



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Secretary of State to speak at f40 education funding conference

ED BALLS, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Services will be the main speaker at a conference in Wakefield later this month which will deal with the problem of unfair funding of children's education in many parts of the country.

The conference on Saturday 21 March will be debating the Government's current review of education funding and confirming details of the case that the country's worst-funded authorities will submit to the Government.

The conference has been called by campaigning group f40, which represents those authorities at the bottom of the funding league table.

It will be hosted by Stafford MP, David Kidney, who chairs the f40 Group. He says this conference comes at a vital time for school funding.

"We formed f40 to press for a fairer share of school funding for all schoolchildren in areas of the country where funding has fallen short in the past. This includes shire counties, unitary council areas and metropolitan council areas, including Wakefield.

"We have had past successes. When the Government last reviewed the formula for sharing out education funding we achieved a simplified basic per pupil amount plus up to three additional "top ups" for deprivation, additional costs and sparsity. More recently, we persuaded the Government to include extra funding for "pockets of deprivation" which certainly benefited most f40 authorities.

"This year is extremely significant because the Government is reviewing the system once again. f40, which is playing a crucial part in the review process, wants every school to be entitled to receive a basic amount of funding that covers all the requirements of a balanced school curriculum. Some people call this an "activity-led" model of funding.

"This conference will help us to hone our arguments and to refine the message that we want all our supporters to join us in sending to the Government.

"Wakefield, which itself is one of the poorest funded authorities, is our venue this year. This choice of venue helps demonstrate the range of areas that f40 represents, both in terms of type of council area and wide geographic spread.

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“But it is also appropriate because the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families is Member of Parliament for Normanton, an adjacent parliamentary constituency. We are very pleased that we have been able to persuade him to attend our conference to discuss critically important funding issues with us.”

F40 recently agreed its focus for the review and will be concentrating its efforts on five key issues which will have a major impact in any new education funding formula set by the Government. These are:

**Basic Entitlement Needs** - The level of the basic per pupil funding in the formula should not be based on dividing the remaining pot by the total pupils number once the money for the three “top-ups” (deprivation, area cost and sparsity) has been removed, as is effectively what is done currently. F40 will argue for an activity-led calculation of the basic entitlement first, at what is judged to be the standard level of educational provision we can afford for all pupils.

**Additional Educational Need** – In future this should be targeted at those pupils who are under-achieving in schools.

**Area Costs** – This extra help for recruitment and retention in high cost areas should be calculated on the actual additional costs faced by schools in “expensive” areas.

**Sparsity** – F40 wants this element to be reconsidered in terms of the additional costs inherent in running small schools - primary or secondary. We recognise, however, that the small schools attracting extra funding should only be those that exist by necessity, not simply choice.

**High Cost Pupils** - Recognition must be given to the fact that high cost pupils can be a considerable and unfair burden on authorities as the incidence of these children is not formulaic, but random. Hence there is a case for these costs to be funded centrally, not out of local devolved budgets.

The Government is planning a consultation on proposed changes to education funding later this year.

Ends

Notes to news desks: for media enquiries please contact Doug Allan on 01287 610404 or 07785 223707. David Kidney can be contacted on 020 7219 6472 or 07966 378844.

Please see our website for education funding information – [www.f40.org.uk](http://www.f40.org.uk)