£28.5k - £29k), on that basis nearly 42% of the schools cohort sit in other categories and therefore the proposed average rate band for the school recognises this.

It should also be recognised that the highest MLD rate is £20.34k, against a proposed rate of £21.34k, and therefore a 20% comparison is used based on the lower end of the centile medium. It should also be recognised that the highest rate for SEMH comparison is £28.1k, with centile average of £24.39k, however, the LA is proposed £29,014.

Finally it should be recognised that the rate system is designed to go with the child, regardless of which school they attend, and the rating system is designed to ensure the needs of the child are recognised through the banding they are awarded and therefore the proposed average rate system is based on the cohort in the school, linked back to the funding that child is awarded under the banding rate system.

The point I am making which is supported by the official response above is that Ellesmere is not a secondary MLD school. We cater for SEMH currently funded at £18,429 when they would be funded at £37,137 elsewhere in the city. We cater for SLD currently funded at £18,429 when they would be funded at up to £22,346 elsewhere in the city.

Under the new system any child will be funded at the same level wherever in the city they are educated. Surely the very definition of 'fair and equitable.'

I also think it's worth raising one of the points raised by another head, that Ellesmere is 'winning' more than any other school.

This is only the case because we are 'losing' more significantly than other schools under the current system.

It is also the case that Ellesmere is a significantly larger school than any of the other city special schools. We will still have the lowest weighted average. It's just that the total increase seems more due to the large number of students we cater for.

I am also aware that there is a need for places for more complex children in the city. This will only be possible under a fair and equitable process in which students attract equal funding in whichever school they are placed.

Without the review Ellesmere College will be forced into a significant deficit budget with no way of balancing funds in the near future. An independent ICFP review has concluded that we are significantly underfunded in relation to the needs of the children we educate.



Whilst I appreciate that the review will result in budget cuts for some schools, it is also important to recognise that other schools in the city have been forced to cope with underfunding for some years. I also think it is worth noting that SEMH schools in neighbouring authorities are able to be successful with much lower pupil funding. And whilst it's wonderful that our city SEMH provision is graded outstanding I'm not sure that should be at the expense of the quality of provision for other vulnerable students with SEND in the city.