

# Making the cut: how schools respond when they are under financial pressure

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This report summarises the findings from a qualitative research project carried out in 2018–19. This research was not designed to give an overview of the financial situation of schools in general, but to explore how schools make decisions when they are under financial pressure, and what impacts these decisions could have on quality of education.

We asked headteachers in mainstream schools in England to take part in our online survey. We interviewed school leaders and other school staff to further answer our research questions:

- What are the main financial pressures that their schools are facing?
- How are decisions made when responding to financial pressure?
- What decisions are made?
- What are the wider implications of the responses to financial pressure?

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## Introduction

1. In September 2018, the Public Accounts Committee asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) to provide comment on what Ofsted believes are the major risks to the quality of education and school effectiveness, including the impact of funding. In October 2018, HMCI responded to the Public Accounts Committee with a letter outlining the major issues impacting education.<sup>1</sup> This included a section on funding, along with a literature review into the available research on the impacts of funding on the quality of education.<sup>2</sup>
2. That letter and the accompanying literature review outlined the available research on school funding and noted the sector's major concern over levels of funding. The literature review concluded that:
  - there is limited evidence on whether funding has an impact on attainment
  - what evidence there is suggests that additional spending can have some positive impact on attainment and that it can have more of an impact on disadvantaged pupils
  - what seems to matter more is how money is spent.<sup>3</sup>
3. The literature review went on to note the lack of research into how funding impacts individual schools and pupils and how most available research was quantitative. It set out Ofsted's aim to carry out qualitative research into school funding and how it impacts leaders' and teachers' ability to provide positive outcomes for their pupils.<sup>4</sup>
4. As promised, in 2019 we carried out qualitative research into the potential risks to quality of education and school effectiveness when schools are under financial pressure, and into the ways schools respond to financial pressure. This report outlines the findings of this research.

## Background

### School finances

5. Spending per pupil in English schools has varied over time. Over the 2000s, overall school spending per pupil grew rapidly at around 5% per year in real terms. Since then, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has calculated that total

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<sup>1</sup> 'Amanda Spielman letter to the Public Accounts Committee', Ofsted, October 2018; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee).

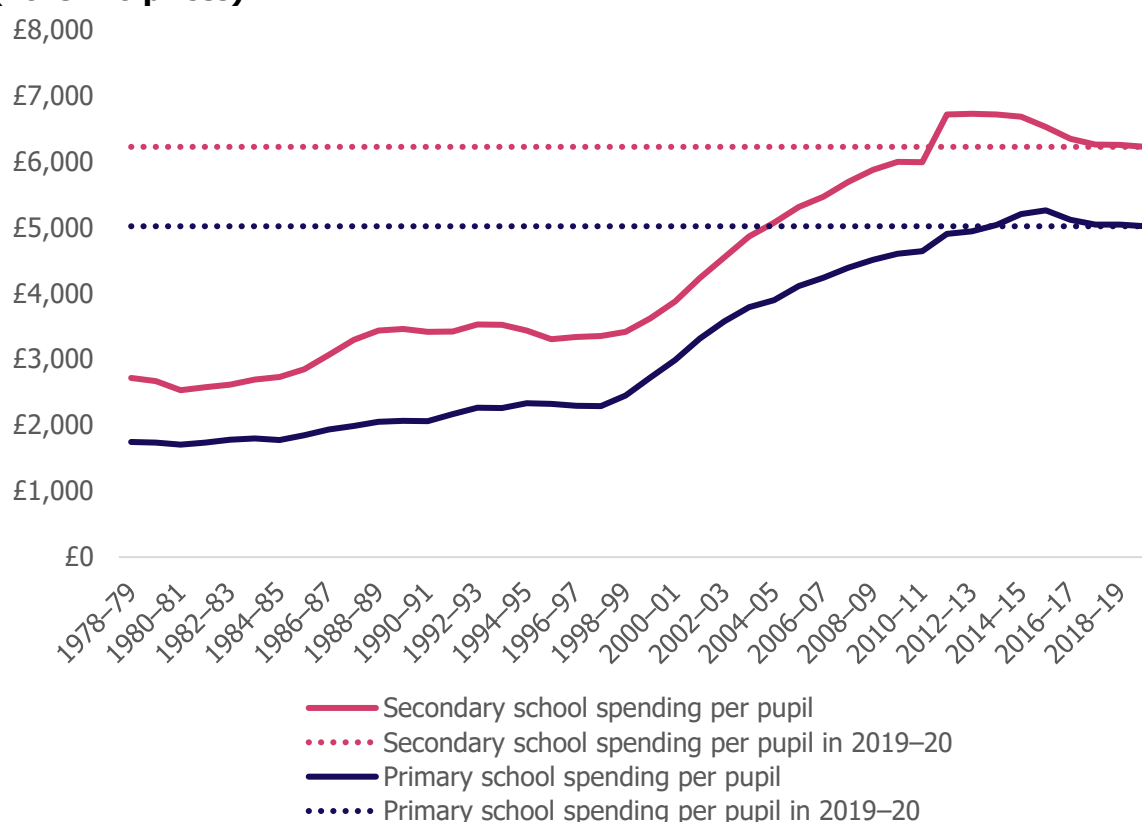
<sup>2</sup> 'Ofsted literature review and research proposal on school funding', Ofsted, October 2018; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee).

<sup>3</sup> 'Ofsted literature review and research proposal on school funding', Ofsted, October 2018; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee).

<sup>4</sup> 'Ofsted literature review and research proposal on school funding', Ofsted, October 2018; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee).

school spending per pupil, taking into account changes in funding allocated to schools, local authority spending on pupils and schools and sixth-form funding, fell by about 8% per pupil in real terms between 2009–10 and 2018–19. However, looking over a longer period, total school spending per pupil is still about 14% higher in real terms than it was in 2003–04.<sup>5</sup> UK spending is also higher than average for Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1: Average spending per pupil per year in primary and secondary schools (2019–20 prices)**



Source: '2019 annual report on education spending in England', Institute for Fiscal Studies, September 2019; [www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369](http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369).

6. Since 2015, schools have been faced with additional cost pressures and uncertainty over their finances.<sup>7</sup> These pressures include staff pay increases, raised national insurance contributions, increases to the cost of teacher pensions and the apprenticeship levy.<sup>8</sup> Schools' costs increased more slowly

<sup>5</sup> '2019 annual report on education spending in England', Institute for Fiscal Studies, September 2019; [www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369](http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369).

<sup>6</sup> In 2016, the UK spent 18% more per student in primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary educational institutions than the OECD average. See 'Country note – education at a glance 2019: United Kingdom', OECD, September 2019; [www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance](http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance).

<sup>7</sup> 'A ten-year plan for school and college funding', Education Select Committee, July 2019; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/969/96902.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> 'A ten-year plan for school and college funding', Education Select Committee, July 2019; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/969/96902.htm>; 'Financial

than inflation between 2010–11 and 2015–16 but grew faster than inflation afterwards.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the annual funding cycle and late announcements over costs make it difficult for schools to plan ahead.<sup>10</sup> Year on year, schools do not know how much money they will receive or what costs they will face far enough in advance to plan effectively. School leaders have asked for multi-year funding settlements to alleviate this problem.<sup>11</sup>

7. Schools are also spending their money on a wider range of activities than they used to. Additional demands on schools and pressures on other government-funded services have led schools to spend more money on providing increased support across a variety of areas.<sup>12</sup>
8. A further financial pressure on schools that has reportedly increased in recent years is the gap between the funding they receive to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the costs of delivering this provision.<sup>13</sup>
9. Government spending for pupils with SEND has been reported to be 'inadequate'.<sup>14</sup> A recent report from the National Audit Office found that the system for supporting pupils with SEND is not, on current trends, financially sustainable.<sup>15</sup> The Education Select Committee similarly concluded that: 'There is simply not enough money in the system to provide for the scale of demand'.<sup>16</sup>
10. In 2017–18, more than four out of five local authorities overspent their high-needs budget, which includes the money they are given by central government

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sustainability of schools', National Audit Office, December 2014; [www.nao.org.uk/report/financial-sustainability-in-schools](http://www.nao.org.uk/report/financial-sustainability-in-schools).

<sup>9</sup> '2018 annual report on education spending in England', Institute for Fiscal Studies, September 2018; [www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13306](http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13306).

<sup>10</sup> Including announcements over teacher pay increases and the degree to which they will be funded by the government.

<sup>11</sup> 'A ten-year plan for school and college funding', Education Select Committee, July 2019; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/969/96902.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> 'A ten-year plan for school and college funding', Education Select Committee, July 2019; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/969/96902.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> 'Special educational needs and disabilities inquiry', Education Select Committee, October 2019; [www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/special-educational-needs-and-disability-inquiry-17-19](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/special-educational-needs-and-disability-inquiry-17-19).

<sup>14</sup> 'A ten-year plan for school and college funding', Education Select Committee, July 2019; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/969/96902.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> 'Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in England', National Audit Office, September 2019; [www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities](http://www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities).

<sup>16</sup> 'A ten-year plan for school and college funding', Education Select Committee, July 2019; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/969/96902.htm>.

to fund mainstream schools to provide for pupils with particularly high needs.<sup>17</sup> We make no judgement here on whether the cause of this is too little funding, overly costly provision, or a combination of both.

11. Different schools in England receive different levels of funding. This continues to be determined by the schools' characteristics, such as their size, and the characteristics of their pupils, such as levels of deprivation and SEND. However, similar schools in different parts of the country have also been receiving different levels of funding. This is because funding allocations to local authorities have been based on out-of-date data and historical spending patterns.
12. The government's national funding formula (NFF) for schools was devised to address these disparities in funding between local areas.<sup>18</sup> Through this formula, introduced in April 2018, funding for each school is determined by up-to-date data on factors including measures of deprivation and variations in labour market costs. Different schools have been affected differently by its introduction. Such a large reform of the school funding system has inevitably created relative winners and losers.<sup>19</sup>
13. The full implementation of the NFF has been delayed until 2021.<sup>20</sup> Currently, schools are operating on a 'soft' NFF introduction. This means that, in 2018–19, 41 of 150 local authorities were using funding settlements that mirror the funding plans 'almost exactly'. Another 73 had moved their funding plans 'closer' to what is proposed.<sup>21</sup>
14. In this financial context, a minority of schools have not been balancing their books. Twenty-eight per cent (260) of local authority maintained secondary schools were in debt in 2018–19. Of these, their average debt was over £500,000. Eight per cent of local authority maintained primary schools were in debt in 2018–19.<sup>22</sup> Comparable data is not available for individual schools within multi-academy trusts (MATs), which makes it difficult to assess the

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<sup>17</sup> 'Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in England', National Audit Office, September 2019; [www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities](http://www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities).

<sup>18</sup> 'Schools and high needs funding reform: the case for change and consultation summary', Department for Education, March 2016; <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula>.

<sup>19</sup> 'The short- and long-run impact of the national funding formula for schools in England', Institute for Fiscal Studies, March 2017; [www.ifs.org.uk/publications/9075](http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/9075).

<sup>20</sup> 'A ten-year plan for school and college funding', Education Select Committee, July 2019; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/969/96902.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> 'National funding formula for schools and high needs: 2019 to 2020', Department for Education, July 2018; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-for-schools-and-high-needs](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-for-schools-and-high-needs).

<sup>22</sup> 'LA and school expenditure 2018 to 2019: tables', Department for Education, December 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2018-to-2019-financial-year](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2018-to-2019-financial-year).

financial stability of the school system as a whole.<sup>23</sup> However, analysis of trusts managing a total of 1,500 schools showed that 8% of these trusts had a cumulative deficit in 2019, an increase from 6% in 2017.<sup>24</sup>

15. In contrast, there are many schools with large surpluses. Forty-three per cent of local authority maintained primary schools and 36% of local authority maintained secondary schools had balances deemed to be 'excessive' by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2018–19.<sup>25</sup> In relation to MATs, the sector has, on average, accumulated a surplus.<sup>26</sup>
16. Those schools that have experienced financial pressure have taken various actions in response.<sup>27</sup> These have included: reducing the numbers of teachers and other staff; reducing spending on school premises and learning resources; and asking for parental contributions.
17. In response to growing concerns about financial pressure in schools, the government committed to increase funding for schools by £7.1 billion by 2022–23, with a rise of £2.6 billion in 2020–21. The minimum per pupil amount for 2020–21 will increase to £3,750 for primary schools and £5,000 for secondary schools.<sup>28</sup> Schools that will benefit most from these minimum funding changes will be those that have less challenging intakes and therefore do not have the characteristics associated with additional funding under the NFF.<sup>29,30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The Education Policy Institute reported that, in 2016/17, 4.3% of academies across England were in trusts that had a cumulative deficit. However, the report points out that, because balances are reported at a trust rather than individual school level, this makes the balances data a less useful indicator of the overall health of the system than it is for maintained schools. See 'School revenue balances in England', Education Policy Institute, January 2019; <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/school-revenue-balances>.

<sup>24</sup> 'Academies benchmark report 2020', Kreston Academies Group, January 2020; [www.krestonreeves.com/news/academies-benchmark-report-2020](http://www.krestonreeves.com/news/academies-benchmark-report-2020).

<sup>25</sup> 'LA and school expenditure 2018 to 2019: tables', Department for Education, December 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2018-to-2019-financial-year](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2018-to-2019-financial-year).

<sup>26</sup> 'Academies benchmark report 2020', Kreston Academies Group, January 2020; [www.krestonreeves.com/news/academies-benchmark-report-2020](http://www.krestonreeves.com/news/academies-benchmark-report-2020).

<sup>27</sup> 'Breaking point 2017/18: a snapshot of the continuing crisis in school and academy funding', National Association of Head Teachers, March 2018; [www.naht.org.uk/news-and-opinion/press-room/new-poll-reveals-full-impact-of-school-funding-crisis](http://www.naht.org.uk/news-and-opinion/press-room/new-poll-reveals-full-impact-of-school-funding-crisis). 'School business leaders funding survey results', Association of School and College Leaders, May 2018.

<sup>28</sup> In 2021–22, it will increase to £4,000 for primary schools.

<sup>29</sup> 'The government's one-year spending round: looking beyond the big numbers', Education Policy Institute, September 2019; <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/spending-round-preview>.

<sup>30</sup> The Education Policy Institute has calculated that only a minority of schools will benefit from these minimum funding changes. Around 41% of primary schools and 34% of secondary schools are below the proposed funding floors. 'Analysis: "levelling up" – what it really means for school funding', Education Policy Institute, August 2019; <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/analysis-the-prime-ministers-promise-to-level-up-school-funding>.

18. The government is also making available support and guidance to help schools to reduce costs and get value for money.<sup>31</sup> This includes publishing guidance and toolkits on issues such as workforce planning, providing benchmarking information, recommending deals to help schools get good value when purchasing goods and services and deploying school resource management advisers in schools in particular need of support. Academy trusts will be provided with a new ESFA tool which will be able to give trusts rapid feedback on level and direction of spend compared to the nearest comparable schools.<sup>32</sup>
19. In response to concerns about the funding for pupils with SEND and how the system is working to support them, the government has announced additional funding, a review into support for children with SEND and a programme of research and analysis into the impact and value for money of SEND provision.<sup>33,34</sup> The additional schools funding described above includes over £700 million more in 2020–21 compared with 2019–20 funding levels to support children and young people with SEND.<sup>35</sup>

## The link between finances and educational outcomes

20. There is currently only limited evidence of a link between the amount of spending by schools and educational attainment.<sup>36</sup> There are only a few research studies on English data sophisticated enough to provide robust estimates of the impact of school spending on attainment.<sup>37</sup> The weight of evidence from these studies suggests that greater school resources have a modest positive influence on attainment.<sup>38</sup> In the main, these positive effects are only found to be significant in studies examining data at the primary school level.<sup>39</sup> However, research does suggest that additional spending has more of

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<sup>31</sup> 'Supporting excellent school resource management: strategy', Department for Education, August 2018; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-excellent-school-resource-management](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-excellent-school-resource-management).

<sup>32</sup> <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/agnew-launches-rapid-feedback-school-spending-comparison-service/>

<sup>33</sup> 'News story: major review into support for children with special educational needs', Department for Education, September 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-into-support-for-children-with-special-educational-needs](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-into-support-for-children-with-special-educational-needs).

<sup>34</sup> 'DfE update: SEN futures', Council for Disabled Children, February 2019; <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/news-opinion/news/dfе-update-sen-futures>.

<sup>35</sup> 'Spending round 2019', HM Treasury, September 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-round-2019-document](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-round-2019-document).

<sup>36</sup> 'Ofsted literature review and research proposal on school funding', Ofsted, October 2018; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee).

<sup>37</sup> 'School funding and pupil outcomes: a literature review and regression analysis', Department for Education, August 2017; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-funding-and-pupil-outcomes-review](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-funding-and-pupil-outcomes-review).

<sup>38</sup> Such research defines educational attainment as test scores at GCSE or at the end of key stage 2.

<sup>39</sup> 'School funding and pupil outcomes: a literature review and regression analysis', Department for Education, August 2017; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-funding-and-pupil-outcomes-review](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-funding-and-pupil-outcomes-review); 'School funding in England since 2010 – what the key evidence tells us', National Foundation for Educational Research, January 2018; [www.nfer.ac.uk/school-funding-in-england-since-2010-what-the-key-evidence-tells-us](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/school-funding-in-england-since-2010-what-the-key-evidence-tells-us).



an impact on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.<sup>40</sup> Our literature review concluded that what seems to matter more in terms of influencing academic attainment is **how** money is spent.

21. Despite funding for schools not having kept pace with rising costs, there is no evidence of falling levels of attainment. Standards have not declined in assessments at the end of key stage 2 or for GCSEs.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test scores<sup>42</sup> for English 15-year-olds over recent PISA cycles have not changed significantly in reading and science and have significantly increased for mathematics compared with scores in 2015.<sup>43</sup>
22. Ofsted grades have also improved. The proportion of schools that are good or outstanding has increased between 2010 and 2019.<sup>44</sup>

## Ofsted's role

23. Accountability for schools is split across different bodies. In particular, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) oversees schools' finances, not Ofsted. We are working closely with the ESFA and regional schools commissioners to improve information-sharing to better help us understand the impact of finances on schools.<sup>45</sup>
24. Given that our remit does not cover regulating finances, our previous school inspection framework had little focus on schools' finances.<sup>46</sup> Specific references to finances within the grade criteria in the previous inspection handbook<sup>47</sup> were

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<sup>40</sup> 'School funding and pupil outcomes: a literature review and regression analysis', Department for Education, August 2017; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-funding-and-pupil-outcomes-review](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-funding-and-pupil-outcomes-review); 'School funding in England since 2010 – what the key evidence tells us', National Foundation for Educational Research, January 2018; [www.nfer.ac.uk/school-funding-in-england-since-2010-what-the-key-evidence-tells-us](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/school-funding-in-england-since-2010-what-the-key-evidence-tells-us).

<sup>41</sup> 'National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England, 2019 (provisional)', Department for Education, September 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-2-2019-provisional](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-2-2019-provisional); 'Guide to GCSE results for England, 2019: Ofqual's guide to the 2019 GCSE results for England', Ofqual, August 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/news/guide-to-gcse-results-for-england-2019](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/guide-to-gcse-results-for-england-2019).

<sup>42</sup> In these, the ability of 15-year-olds is tested every three years in reading, mathematics and science.

<sup>43</sup> 'PISA 2018: national report for England', Department for Education, December 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/pisa-2018-national-report-for-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pisa-2018-national-report-for-england).

<sup>44</sup> 'The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2018/19', Ofsted, January 2020; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-201819-education-childrens-services-and-skills](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-201819-education-childrens-services-and-skills).

<sup>45</sup> 'Letter from HMCI to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee', Ofsted, October 2018; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee).

<sup>46</sup> 'The common inspection framework: education, skills and early years', Ofsted, June 2015; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015).

<sup>47</sup> School inspection handbook, Ofsted, June 2015; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015).

limited to how effectively leaders used additional funding,<sup>48</sup> as well as the effectiveness of governors in discharging their core functions, which include overseeing financial performance and making sure money is well spent.

25. Likewise, the inspection handbook for our current framework refers to governors' core functions, including financial oversight, as well as the school's use of the pupil premium.<sup>49</sup>
26. However, our current inspection framework looks in more detail at how schools are meeting the needs of pupils with SEND, the workload and well-being of staff and the breadth of the curriculum. This could increase our understanding of the impacts of schools' responses to financial pressure.
27. We will be carrying out research to see whether or not it is helpful for inspectors to go into schools with some financial indicators, and what conversations with leaders, governors and trustees may help inform our judgements on leadership and management and quality of education. We will then make a decision on whether or not to include these elements in future school inspections.

## Limitations of the research

28. We sought to explore four questions through this research:
  - What are the main financial pressures schools are currently facing?
  - How are decisions made when responding to financial pressure?
  - What decisions are made?
  - What are the wider implications of the responses to financial pressure?
29. It is important to note that we invited schools to take part in a survey on financial decision-making in times of financial pressure. Therefore, headteachers who responded were self-selecting and their responses may be more representative of the experience of schools that are under greater financial pressure.
30. However, we carried out research visits to 16 schools that we selected to be broadly representative of schools in England on a range of criteria.
31. This research is focused exclusively on mainstream primary and secondary schools. The funding models for other types of provision, including alternative provision, special schools, early years and post-16 provision,<sup>50</sup> differ from that for mainstream primary and secondary schools. It was important that we could

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<sup>48</sup> Including the primary PE and sport premium and the pupil premium.

<sup>49</sup> School inspection handbook, Ofsted, May 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif).

<sup>50</sup> Secondary schools with sixth forms were included in this research, although we did not focus specifically on the funding of post-16 provision in these settings.

compare the data effectively. This does not mean that other education settings do not face financial pressure.

32. We gathered both quantitative and qualitative data to help us to answer these questions. This mixed-methods design allowed us to take a broad and a deep look at the research questions and triangulate the findings. We used a variety of methods:
  - survey of headteachers (201 complete responses received)
  - telephone interviews with headteachers (18) on particular themes
  - Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI) focus groups and reflections
  - research visits to 16 schools.
33. All the evidence that we have collected is subjective and self-reported by school staff and leaders. We did not attempt to independently verify what was reported to us.
34. For more detail on the scope and methods of our research see Appendix 1, for the survey questions that we sent to participants see Appendix 2, and for our approach and topic guides see Appendix 3.

## Findings

### The financial pressure schools are facing

35. It is clear that, for those schools experiencing financial pressure, it is a main concern for school leaders. ‘Financial pressures’ was the biggest concern of more than half of all headteachers who responded to our survey.<sup>51</sup> Almost 80% of respondents cited ‘financial pressures’ as one of their three biggest concerns.
36. Forty-two per cent of primary school headteachers and 48% of secondary school headteachers who responded to our survey predicted that their school would be in debt by the end of the 2019–20 budget year.
37. Some financial pressures have been felt by all the schools that we visited or spoke to. In particular, schools told us about rising staffing costs, including increased employer pension and national insurance contributions.<sup>52</sup>
38. Many school leaders also told us that reductions in local authority services resulting from cuts to local authority budgets, as well as increased pupil needs, have had a big impact on the financial pressure that their schools are facing.

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<sup>51</sup> Other options in our survey were ‘condition of the premises’, ‘Ofsted inspection’, ‘pupil behaviour’, ‘pupil progress’, ‘pupil well-being’, ‘staff recruitment/retention’, ‘staff workload/well-being’ and ‘other’.

<sup>52</sup> These increased staffing costs have been well documented elsewhere. See ‘Ofsted literature review and research proposal on school funding’, Ofsted, October 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/amanda-spielman-letter-to-the-public-accounts-committee).

Seventy-six per cent of primary headteachers and 58% of secondary headteachers who responded to our survey thought that reductions in local authority services had led to a 'major impact' on financial pressure in their school.<sup>53</sup>

39. School leaders described various ways in which reductions to local authority services have increased costs to their schools. One leader in a secondary school described how the school has increased how much it spends on staff with pastoral roles. The school has done this because of increased safeguarding issues among its pupils, which the leader related to decreasing capacity within the local authority around safeguarding.
40. Another secondary school has had a full-time on-site police officer, who the police force has largely paid for. However, the police force can no longer meet this cost and school leaders were considering whether the school could pay £17,000 for this service next year.

'Several [local authority] services are failing and have been for years. We are plugging gaps in the system that shouldn't exist. These have a cost. Behavioural support and mental health referrals are put through but don't go anywhere. We are concerned about some students and are putting in bespoke timetables, pastoral support, more meetings with parents. Ten to 15 years ago there would have been more liaison with the local authority and it would have been providing these services.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

'The school has had to employ a home-school inclusion officer and qualified counsellor where we would have previously had some support from the local authority... There is a higher expectation on the school from children's services at the local authority due to it having fewer services.' (Headteacher, primary school)

41. The funding that different schools receive varies widely. Schools that we spoke to in different parts of the country have been receiving different levels of funding. The introduction of the NFF, which aims to address these disparities, has caused increased financial pressure for some of the schools that we spoke to and relieved it for others. The more popular schools that we visited or spoke to have benefited financially from being full, whereas the finances of less popular schools with lower pupil numbers have been negatively affected. This is because much of the funding that schools receive is determined by pupil numbers.
42. The needs of pupils in different schools also vary widely, which has implications for the costs that different schools face. In particular, school leaders who we

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<sup>53</sup> Ninety-one per cent of primary headteachers and 87% of secondary headteachers that responded to our survey thought that reductions in local authority services had had a 'major' or a 'minor' impact on financial pressure in their school.

spoke to told us that the cost of meeting the needs of pupils with SEND exceeds the funding that they receive to do so. This especially affects schools with a high proportion of pupils with SEND or pupils with more complex needs. Leaders described an increase in the complexity and severity of the needs of pupils in mainstream schools. Some related this, in part, to a lack of capacity within special schools. They also reported decreased high-needs funding from local authorities and increased costs to schools for services needed for SEND provision, such as educational psychologist reports.

## How schools are making decisions in response to financial pressure

43. Schools have made difficult decisions in response to financial pressure. Almost all the headteachers who responded to our survey, and all of the schools that we visited, reported that their schools have made these decisions.<sup>54</sup>
44. Many schools are attempting to make informed decisions in response to financial pressure. Roughly two thirds of headteachers who responded to our survey told us that their schools have used research evidence on effective use of resources to inform their decisions. A similar proportion told us that their schools have used financial benchmarking. Schools that we talked to described using various research evidence, guidance and toolkits. For example, leaders told us that they have used research summaries and guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation<sup>55</sup> and 'curriculum-led financial planning' approaches. They told us that they have carried out a variety of informal and formal benchmarking activities, including using the DfE's and ESFA's tools.<sup>56</sup> Some school leaders pointed out that the usefulness of benchmarking data relies on the selection of genuinely comparable schools.

'The school did a huge benchmarking exercise with our statistical partners. I would seriously question the other schools in our group. It told us that we are more expensive on buildings. This building was built in 1931. Many parts are from the 1930s. We have reduced our utility costs. They are still high... That is because we are being compared with new-build academies. Of course, our premises costs are going to be higher... However, the funding is not there to renovate.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

45. Various stakeholders were involved in these decisions. Headteachers told us that they were influential in decisions, in collaboration with other stakeholders, including business managers and governors. Senior leadership teams (SLTs) were involved to varying degrees in different schools. For schools in MATs, MAT

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<sup>54</sup> Ninety-seven per cent of primary school headteachers that responded to our survey reported that they had made decisions about how to respond to financial pressures over the last two years or for the next two years; 96% of secondary school headteachers reported that they had made such decisions.

<sup>55</sup> See <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk>.

<sup>56</sup> See the Department for Education's 'Schools financial benchmarking' service <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk>.

staff and trustees were influential. For some local authority-maintained schools that had concerns raised over their financial situation, local authority staff were also influential.

46. Headteachers feel confident that those involved in this decision-making can make the best choices in the circumstances. Nearly 80% of headteachers who responded to our survey felt 'confident' or 'very confident' in the ability of those involved to make good decisions for their school in response to financial pressure. However, headteachers that we spoke to were clear that, although they felt that those involved were able to make the best decisions possible in the circumstances, these decisions are difficult. Some told us that the decisions involved weighing up the need to provide good-quality education and to meet pupils' broader needs against the need to balance the budget. One headteacher described their dilemma of choosing between being accused of being 'financially incompetent' or of 'failing children'.
47. Unsurprisingly, many of the leaders who we interviewed described how decisions were driven by the need to minimise the impact on pupils and the quality of education provided. Attainment in core subjects was the thing that headteachers in secondary schools who responded to our survey most commonly listed as their top priority when making decisions about how to respond to financial pressure. For primary schools, this was headteachers' second most commonly listed top priority, behind pupil safety.
48. Some schools also highlighted the consideration of staff morale, well-being and retention when making decisions, given that effective staff are essential to the provision of quality education. For example, one leader in a secondary school told us that the school has protected the English and mathematics departments from financial pressure because recruitment of teachers in these subjects is an issue for them: 'If a maths teacher leaves through unmanageable workload mid-year, we wouldn't be able to recruit. This has happened.'
49. Some leaders told us that spending on buildings and maintenance, as well as resources, was less of a priority than on teaching staff.
 

'The school is starting to show its age. We had a programme of redecoration, but it has had to be suspended... We feel that because pressure is so great, we can't afford to spend on anything that is not a core activity.' (Governor, primary school)
50. Schools reported that effective decision-making is hampered by uncertainty over costs and incomes, as discussed earlier. The inherent uncertainty of the government's annual funding cycle and late announcements about additional costs to schools have made it hard for many of the schools that we spoke to to predict what their future financial situation will be and to make decisions accordingly. Schools were fearful of unexpected financial pressures.

'There is no certainty from one year to the next. Therefore, we can't do long-term planning. It makes the three-year budget a work of fiction... it makes it very hand-to-mouth.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

51. We found no strong evidence that the process of making decisions in response to financial pressure is any different for schools that reported a high level of impact as a result of responses to financial pressure and schools that reported a low level of impact.
52. The type, scale and pace of actions do differ between schools under different degrees of financial pressure. Some popular schools have been able to increase the number of pupils they admit in order to reduce financial pressure. Some schools with financial reserves have been using them up and making more cautious changes rather than taking more drastic action. For example, we spoke to a headteacher at a secondary school who reported that her school was experiencing less financial pressure than others because it is very large, full and receives a lot of pupil premium funding.<sup>57</sup> She told us that one of the school's responses to the financial pressure it is experiencing has been to move support staff to term-time-only contracts. Because the school is still in the position where she has the 'luxury of not having to save every penny yet', she has been able to introduce this measure gradually, without having to force anyone to make this change, while she weighs up the impact on staff morale.
53. Schools that have experienced greater financial pressure, on the other hand, have taken action at greater pace and scale. For example, one secondary school that we visited had reduced staffing levels through two restructures in the last few years. The latest restructure affected more than 30 posts and 13 posts were entirely removed. The SLT was reduced from 10 to six staff<sup>58</sup> and there are fewer pastoral and educational support staff. The school had also reduced almost all other areas of spending.

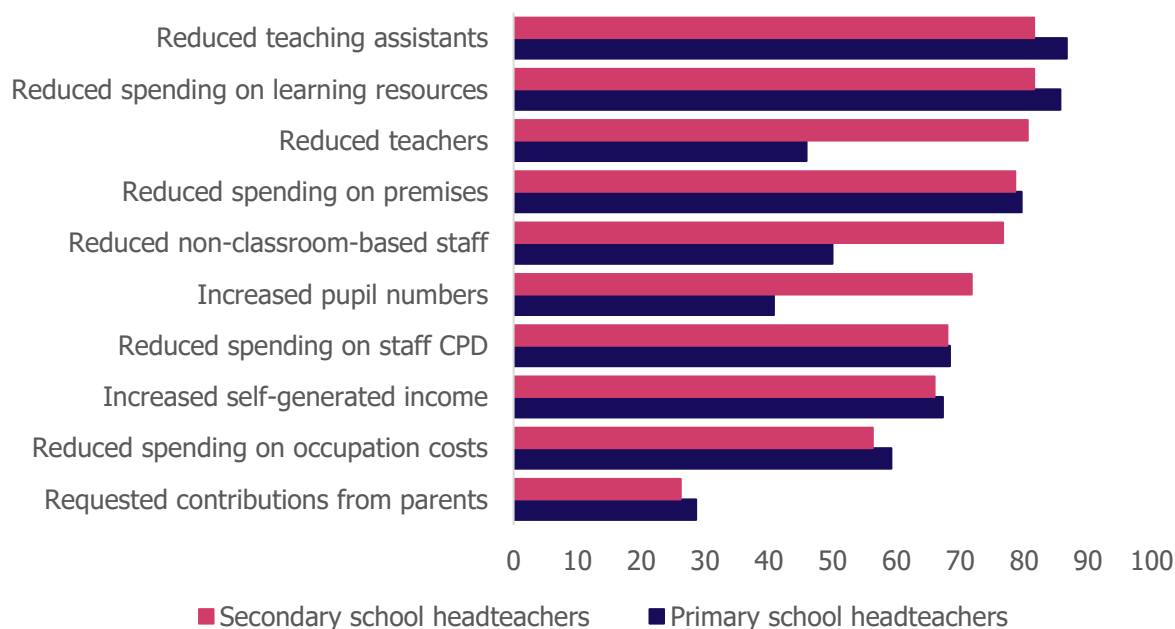
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<sup>57</sup> The pupil premium was introduced by the coalition government in 2011 to increase social mobility and reduce the gap in performance between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Schools receive funding for each disadvantaged pupil and can use the funding flexibly, in the best interests of eligible pupils.

<sup>58</sup> There is data available on changes to the ratio of pupils to senior leaders over time in the school workforce census ([www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce)) and the school census ([www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers)).

## What decisions schools are making in response to financial pressure

**Figure 2: Percentage of headteachers reporting different actions in response to financial pressure**



Percentage of headteachers who responded in our survey that their school has taken different actions in response to financial pressure in the budget years 2017–18 and 2018–19.

### Reducing spending on staff

54. When savings have been required, schools told us that staffing costs have often been the primary source because this is the largest area of spending. Schools have achieved reductions in levels of staffing by not replacing staff who have left, by reducing the hours of staff and by making redundancies.

'Staffing is the only place where savings of this scale could be made.'  
(Headteacher, secondary school)

#### Teachers

55. Reductions in spending on teachers have been delivered by the schools that we visited or spoke to in various ways. Many of them have reduced teacher numbers. Reductions in the number of teachers in response to financial pressure in the last two years were reported by:
- 46% of primary school headteachers and 81% of secondary school headteachers who responded to our survey
  - similar proportions in the schools that we visited.



56. Available data demonstrates that ratios of pupils to teachers have risen across England in both primary and secondary schools since 2010.<sup>59,60</sup> Data also shows that English schools have high ratios of pupils to teachers in comparison with other countries. However, they also have higher numbers of educational support staff.<sup>61</sup>
57. In some of the schools that we spoke to, increases in pupil numbers were part of the schools' responses to financial pressure because extra pupils bring in additional funding. Alongside this, reductions in numbers of teachers have contributed to increases in class sizes in many schools. Forty-one per cent of primary school headteachers and 91% of secondary school headteachers who responded to our survey reported that class sizes have increased because of their school's responses to financial pressure. Most of the secondary schools that we visited had shifted to fewer but larger classes in order to save money on teachers.
58. Existing research evidence suggests that increasing class sizes may not have much effect on pupil attainment<sup>62,63</sup> although it may affect teacher well-being.<sup>64,65</sup> In the schools that we visited, some staff described difficulties resulting from these larger classes because of the capacity of classrooms. Some also described how teachers were less able to offer effective support for individual pupils because of increased pupil numbers.
- 'Some quieter students get lost in a bigger classroom. It's hard for staff to get round all the students and support them.' (Teacher, secondary school)
59. Less-qualified staff were reportedly being used in some schools in order to reduce costs. In some schools that we visited, higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) were being used to cover classes when teachers were absent, rather than the school paying for teachers to cover these lessons. Staff and leaders were concerned that these HLTAs were not able to provide as high-quality teaching as qualified teachers. In a few schools, HLTAs were planning and taking classes on a regular basis. For example, in one primary school that we

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<sup>59</sup> '2019 annual report on education spending in England', Institute for Fiscal Studies, September 2019; [www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369](http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369).

<sup>60</sup> These ratios in 2018 were at the levels found in primary schools in about 2005 and in secondary schools in about 2000.

<sup>61</sup> 'The teaching and learning international survey (TALIS) 2018', Department for Education, June 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-in-primary-and-secondary-schools-talis-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-in-primary-and-secondary-schools-talis-2018).

<sup>62</sup> 'Class size and student-teacher ratio', Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, September 2018; <http://gpseducation.oecd.org/revieweducationpolicies/#!node=41720&filter=all>.

<sup>63</sup> 'Teaching and learning toolkit: an accessible summary of the international evidence on teaching 5–16-year-olds', Education Endowment Foundation; <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit>.

<sup>64</sup> 'Class size and student-teacher ratio', Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, September 2018; <http://gpseducation.oecd.org/revieweducationpolicies/#!node=41720&filter=all>.

<sup>65</sup> 'Class size and education in England evidence report', Department for Education, December 2011; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/class-size-and-education-in-england-evidence-report](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/class-size-and-education-in-england-evidence-report).

visited, cuts to teaching staff meant that an HLTA was teaching classes, including art, PE and music, every afternoon on a long-term basis. Some staff at this school thought that this was the reason that parents were choosing to move their children to a different school.

60. Staff in some schools that we visited reported that their school has been unable to afford to employ teachers of the same quality, expertise or levels of experience because of the need to cut costs. For example, in some of the secondary schools that we visited, subject specialists were not being replaced when they left. Other teachers were teaching outside their specialism, or curriculum breadth was being reduced, as a consequence. Leaders in some schools that we visited reported that they were recruiting less-experienced teachers because they were less expensive.<sup>66</sup>

‘We don’t always get the best candidate for a role. It can be based on getting what we can afford.’ (Governor, primary school)

61. Staff in many of the schools that we visited described how savings have been made through reducing spending on continuous professional development for staff including teachers, in particular on external training. Similarly, roughly two thirds of headteachers who responded to our survey said that they had reduced this area of spending in response to financial pressure in the last two years.
62. School staff and leaders told us about other ways that their schools have reduced the cost of teachers. Some have reduced spending on teachers through removing teaching and learning responsibility points (TLRs)<sup>67</sup> and through increasing the proportion of their time that teachers, including senior leaders, spend in the classroom. In some schools, the size of the SLT had been reduced through staff losses, sharing responsibilities across the remaining staff and sharing staff across schools.

### *Teaching assistants*

63. Most of the schools that we visited or that responded to our survey had reduced teaching assistant (TA) numbers. Reductions in the number of TAs in response to financial pressure in the last two years were reported by:
- 87% of primary school headteachers and 82% of secondary school headteachers who responded to our survey
  - the majority of the schools that we visited.
64. In contrast to these reports, rising pupil to TA ratios are apparent in national data for secondary schools, but not for primary schools. This ratio has risen in

<sup>66</sup> Some of these schools noted that reductions in teacher numbers and hiring of less expensive staff are related to difficulties in teacher recruitment and retention as well as financial pressure.

<sup>67</sup> TLR payments reward additional leadership and management responsibilities carried out by classroom teachers.

secondary schools since 2011 but has continued to fall in primary schools up to November 2018.<sup>68,69</sup> We note that England has more educational support staff and administrative staff per teacher than in most other OECD countries.<sup>70</sup> Also, increases in these areas of spending have accounted for the largest proportion of increased spending since 2002–03.<sup>71</sup>

65. Reductions in spending on TAs have been made in the schools that we visited in various ways. For example, some have increased the workload of remaining TAs and teachers and some have stopped or reduced some of the tasks that TAs had been doing. In some of the primary schools that we visited, TAs were providing less general classroom support. Some of the schools had reduced out-of-class interventions that TAs were providing for pupils needing extra support, including (but not limited to) pupils with SEND.
66. Research has found that the way TAs are typically deployed and used, under everyday conditions, is not leading to improvements in academic outcomes.<sup>72</sup> In particular, on the basis of this research, the Education Endowment Foundation recommended that TAs should not be used as an informal teaching resource for low-attaining pupils. It also recommended that TAs should be used to deliver high-quality one-to-one and small-group support using structured, evidence-based interventions. Therefore, cuts to numbers of TAs will have more of an impact on pupils' attainment when these staff have been used effectively to boost attainment.
67. Existing research is thin on the impact of TAs on non-academic outcomes. However, some staff who we talked to reported that reductions in numbers of TAs have had negative impacts in this area. Some described remaining TAs having less capacity to build relationships with pupils and uncover and deal with pupils' 'barriers to learning', including problems at home and emotional issues.
68. School staff reported negative impacts of reduced numbers of TAs on teachers. There is evidence that TAs ease teachers' workloads and stress.<sup>73</sup> School staff

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<sup>68</sup> '2019 annual report on education spending in England', Institute for Fiscal Studies, September 2019; [www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369](http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369).

<sup>69</sup> This discrepancy between the findings from our survey and nationally available data may reflect that some of the reductions in numbers of TAs in the primary schools that responded to our survey have happened very recently or that headteachers in schools that have made such reductions would have been more likely to respond to our survey.

<sup>70</sup> 'The teaching and learning international survey (TALIS) 2018', Department for Education, June 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-in-primary-and-secondary-schools-talis-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-in-primary-and-secondary-schools-talis-2018).

<sup>71</sup> 'Understanding school revenue expenditure – part 1: why do we need another study on school funding?', Education Policy Institute, September 2019; <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/understanding-school-revenue-expenditure-part-1>.

<sup>72</sup> 'Making best use of teaching assistants', Education Endowment Foundation, November 2016; <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/making-best-use-of-teaching-assistants>.

<sup>73</sup> 'Making best use of teaching assistants', Education Endowment Foundation, November 2016; <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/making-best-use-of-teaching-assistants>.

who we talked to described how reductions in the numbers of TAs and pastoral staff have meant that teachers have taken on more work. This includes taking on more responsibility for pastoral support and administrative tasks. Staff also described how teachers are having to cater for a wider range of needs in the classroom when TAs had helped to cater for particular pupils with SEND or other needs.

‘The lack of support staff means longer hours, more demands on planning for a wider variety of needs and delivery, and more stress to manage the difference in needs.’ (Teacher, secondary school)

### *Other staff*

69. Schools have also reduced spending on other staff. Many of the headteachers who responded to our survey had reduced spending on non-classroom-based staff in the last two years in response to financial pressure. Some of the schools that we visited had reduced spending on these staff, including lunchtime supervisors and catering, administration, ICT and site staff, by reallocating the work to other staff, including teachers and TAs.

### **Making changes to SEND provision**

70. Most schools told us that they have made changes to their SEND provision because of financial pressure:
- Eighty per cent of primary headteachers and 72% of secondary headteachers who responded to our survey reported that their school has made changes to the way it meets the needs of pupils with SEND because of financial pressure.<sup>74</sup>
  - Most of the schools that we visited have also made these sort of changes.
  - We also held telephone interviews with some headteachers who told us in their survey response that their school had made ‘major’ changes to its SEND provision.
71. Some of the schools that we visited or spoke to have moved away from a ‘one-to-one’ model, whereby a TA stays with an individual pupil with high needs all day. However, some of the headteachers in schools that had done this told us that they had made these changes, at least in part, in order to improve provision. Guidance stemming from the review of research evidence discussed above supports moving away from a one-to-one model.<sup>75</sup> However, these

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<sup>74</sup> Forty-one per cent of primary school headteachers and 27% of secondary school headteachers who responded to our survey reported that these were ‘major changes’.

<sup>75</sup> The Education Endowment Foundation’s overview of existing research concluded that TAs spend the majority of their time in an informal instructional role supporting pupils with the most need. It concluded that schools needed to break away from a model where TAs are assigned to specific pupils for long periods in favour of more strategic approaches to classroom organisation. ‘Making best use of

changes in the schools that we visited or spoke to were also influenced by the need to cut staffing costs. In some schools, headteachers told us that intended improvements to provision through moving away from this model have been compromised by financial pressure. For example, one primary school headteacher said that the changes were 'going further and deeper than we planned'.

72. There was a discrepancy between the views of different staff in some schools that we visited about the impact of this move away from a one-to-one model on pupils. Although leaders in these particular schools felt that interventions by educational support staff were more targeted and of better quality, other staff felt that provision for these pupils had been reduced rather than improved. For example, in one secondary school that we visited, the headteacher told us that he did not want 'TAs glued to the side of a child' because he thought it was neither effective for the pupils nor financially viable. In the same school, another member of staff pointed out that the number of TAs working with pupils with SEND had been more than halved and that the remaining staff could not 'give the kids the attention they really need'.
73. As described above, some of the schools that we visited or spoke to are providing fewer or less regular out-of-class interventions to pupils with SEND.

'We used to provide, about two years ago, specialist interventions for [children with SEND], academic and social. The school has a good track record on [the progress of pupils with SEND]. We put that down to high-quality targeted intervention. As staffing has reduced, we can't provide this to the same extent.' (Headteacher, primary school)

74. The amount of expert support for pupils with SEND has been reduced in some schools. Some schools reported that they have decreased their use of external services, such as educational psychology, behavioural support and alternative provision, because they cannot afford them. Some reported that special educational needs and disabilities coordinators (SENDCos) have less capacity to manage SEND provision in their schools because their other workload has increased as a result of staff losses.

'The SENDCo has a 100% teaching commitment. Evidence collection is down to teachers in class. Provision is untouched. There is a vague trial-and-error approach as the SENDCo is teaching her own class and has not got time to observe.'<sup>76</sup> (Teacher, primary school)

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teaching assistants', Education Endowment Foundation, October 2019; <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/making-best-use-of-teaching-assistants>.

<sup>76</sup> This contradicts guidance in the SEND code of practice. See paragraphs 6.90 and 6.91 in 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years', Department for Education and

75. Some secondary schools that we visited or spoke to are focusing support for pupils with SEND on core subjects or grouping pupils with SEND together more, in order to manage provision with fewer TAs. For example, one secondary school has created a 'one class nurture group' with increased staffing, with pupils with SEND concentrated in this group.<sup>77</sup>
76. Staff and leaders in many of the schools that we spoke to told us about increased expectations of class teachers from leaders to meet the needs of pupils with SEND within the classroom, through high-quality teaching and differentiation. This has reportedly had implications for teachers' workloads.

'It is about the workload of teachers. We are looking at quality-first teaching. There is an increase in teacher workload to meet children's needs. TA losses have been picked up by teachers and SLT. We are really quite stretched.' (Headteacher, primary school)

'I'm not criticising our school. Cutting money will have consequences. The bottom set in Year 9 has 29 kids – their needs are huge. My registration sheet is five sides long with all their individual needs. I am on my own. I attempt to differentiate.' (Teacher, secondary school)

77. School staff and leaders who we spoke to commonly reported that pupils with SEND, and predominantly pupils with SEN support rather than those with education, health and care plans (EHCPs),<sup>78</sup> have been particularly negatively affected by schools' responses to financial pressure.<sup>79,80</sup>

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Department for Health, January 2015; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25).

<sup>77</sup> Evidence suggests that setting and streaming has a very small negative impact on attainment for low and mid-range attaining learners. See 'Toolkit: setting or streaming', Education Endowment Foundation, undated; <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/setting-or-streaming/#closeSignup>.

<sup>78</sup> There are two categories of support for pupils with SEND, which broadly reflect their level of need. At January 2019, 21% of pupils with SEND had legally enforceable entitlements to specific packages of support, set out in EHCPs. These are children whom local authorities have assessed as needing the most support. Nearly half attended mainstream schools. 79% of pupils with SEND did not have EHCPs but had been identified as needing some additional support at school ('SEN support'). The vast majority of these children attended mainstream schools. See 'Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in England', National Audit Office, September 2019; [www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities](http://www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities).

<sup>79</sup> This mirrors the findings in the recent National Audit Office report. 'Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in England', National Audit Office, September 2019; [www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities](http://www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities).

<sup>80</sup> There is some evidence that too many children and young people are identified as SEND support when their difficulties arise from a lack of school-readiness, gaps in 'early help' provision from health and social care services and/or weaknesses in the curriculum and teaching in schools. See 'The special educational needs and disabilities review: a statement is not enough', Ofsted, September 2010; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-and-disability-review](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-and-disability-review). We are currently exploring this issue further through a forthcoming research project on how the needs of children and young people with SEND are being met in mainstream schools.

'[Pupils who receive SEN support] don't get as much support as we would like. [They suffer] as opposed to [pupils with] EHCPs because they have a written document and extra funding.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

'Children with significant needs: because of that level of need, we have to find the resources from elsewhere to support them in the class and keep them safe. Some children would blend in in the class but are struggling although they are not near an EHCP.' (Headteacher, primary school)

## Reducing curriculum breadth and extra-curricular activities

78. Responses to financial pressure in some schools that we visited, or that responded to our survey, have reportedly led to reduced curriculum breadth:
- This was more commonly reported in the secondary schools that we visited.
  - Similarly, 44% of primary school headteachers and 67% of secondary school headteachers who responded to our survey reported that responses to financial pressure over the last two years have led to some reduction in curriculum breadth in their schools.<sup>81</sup>
79. For primary schools, the subjects that these headteachers most commonly told us had suffered were computing, music, design and technology, art and design, and languages. For secondary schools, these were design and technology, languages, citizenship, music and computing.
80. Those interviewed did identify other drivers for this reduction in curriculum breadth, including Ofsted and the wider accountability system and difficulties in teacher recruitment. However, interviewees who talked to us about reduced curriculum breadth were clear that this was, at least in part, the result of responses to financial pressure.
81. These reductions to curriculum breadth in some of the secondary schools that we visited and interviewed headteachers from were apparent in the subjects taught in key stage 3 and in the breadth of GCSE subject choices. For example, one secondary school headteacher told us that she was making cuts to music and having to deliver it in key stage 3 through 'drop-down days' rather than regular lessons on the timetable. These reported reductions in curriculum breadth enabled financial savings through losses of specialist staff and through not running options with small groups. In some schools, staff also raised concerns about non-specialist teachers delivering particular subjects as a result of the loss of specialist teachers.
82. Staff in some of the secondary schools that we visited and spoke to reported reductions in the extent to which vocational options and alternative provision

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<sup>81</sup> Thirty-five per cent of primary school headteachers reported a 'minor impact' and 9% reported a 'major impact' on curriculum breadth as a result of responses to financial pressures in the last two years; 45% of secondary school headteachers reported a 'minor impact' and 22% reported a 'major impact'.

were available. Leaders in these schools told us that this sort of provision was increasingly unaffordable.

'We have got rid of vocational courses at key stage 4. A small number of pupils accessed the vocational courses, but they were important for them. We have a traditional key stage 4 route and those pupils who would have accessed vocational courses are now in a traditional curriculum when they might be more suited to more vocational subjects... We have had to withdraw vocational education because it was expensive.' (Teacher, secondary school)

'The local authority used to part-fund alternative provision. This often resulted in avoiding permanent exclusions. The local authority said it would keep that money for post-permanent exclusions. Therefore, alternative provision is almost unbearably expensive... Some pupils in the past would have had alternative provision but now the lack of alternative provision has resulted in at least two permanent exclusions because the school "diet" didn't meet their needs.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

83. Staff in some schools that we visited described how the number and quality of trips had decreased as a result of financial pressure. Others reported that the provision of extra-curricular clubs and activities had reduced. This had reportedly happened both because these schools are less able to pay for or subsidise the cost of these clubs and because staff are less willing or able to run them due to increased workload.

'We have had to cut the number of experiences that we have been able to provide for a very disadvantaged cohort. The lack of trips reduces pupils' experiences and limits their understanding.' (Headteacher, primary school)

### **Reducing spending on school facilities and resources**

84. The majority of schools that responded to our survey or that we visited reported that they have reduced spending on learning resources, IT, buildings, maintenance and occupation costs.

'We are constantly patching things up rather than doing things properly – this feels unsustainable. There are parts of the roof that are more repair than roof.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

'We have reduced the spending on learning resources from £30K to £5K. All subject leaders now have to beg for the resources for their areas of responsibility.' (MAT staff member, primary school)

85. Some staff and leaders, including most of the headteachers who responded to our survey, thought that facilities have deteriorated in quality as a result of responses to financial pressure. In the schools that we visited, staff and leaders described facilities that are increasingly inadequate or in a poor state of repair as a result of these responses. They talked about maintenance spending having



become 'reactive' and about issues such as leaking roofs, rotting windows and ageing IT systems.

86. Data gathered through a government programme to assess the condition of England's schools estate corroborates these reports. This data reveals that roughly one in five schools in England have been judged by surveyors to be in need of some immediate repairs or replacements to their buildings.<sup>82</sup>
87. Nearly nine out of 10 headteachers who responded to our survey thought that responses to financial pressures in their school had resulted in deterioration in the quality of IT equipment and systems.

### **Generating additional income**

88. Schools told us that they have not only made cost-saving decisions but have also increased their income. Some schools have generated additional income from increasing pupil numbers, although this is an option only available to more popular schools. Some schools have also increased their self-generated income, for example by securing grants, increasing lettings, asking for contributions from parents and by senior staff doing consultancy or other work to bring in income.
89. Some of these options are more achievable for schools in some contexts than others. For example, the headteacher of a primary school that we visited in a deprived area described how 'parents here are not able to prop up the budget' and the funds raised from lettings of school facilities are minimal. Some headteachers questioned whether it is right to ask parents, whether or not they can afford it, to contribute financially to the day-to-day running of schools.

### **The implications of responses to financial pressure**

90. The degree of financial pressure felt by schools has differed, as has the nature and scale of different schools' responses and the degree of impact resulting from these responses. Notably, the levels of reported impact in our survey were higher for secondary schools than for primary schools. This reflects the greater financial pressure on secondary schools over recent years.<sup>83</sup>
91. We found that school leaders have not attempted to carefully monitor the impacts of their responses to financial pressure. The decisions that schools have made have reportedly often had complex consequences. School decision-makers must predict, mitigate against and monitor these consequences. In our discussions with school leaders, it was clear that they have not tried to monitor these carefully, beyond reference to progress and attainment data and

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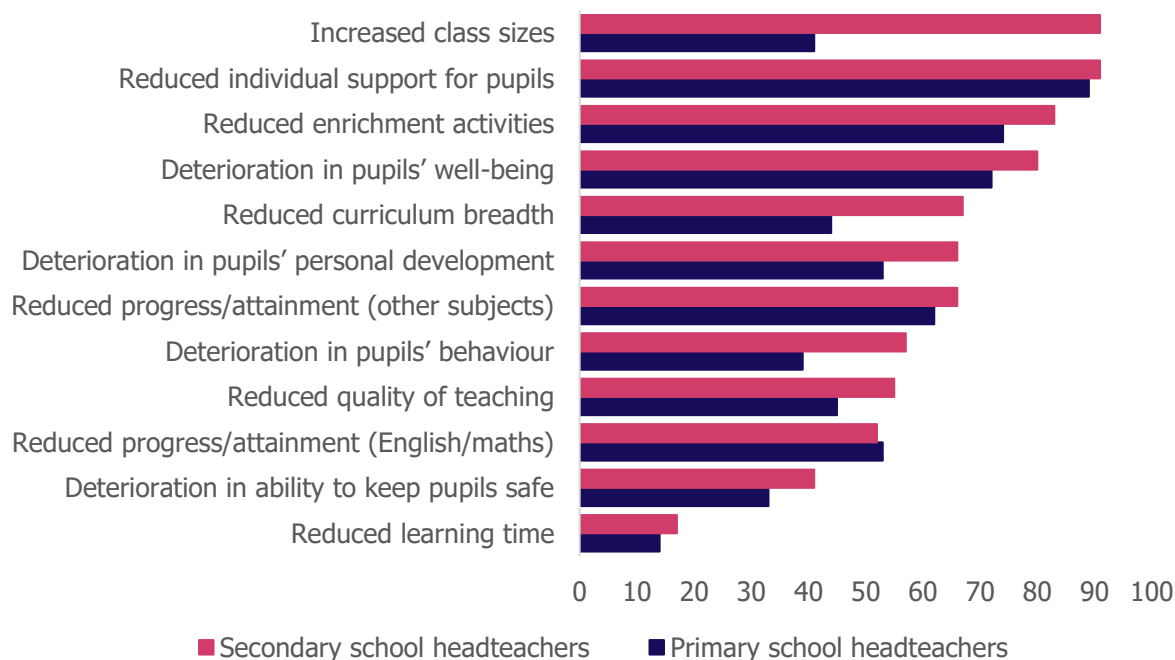
<sup>82</sup> Frances Perraudin, 'Revealed: one in five school buildings in England require urgent repairs', in 'The Guardian', 8 December 2019; [www.theguardian.com/education/2019/dec/08/revealed-one-in-five-school-buildings-in-england-require-urgent-repairs](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/dec/08/revealed-one-in-five-school-buildings-in-england-require-urgent-repairs).

<sup>83</sup> '2019 annual report on education spending in England', Institute for Fiscal Studies, September 2019; [www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369](http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14369).

occasional reference to surveys of pupils, parents and staff. Please read our findings on the perceptions of school leaders and staff on the implications of responses to financial pressure with this in mind.

## Pupils

**Figure 3: Percentage of headteachers reporting different impacts on pupils from responses to financial pressure**



Percentage of headteachers who responded to our survey who thought that responses to financial pressures over the budget years 2017–18 and 2018–19 have had various impacts on pupils.

### *Academic attainment and progress*

92. School leaders who responded to our survey had mixed views on whether their schools' responses to financial pressure have had an impact on pupils' academic progress and attainment. The majority of these headteachers thought that these responses had had no such impact or only a minor impact on progress and attainment in English and mathematics.<sup>84</sup> These views are in line with the lack of evidence of falling levels of attainment across English schools, discussed in ['the link between finances and educational outcomes'](#) section of this report. More headteachers who responded to our survey thought that their school's responses to financial pressure had had an impact on pupils' progress and attainment in other subjects.

<sup>84</sup> Forty-six per cent of secondary headteachers reported that there had been no such impact, with 34% reporting a 'minor impact' and 18% reporting a 'major impact'. For primary headteachers, these figures were 43%, 37% and 16% respectively.

93. Some headteachers who we spoke to had seen reductions in academic progress and attainment data and thought that these reductions were related to their school's responses to financial pressure.

'It is relentless doing more with less. I have had to take time off. It was towards Christmas, with the realisation that I couldn't maintain provision and that there was going to be an impact on [pupils' progress and attainment] in Year[s] 5 and 6.' (Headteacher, primary school)

94. Some headteachers had not seen these reductions or had seen improvements in academic progress and attainment data. These leaders proposed various explanations for this lack of observed impact. Some thought that other factors, including staff working harder and changes in leadership driving up standards, were mitigating the impact of responses to financial pressure on progress and attainment. Other headteachers thought that an impact might become apparent in the future.

'I inherited a school with very poor academic standards. Standards are improving, but because of the leadership. But the finances don't help. We would be making more rapid progress.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

'I see no evidence that funding is affecting the quality of education yet... and it is a big yet. The effect of the cuts is not being seen now. However, it is affecting teacher retention, morale and workload which has a lagged effect. This is the chronic disease. What is happening? Teachers and support staff are doing more, people are rising to the challenge, but this is not sustainable.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

95. School staff and leaders we interviewed across the majority of the schools that we visited frequently reported that staff have worked hard to mitigate the impact of responses to financial pressure on pupils.
96. Those who we interviewed did not commonly describe prioritisation of test and exam scores in core subjects when making decisions about their schools' responses to financial pressure. However, this was evident in headteachers' survey responses (see paragraph 47 in the ['How schools are making decisions in response to financial pressure'](#) section of this report).
97. School leaders were often cautious in claiming that actions they have taken in response to financial pressure are causally related to trends in progress and attainment data. For some, this was because these responses have only been implemented recently, so may not have had time to impact on progress and attainment. Others noted that other factors may have been influential.

'We have a fluctuating P8 measure.<sup>85</sup> This is not helped by larger class sizes, by removing Year 7 interventions or reduced support for SEND, but other factors such as gender imbalance may be playing a part.'  
(Headteacher, secondary school)

### *Quality of teaching*

98. School leaders and staff had mixed views on whether their schools' responses to financial pressure have had an impact on the quality of teaching that their pupils were experiencing:

- About half of the headteachers who responded to our survey thought that their schools' responses have led to some reduction in the quality of teaching.<sup>86</sup>
- Staff and leaders in many of the schools that we visited told us that their responses have led to changes that may have reduced teaching quality.

99. In some of the schools that we visited, staff reported that the capacity of teaching staff to teach well has been reduced because of increased workloads resulting from staffing reductions.

'The finances here are secure because the staff are doing so much, and not managing to do everything they need to do. This impacts on the quality of education.'  
(Deputy headteacher, primary school)

100. Pupils have reportedly experienced less continuity of teaching staff as a consequence of staffing reductions in some schools, for various reasons. These reasons include:

- increased teacher absence, which some leaders related to increased workloads and stress
- senior leaders, who have increased the amount of teaching they do, being called out of the classroom to perform their leadership roles
- reduced numbers of teachers, leading to reduced timetabling flexibility and more split classes.

'If teachers are stressed and off sick, then this has an impact in terms of pupils' continuity of learning. Pupils in the lower school have been covered quite a lot.'  
(Headteacher, secondary school)

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<sup>85</sup> Progress 8 is an indicator of school performance, which aims to capture the progress that pupils in a school make from the end of primary school to the end of key stage 4. See 'Secondary accountability measures: guide', Department for Education, March 2014; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure).

<sup>86</sup> Thirty-four per cent of primary school headteachers who responded to our survey thought that their school's responses to financial pressures over the last two years have led to a 'minor impact' on quality of teaching, while 11% thought these had led to a 'major impact'. For secondary school headteachers, these figures are 41% and 15% respectively.

101. There has reportedly been less support around teaching quality from senior staff and from continuous professional development in some schools. Senior and middle leaders' workloads are said to have increased as a result of responses to financial pressure. In particular, this has been because of staffing cuts to the SLT or because senior leaders have taken on more teaching when teaching staff have been cut. This has meant that they have had less time to devote to supporting teachers through, for example, line management, observation and monitoring, training and 'team teaching'.

'We need to provide more leadership capacity to raise standards higher... There has been an impact on pupils as senior leaders are doing less monitoring and less associated training.' (Governor, primary school)

'In relation to teaching staff, this has a serious impact as they are not observed frequently enough or sufficiently well. So, they do not receive the feedback they need to develop professionally. [Senior leaders] are required to be elsewhere – if members of staff are on a support plan, the plans are written, but the support plans are not implemented effectively. This prevents some staff from developing the skills they need to perform well.' (Teacher, primary school)

'Time for support and help has been vastly reduced. This means staff have less time to be reflective about their own practice and how they want to develop their areas.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

102. The qualifications or levels of experience of those teaching has reportedly been reduced in some schools in order to reduce staffing costs (see paragraphs 59 to 60 in the ['Reducing spending on staff'](#) section of this report).
103. Staff in some schools reported that a lack of sufficient facilities and learning resources has limited how teachers can teach.

'For some GCSE core practicals, the pupils have to look at a video of others doing the experiment. "Look at the rich kids playing with the kit". It makes them feel second rate.' (Teacher, secondary school)

#### *Meeting pupils' broader needs*

104. School leaders and staff told us that decisions made in response to financial pressure are having an impact on pupils' broader educational experience. They told us about narrowed curriculums, reductions in learning resources to enrich lessons and reduced extra-curricular activities. In particular, nearly four out of five of all the headteachers who responded to our survey reported that responses to financial pressure over the last two years have led to reductions in enrichment activities for pupils.

'We can no longer afford the really nice experiences. These children will never get this experience otherwise in their lives.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

105. School leaders and staff also told us that decisions made in response to financial pressure have reduced their schools' ability to meet pupils' broader needs. Those who we interviewed commonly described how these responses, in particular staffing reductions, have meant that their school is less able to meet pupils' pastoral, social, emotional and behavioural needs. Many of the headteachers who responded to our survey similarly reported that their schools' responses to financial pressure have led to broader impacts on pupils. For example, roughly three quarters of all the headteachers who responded to our survey reported that responses to financial pressure over the last two years have led to reductions in pupils' well-being.

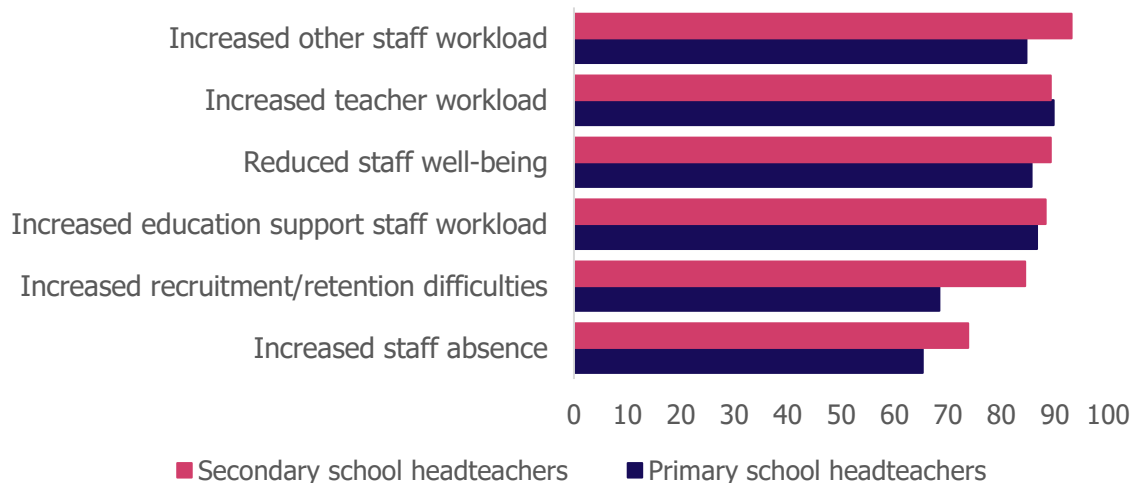
'[Pupils with SEND] do not make as much progress – not just from the academic side but from a social and emotional perspective. The pupils have emotional needs that are not identified by teachers and not picked up and dealt with. The pupils suffer. Previously, more TAs supported [pupils with SEND]. This has reduced and has a negative impact on [pupils with SEND] and the other pupils because, due to their needs not being met, their behaviour deteriorates and this distracts all pupils from learning.' (SENDCo, primary school)

'We had non-teaching support roles to do with community outreach and responsibility points to mentor students. We had to remove these. The school has lost capacity to go the extra mile. We are having to focus on providing a core for everyone.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

'This is a challenging school in which to work: over half the cohort are disadvantaged and many speak English as a second language. We need high levels of staffing to support and manage the pupils. When these levels are reduced, pupils find things more difficult, behaviours can become more challenging and this can have an impact on staff well-being and attendance.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

## Staff

**Figure 4: Percentage of headteachers reporting different impacts on staff from responses to financial pressures**



Percentage of headteachers who responded to our survey who thought that responses to financial pressures over the budget years 2017–18 and 2018–19 have had various impacts on staff.

106. Interviewees described increased teacher workload in the schools that we visited as a major impact of responses to financial pressure. However, we also asked interviewees about other factors that they thought have contributed to increasing workloads. Other factors that interviewees identified include:
- externally driven changes, such as changes to curriculums and assessment
  - pressure from the accountability system to achieve academic results
  - additional work resulting from reduced services outside of schools and increased needs among pupils and their families.
107. Similarly, more than half of the headteachers who responded to our survey reported that financial pressure has had a 'major impact' on staff workload, for all categories of staff in both primary and secondary schools. Most headteachers reported some impact on workload, for all staff groups.
108. Staff and leaders, in particular in all of the secondary schools that we visited, described an increased volume of work for teachers resulting from responses to financial pressure. This has meant, for example, larger class sizes, less support from other staff or more contact time. They told us that these changes have affected the volume of many aspects of teachers' workloads, including planning, marking and time spent at parents' evenings.
109. Increased SLT workload, in particular, was reported as a consequence of responses to financial pressure by interviewees in the majority of the schools that we visited. Some senior leaders are evidently under a lot of pressure. These increases in their workloads related to staff losses, both among the SLT and more broadly, and the need for them to take on additional work as a result,

including more teaching. These increases also related, in some cases, to senior leaders, and headteachers in particular, taking on additional work outside the school in order to bring in extra income for the school. This additional work included working across more than one school, consultancy work and working as Ofsted Inspectors. It also covered the considerable work involved in planning and implementing responses to financial pressure.

‘Since losing the other assistant headteacher at Christmas, we are all doing a 12-hour day every day at school and then having to catch up on other work at home. This has a serious impact on our well-being, but we remain committed to the school and just want to do the best for the pupils.’ (Deputy headteacher, primary school)

110. In the majority of the schools that we visited, interviewees described increased workloads for educational support staff and other staff. Interviewees described educational support staff working outside their contracted hours and taking on tasks from staff who had left and not been replaced.

111. Staff and leaders in nearly all the schools that we visited and who responded to our survey reported an impact on staff well-being.<sup>87,88</sup>

‘Because of increased workload, they are knackered. They don’t have the breaks they should. They work beyond their hours. It is stressful. It is emotionally draining.’ (SENDCo, secondary school)

‘We know that staff are under more pressures. Staff are absent more often. In back-to-work interviews, stress is mentioned more often. This has meant more referrals to occupational health.’ (Senior leader, secondary school)

112. Although many school staff and leaders reported to us that responses to financial pressure have had a negative effect on teachers’ workloads, other evidence suggests that workloads seem to be reducing. A survey for the DfE revealed that teachers reported working fewer hours in 2019 than they did in 2016.<sup>89</sup>

113. In schools that have had redundancy processes, or where there has been fear of redundancies, staff and leaders highlighted the harm caused to staff well-being.

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<sup>87</sup> We have published a detailed report on teacher well-being, ‘Teacher well-being at work in schools and further education providers’, Ofsted, July 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-well-being-at-work-in-schools-and-further-education-providers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-well-being-at-work-in-schools-and-further-education-providers).

<sup>88</sup> Eighty-six per cent of primary school headteachers and 89% of secondary school headteachers who responded to our survey reported that responses to financial pressures over the last two years have led to reduced staff well-being. Thirty-seven per cent of primary school headteachers and 50% of secondary school headteachers reported that this was a ‘major impact’.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Teacher workload survey 2019: research report’, Department for Education, October 2019; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-workload-survey-2019](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-workload-survey-2019).



'TAs are in constant fear of it all happening again. If there are any performance management processes, they fear it will end up with a judgement on their capacity.' (Teacher, secondary school)

114. Some highlighted the demoralising effect of staff feeling that they are not able to do as good a job for pupils as they used to be able to or feel they ought to.

'[Staff] are less able to meet pupils' needs possibly, which adds more pressure. It doesn't sit well that they are not doing it to the best of their ability.' (Senior leader, secondary school)

115. Some school staff and leaders who we talked to or who responded to our survey thought that responses to financial pressure have led to increased levels of staff absence. More than two thirds of headteachers who responded to our survey thought that their school's responses to financial pressure in the last two years have had an impact on staff absence.

116. Some staff and leaders also thought that responses to financial pressure have affected staff retention. Some of those interviewed in the schools that we visited thought that the decisions of some staff to leave the school, or to reduce their hours, have been influenced by their school's responses to financial pressure. However, interviewees also acknowledged other pressures on staff retention. Roughly three quarters of headteachers who responded to our survey thought that their school's responses to financial pressure in the last two years have had an impact on staff recruitment and retention.

'To plug the gaps, teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders are working 60- to 70-hour weeks. We are now seeing good people leaving the profession.' (Headteacher, secondary school)

'The support for those who find it difficult is not always there, meaning they continue to find it hard, don't improve and then sometimes leave. This creates a vicious circle. We [senior leaders] do try to identify staff who need coaching, but the feedback cycle often slips owing to our other commitments.' (Deputy headteacher, primary school)

117. Some leaders in the schools that we visited questioned the ability of staff to sustain the quality of their provision under the pressure that they are currently experiencing.

'I feel that we are doing the best we can with what is available to us and maintaining the standards. However, in the future it comes down to sustainability. If teachers can work for the long term with the additional stress and pressures they are under, then it is sustainable, but I don't think they can. I don't think they should have to.' (Headteacher, primary school)

## What we are doing next

118. This study has clearly shown that there are schools that are feeling the pressure of cuts to their own funding and rising costs over recent years. In addition, they are impacted by cuts to local authority budgets and services.
119. We welcome the government's commitment to increase funding for schools by £7.1 billion by 2022–23. However, even if this meets schools' immediate needs, shortfalls in local authority funding will continue to affect them.
120. The research showed that, although there was a lot of evidence of schools making well-thought-through decisions using research evidence and financial benchmarking, this was not always the case. We saw some schools making poor decisions that had an unnecessary impact on quality of education.
121. The financial health of schools and MATs is not itself within Ofsted's remit. This is the responsibility of the ESFA. However, we are concerned about any decisions that adversely affect quality of education.
122. For this reason, we will be carrying out research to see whether or not it is helpful for inspectors to go into schools with some financial indicators, and what conversations with leaders, governors and trustees may help inform our judgements on leadership and management and quality of education. We will then make a decision on whether or not to include these elements in future school inspections.

## Appendix 1: Scope and methods

### Research questions and scope

This research is focused exclusively on mainstream primary and secondary schools. The funding models differ for other types of provision, including alternative provision, special schools, early years and post-16 provision. It was important that we could compare the data effectively. This does not mean that other education settings do not face financial pressure.

We sought to explore four research questions:

- What are the main financial pressures schools are currently facing?
- How are decisions made when responding to financial pressure?
- What decisions are made?
- What are the wider implications of the responses to financial pressure?

### Methods

We gathered both quantitative and qualitative data to help us to answer these questions. This mixed-methods design allowed us to take a broad and a deep look at the research questions and triangulate the findings. We used a variety of methods:

- survey for schools
- telephone interviews with headteachers
- HMI focus groups and reflections
- research visits to 16 schools.

### Survey for schools

We sent a survey to headteachers at 750 nationally representative primary schools and 750 nationally representative secondary schools. Secondary schools were over-represented in the sample due to the greater reported financial issues in secondary schools.

The survey aimed to collect quantitative data on the questions above to provide a broad picture across the country. This information was used to inform subsequent qualitative data collection methods.

We received 98 responses from primary school headteachers and 103 responses from secondary school headteachers.

### Telephone interviews with headteachers

After analysis of the survey data, we carried out telephone interviews with respondents on two key themes identified through this analysis. We interviewed headteachers who identified particularly high or low levels of impact as a result of

responses to financial pressure. We wanted to understand whether schools at either end of this spectrum were experiencing different financial pressures, making decisions differently or making different decisions. In addition, we wanted to understand the range of impacts that schools are experiencing. We also interviewed headteachers who reported that their school has made major changes to SEND provision in response to financial pressure because so many headteachers reported that this was the case.

We interviewed:

- four headteachers who had reported high impact as a result of financial pressure
- four headteachers who had reported low impact as a result of financial pressure
- 10 headteachers who had reported major changes to SEND provision in response to financial pressure.

We created a variable to order schools who responded to the survey along a spectrum of reported impact. Schools selected for the high and low impact interviews were those closest to either end of this spectrum. There was an even split between primary and secondary schools.

Schools selected for follow-up interviews regarding major changes to SEND provision in response to financial pressure had responded with 'Yes – major changes' to the question 'Since the start of the 2017–18 budget year, has your school made changes to the way it meets the needs of pupils with SEND because of financial pressures?' The sample selected were representative in terms of Ofsted grades and whether schools were academies or local authority-maintained schools. There was an even split between primary and secondary schools.

Schools selected for follow-up interviews had consented to further involvement in the research at the time of completing the survey.

### **HMI focus groups**

We held three focus groups with HMI to seek their insights into:

- whether inspections pick up on schools' decisions around responding to financial pressure and the impacts of financial pressure
- why this is the case
- what these decisions and impacts are.

After completing the research visits, HMI who did the fieldwork provided reflections on each visit on whether the information gathered during the visit would have potentially impacted a judgement had it been an inspection.

## Research visits

The purpose of the research visits was to explore the four research questions in depth through collecting more detailed qualitative data in a variety of contexts.

We identified variables known, through available research, to affect financial pressure. We created a hierarchy of variables to ensure those most pertinent were fairly represented.<sup>90</sup> The sample includes:

- eight primary and eight secondary schools
- schools broadly representative of Ofsted grades
- one inner, outer and fringe London school
- local authority-maintained schools and academies
- schools from each of the income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI)<sup>91</sup>, SEN support and EHCP quintiles
- secondary schools with and without sixth forms
- schools classified as both urban and rural
- a range of school sizes (ranging in size from fewer than 100 pupils to over 1,000)
- a range of progress scores.

Research visits lasted one day and interviews or focus groups were carried out with a variety of individuals within the school, including:

- headteachers
- senior leaders
- school business managers
- teachers
- SENDCos
- educational support staff
- governors or trust board members
- MAT staff.

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<sup>90</sup> The primary variables stipulated that the sample needed to be nationally representative of Ofsted grades, urban and rural contexts, academy and local authority-maintained schools and a representative of each SEND quintile. Secondary variables included: IDACI quintiles, a spread of progress scores, free school meals quintiles, London/non-London schools, a variety of sizes and schools with sixth forms.

<sup>91</sup> For state-funded schools, the deprivation of a provider is based on the mean of the IDACI deprivation indices associated with the home postcodes of the pupils attending the school. See 'Data view guidance', Ofsted, December 2015; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploring-ofsted-inspection-data-with-data-view](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploring-ofsted-inspection-data-with-data-view).

We asked headteachers in the sample to complete the survey and take part in a discussion before the visit. We did this in order to identify the 'key actions' that the school had taken in response to its financial situation that we would focus on during the visits. We defined 'key actions' as those decisions made and already implemented by the school, in response to its financial situation, which have had the most significant impact on the school's financial situation, rather than those actions which have had the greatest impact on pupils, staff, facilities and resources.

We used the visits to understand the 'causal chain', as understood by school staff and leaders, from financial situation to impacts. To understand this causal chain, and the contribution of the financial situation to particular impacts, we asked interviewees to:

- identify other factors that may have contributed to the decision to take a particular action
- identify other factors, other than the actions taken, that may have influenced impacts.

When analysing this qualitative data, we were mindful of these other factors that may have influenced decisions and impacts when drawing conclusions about the reported causal links between financial pressure and impacts.

### **Limitations of the methodology**

The first limitation of this research is that respondents to the survey were self-selecting. Although we sent the survey out to 750 representative primary and 750 representative secondary schools, headteachers were under no obligation to respond.

Second, all the evidence we have collected was subjective and self-reported through the survey, focus groups and interviews. We did not attempt to independently verify what was reported to us.

## Appendix 2: School funding

### About this questionnaire

Dear respondent

Ofsted's Research and Evaluation Team is carrying out a research project into school funding which aims to:

- identify the financial pressures that schools are facing
- understand what decisions schools are making and how they are making them, in response to financial pressures
- understand the impact of responses to financial pressures holistically, both to date and in the future.

As part of this research, we have sent this questionnaire to a sample of 750 representative primary and 750 representative secondary schools across England. This questionnaire will provide us with an overview of how schools in general are responding to financial pressures and the impacts of these responses. The questionnaire focusses on responses over the previous two budget years and planned responses over the next two budget years. This is because we think that respondents will be able to answer questions accurately for these timeframes. This information will allow us to identify emerging themes to explore through subsequent qualitative research, including case study visits to selected schools who are willing to participate.

We would be grateful if you, as headteacher, could complete this questionnaire. It should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. We do not envisage that you will have to look anything up in order to complete it.

The questionnaire is anonymous, although you have the option to provide us with contact details should your school be willing to take part in further qualitative research. The data gathered through this research will not inform Ofsted's future inspection of your school. We hope that you will feel able to answer the questions honestly.

You are under no obligation to take part. Please tick the appropriate box at the end of the privacy notice to inform us of your consent to us processing and sharing your information.

We follow the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research: [www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018](http://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018).

If you experience technical issues completing the questionnaire, please contact [Research\\_Questionnaires@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:Research_Questionnaires@ofsted.gov.uk). Your email should include 'School funding research project' in the subject line.

## **Privacy statement**

### **What we do with your information**

The legal basis for processing your personal information is Article 6(1) (a) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), if you have given consent to the processing of your personal data for one or more specific purposes.

Any information you provide will be used for the purposes of the school funding research project only and will not be linked to inspection of your school or any other purpose.

We will only use the information we record for the purposes of the research to compile and prepare a report or commentary. We will use your personal data only if you have given consent for us to do so.

We will not publish any information that identifies individuals or schools by name and will endeavour to ensure that information is not reported in such a way that might make it possible to identify schools or individuals.

### **How we get information**

If you have agreed to take part in this research project, we will only use personal data that you have given to us directly. We will not use any other sources to obtain information about individuals. Examples of the sorts of information we will ask you for include:

- personal opinions on your school's decision-making processes in responding to financial pressures
- personal opinions on the impact of responses to financial pressures.

We are using a third-party system, SmartSurvey, to carry out this questionnaire. Any personal information you submit as part of this questionnaire will be stored and processed for a short period of time by SmartSurvey. SmartSurvey will not use participant responses for its own purposes. Ofsted will collect submitted information. While it is held by SmartSurvey, it will be protected in line with its privacy policy: [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/privacy-policy](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/privacy-policy).

By continuing with this survey, you consent to the transfer of your information from SmartSurvey to Ofsted for the purposes of the school funding research.

### **How long we keep your personal data**

We will keep information that is relevant to the research project for 18 months. All data will be destroyed or anonymised within 18 months of receipt.



## What are your rights?

Your participation in this research is voluntary: you have the right to choose not to take part in the research project or to withdraw consent at any time. Please contact [Research\\_Questionnaires@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:Research_Questionnaires@ofsted.gov.uk) if you want to withdraw your consent.

For information about your rights and how to get in touch with us about the information we hold, view the Ofsted personal information charter.

You have the right to enquire about or request a copy of the personal information we have about you. You can also ask us to delete information that we hold about you and, in some circumstances, we must then do so. This is known as the right to erasure.

Our data protection officer (DPO) is Neil Greenwood, Director, Digital & Information. The DPO is responsible for independent advice and monitoring how Ofsted uses personal information. You can contact Ofsted about any of your rights, or to address any concerns the DPO, at the following addresses:

Email: [informationrequest@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:informationrequest@ofsted.gov.uk)

Post:

Information Rights and Access team  
Ofsted  
2 Rivergate  
Temple Quay  
Bristol  
BS1 6EH

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if you are not happy with the way we have processed your personal information. The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Helpline number: 0303 123 1113

## Survey questions

[\* = compulsory question]

1. I consent to Ofsted using information given by me in this online questionnaire for the purpose of the school funding research:\*

- Yes – go to question 2
- No – respondent is directed out of the survey

## Characteristics of your school

2. Is your school an academy (including free schools) or local authority maintained?\*

- Academy
- Local authority maintained

3. Is your school primary or secondary phase?\*

- Primary (including 'infant', 'junior' and 'lower' schools) – go to question 4
- Secondary (including 'all-through' schools and 'middle' schools) – go to question 33

4. Is your school in a rural or an urban area?

- Rural
- Urban

5. How many pupils are there currently in your school?

- 0–149
- 150–199
- 200–299
- 300–399
- 400+

6. What percentage of pupils in your school is currently eligible for free school meals?

- 0–4.9%
- 5–7.9%
- 8–12.9%

- 13–20.9%
- 21%+

7. What percentage of pupils in your school have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (or a statement of SEN)?

- 0–0.49%
- 0.5–0.99%
- 1–1.49%
- 1.5–1.99%
- 2%+

8. What percentage of pupils in your school is 'SEN support'?

- 0–6.9%
- 7–9.9%
- 10–12.9%
- 13–16.9%
- 17%+

9. What is your school's latest Ofsted rating?

- Inadequate
- Requires improvement
- Good
- Outstanding

### Your biggest concerns as a headteacher

10. What are your biggest concerns as a headteacher? (Please rank up to five of your biggest concerns, with '1' being the most important concern.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Condition of the premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum/assessment changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial pressures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ofsted inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	1	2	3	4	5
Pupil well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff recruitment/retention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff workload/well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please 'rank' and then specify in the comment box below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

### Your school's financial situation

Academies have financial years running from September to August while maintained schools have financial years running from April to March. When we use the term 'budget year' in this questionnaire, this refers to whichever definition of financial year your school is using.

11. Did your school have a cumulative deficit/are you predicting a cumulative deficit in the following budget years:\*

	Yes	No
2017/18?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2018/19?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2019/20?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2020/21?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Did your school have an in-year expenditure exceeding income/are you predicting an in-year expenditure exceeding income in the following budget years:\*

	Yes	No
2017/18?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2018/19?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2019/20?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2020/21?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. What impact do you think the ongoing introduction of the National Funding Formula will have for your school?\*

- Very negative
- Negative
- Neither negative nor positive

- Positive
- Very positive

14. What impact have reductions in local authority services had on financial pressures in your school?\*

- No impact
- Minor impact
- Major impact
- Not sure

### How your school has made decisions on how to respond to financial pressures

15. Has your school made any decisions about how to respond to financial pressures over the last two budget years (2017/18 and 2018/19) or for the next two budget years (2019/20 and 2020/21)?\*

- Yes – go to question 16
- No – go to question 30

16. Who has been the most influential in these decisions about how to respond to financial pressures? (Please rank up to five that have been involved, with '1' being the most influential.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Board of directors/trustees (for academies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education and Skills Funding Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governing board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headteacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local governing board (for schools in multi-academy trusts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multi-academy trust CEO (for schools in multi-academy trusts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional schools commissioner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School business manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior leadership team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please 'rank' and then specify in the comment box below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

17. How confident are you in the ability of those involved (including yourself) to make good decisions for your school in response to financial pressures?\*

- Not confident
- Somewhat confident
- Confident
- Very confident

18. What information has been most significant in informing these decisions about how to respond to financial pressures? (Please rank up to five that have been significant, with '1' being the most significant.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Financial benchmarking against other schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial 'health checks' for schools from external suppliers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance from the local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance from the multi-academy trust (for academies in multi-academy trusts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perceptions of what parents will support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perceptions of what staff will support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research evidence on effective use of resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School resource management guidance from central government (for example, toolkits and guidance documents)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What you know about how other schools are responding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please 'rank' and then specify in the comment box below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

19. Has your school used either of the following? The Department for Education's 'deals for schools', for things your school regularly buys. A 'framework agreement' set up by the local authority or other body in its procurement.\*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

20. What has your school prioritised when making decisions about how to respond to financial pressures? (Please rank up to five of the most relevant, with '1' being the most prioritised.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Attainment in core subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breadth of the curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extra-curricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion of pupils with additional needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parental satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reversibility of changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School physical environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please 'rank' and then specify in the comment box below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

### How your school has responded to financial pressures

21. Over the 2017/18 and 2018/19 budget years, what actions has your school taken to respond to financial pressures (through increasing income or reducing expenditure)? Indicate as many as apply.\*

	Yes	No	Not sure
Reduced teachers (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced teaching assistants (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced teaching assistants' salaries (re-grading)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced non-classroom-based staff (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No	Not sure
Reduced spending on premises maintenance and improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced spending on occupation costs (including water, energy costs, insurance and catering costs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced spending on learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced spending on bought-in professional services (professional services, consultancy and advice to staff and governors purchased from the local authority or an external party)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced spending on continuous professional development for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced total weekly teaching hours for pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased total pupil numbers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requested voluntary contributions from parents for mainstream activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased self-generated income (for example, from hiring out school facilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

[If 'Reduced total weekly teaching hours for pupils' is 'Yes' – go to question 22, else – go to question 23.]

22. How much learning time have pupils lost per week on average?\*

Hours

Minutes

### What impact responses to financial pressures have had in your school

23. Over the budget years 2017/18 and 2018/19, do you think that financial pressures have had a negative impact in your school?\*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

24. Over the budget years 2017/18 and 2018/19, what impact do you think responses to financial pressures have had on pupils in your school? Rate how significant this impact is.\*



	No impact	Minor impact	Major impact	Not sure
Deterioration in pupils' behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in pupils' personal development (including preparation for the next stage and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in pupils' progress and attainment in other subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in pupils' well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in the school's ability to keep pupils safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased class sizes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced curriculum breadth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced enrichment activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced individual support for students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced learning time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced quality of teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

[If 'Reduced curriculum breadth' is 'Minor Impact' or 'Major Impact' – go to question 25, else – go to question 26.]

25. In which subjects have pupils experienced losses in curriculum breadth? (Choose as many as relevant.)\*

- Art and design
- Computing
- Design and technology
- English
- Geography
- History
- Languages
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical education

- Religious education
- Science
- Other (please specify in a few words):

26. Since the start of the 2017/18 budget year, has your school made changes to the way it uses pupil premium funding in response to financial pressures?\*

- No
- Yes – minor changes
- Yes – major changes

27. Since the start of the 2017/18 budget year, has your school made changes to the way it meets the needs of pupils with SEND because of financial pressures?\*

- No
- Yes – minor changes
- Yes – major changes

28. Over the budget years 2017/18 and 2018/19, what impact do you think responses to financial pressures have had on staff in your school?\*

	No impact	Minor impact	Major impact	Not sure
Increased difficulties in staff recruitment and retention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased teacher workload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased education support staff workload (including teaching assistants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased other staff workload (including administrative, maintenance and catering staff)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased staff absence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced staff well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

29. Over the budget years 2017/18 and 2018/19, what impact have responses to financial pressures had on facilities and resources in your school?\*

	No impact	Minor impact	Major impact	Not sure
Deterioration in the quality of the physical school environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in the quality of learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in the quality of IT equipment/systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased financial risks posed by delayed spending on facilities and resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

### How your school plans to respond to financial pressures in the future

30. Over the budget years 2019/20 and 2020/21, does your school plan to take further actions (beyond any already taken in 2017/18 and 2018/19) to respond to financial pressures? If, for example, you plan further reductions in teaching assistants (full-time equivalent), beyond the reductions already made in 2017/18 and 2018/19, you should answer 'yes'.\*

- Yes – go to question 31
- No – go to question 63
- Not sure – go to question 31

31. Over the budget years 2019/20 and 2020/21, what further actions does your school plan to take to respond to financial pressures? Indicate as many as apply.\*

	Yes	No	Not sure
Reduce teachers (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce teaching assistants (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce teaching assistants' salaries (re-grading)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce non-classroom-based staff (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce spending on premises maintenance and improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce spending on occupation costs (including water, energy costs, insurance and catering costs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce spending on learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce spending on bought-in professional services (professional services, consultancy and advice to staff and governors purchased from the local authority or an external party)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No	Not sure
Reduce spending on continuous professional development for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce total weekly teaching hours for pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase total pupil numbers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Request voluntary contributions from parents for mainstream activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase self-generated income (for example, from hiring out school facilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

[If 'Reduce total weekly teaching hours for pupils' is 'Yes' – go to question 32, else – go to question 63.]

32. How much learning time will pupils lose per week on average?\*

Hours

Minutes

End of 'Primary' route. [Respondents are now directed to question 63.]

### Characteristics of your school

33. Does your school have a sixth form?

Yes

No

34. Is your school in a rural or an urban area?

Rural

Urban

35. How many pupils are there currently in your school?

0–599

600–849

850–999

1000–1299

1300+

36. What percentage of pupils in your school is currently eligible for free school meals?

- 0–4.9%
- 5–7.9%
- 8–12.9%
- 13–20.9%
- 21%+

37. What percentage of pupils in your school have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (or a statement of SEN)?

- 0–0.49%
- 0.5–0.99%
- 1–1.49%
- 1.5–2.49%
- 2.5%+

38. What percentage of pupils in your school is 'SEN support'?

- 0–6.9%
- 7–8.9%
- 9–11.9%
- 12–15.99%
- 16%+

39. What is your school's latest Ofsted rating?

- Inadequate
- Requires improvement
- Good
- Outstanding

### Your biggest concerns as a headteacher

40. What are your biggest concerns as a headteacher? (Please rank up to five of your biggest concerns, with '1' being the most important concern.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Condition of the premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum/assessment changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial pressures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ofsted inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff recruitment/retention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff workload/well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please 'rank' and then specify in the comment box below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

### Your school's financial situation

Academies have financial years running from September to August while maintained schools have financial years running from April to March. When we use the term 'budget year' in this questionnaire, this refers to whichever definition of financial year your school is using.

41. Did your school have a cumulative deficit/are you predicting a cumulative deficit in the following budget years:\*

	Yes	No
2017/18?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2018/19?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2019/20?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2020/21?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

42. Did your school have an in-year expenditure exceeding income/are you predicting an in-year expenditure exceeding income in the following budget years:\*

	Yes	No
2017/18?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2018/19?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2019/20?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2020/21?    Yes    No  
   

43. What impact do you think the ongoing introduction of the National Funding Formula will have for your school?\*

- Very negative
- Negative
- Neither negative nor positive
- Positive
- Very positive

44. What impact have reductions in local authority services had on financial pressures in your school?\*

- No impact
- Minor impact
- Major impact
- Not sure

**How your school has made decisions on how to respond to financial pressures**

45. Has your school made any decisions about how to respond to financial pressures over the last two budget years (2017/18 and 2018/19) or for the next two budget years (2019/20 and 2020/21)?\*

- Yes – go to question 46
- No – go to question 60

46. Who has been the most influential in these decisions about how to respond to financial pressures? (Please rank up to five that have been involved, with '1' being the most influential.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Board of directors/trustees (for academies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education and Skills Funding Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governing board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headteacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	1	2	3	4	5
Local governing board (for schools in multi-academy trusts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multi-academy trust CEO (for schools in multi academy trusts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional schools commissioner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School business manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior leadership team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please 'rank' and then specify in the comment box below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

47. How confident are you in the ability of those involved (including yourself) to make good decisions for your school in response to financial pressures?\*

- Not confident
- Somewhat confident
- Confident
- Very confident

48. What information has been most significant in informing these decisions about how to respond to financial pressures? (Please rank up to five that have been significant, with '1' being the most significant.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Financial benchmarking against other schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial 'health checks' for schools from external suppliers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance from the local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance from the multi-academy trust (for academies in multi-academy trusts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perceptions of what parents will support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perceptions of what staff will support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research evidence on effective use of resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School resource management guidance from central government (for example, toolkits and guidance documents)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



	1	2	3	4	5
What you know about how other schools are responding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please 'rank' and then specify in the comment box below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

49. Has your school used either of the following? The Department for Education's 'deals for schools', for things your school regularly buys. A 'framework agreement' set up by the local authority or other body in its procurement.\*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

50. What has your school prioritised when making decisions about how to respond to financial pressures? (Please rank up to five of the most relevant, with '1' being the most prioritised.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Attainment in core subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breadth of the curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extra-curricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion of pupils with additional needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parental satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reversibility of changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School physical environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please 'rank' and then specify in the comment box below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

## How your school has responded to financial pressures

51. Over the 2017/18 and 2018/19 budget years, what actions has your school taken to respond to financial pressures (through increasing income or reducing expenditure)? Indicate as many as apply.\*

	Yes	No	Not sure
Reduced teachers (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced teaching assistants (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced teaching assistants' salaries (re-grading)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced non-classroom-based staff (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced spending on premises maintenance and improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced spending on occupation costs (including water, energy costs, insurance and catering costs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced spending on learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced spending on bought-in professional services (professional services, consultancy and advice to staff and governors purchased from the local authority or an external party)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced spending on continuous professional development for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced total weekly teaching hours for pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased total pupil numbers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requested voluntary contributions from parents for mainstream activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased self-generated income (for example, from hiring out school facilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

[If 'Reduced total weekly teaching hours for pupils' is 'Yes' – go to question 52, else – go to question 53.]

52. How much learning time have pupils lost per week on average?\*

Hours

Minutes

## What impact responses to financial pressures have had in your school

53. Over the budget years 2017/18 and 2018/19, do you think that financial pressures have had a negative impact in your school?\*

- Yes  
 No  
 Not sure

54. Over the budget years 2017/18 and 2018/19, what impact do you think responses to financial pressures have had on pupils in your school? Rate how significant this impact is.\*

	No impact	Minor impact	Major impact	Not sure
Deterioration in pupils' behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in pupils' personal development (including preparation for the next stage and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in pupils' progress and attainment in other subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in pupils' well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in the school's ability to keep pupils safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased class sizes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced curriculum breadth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced enrichment activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced individual support for students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced learning time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced quality of teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

[If 'Reduced curriculum breadth' is 'Minor Impact' or 'Major Impact' – go to question 55, else – go to question 56.]

55. In which subjects have pupils experienced losses in curriculum breadth? (Choose as many as relevant.)\*

- Art and design
- Computing
- Design and technology
- English
- Geography
- History
- Languages
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical education
- Religious education
- Science
- Citizenship
- Sex and relationships education
- Other (please specify in a few words):

56. Since the start of the 2017/18 budget year, has your school made changes to the way it uses pupil premium funding in response to financial pressures?\*

- No
- Yes – minor changes
- Yes – major changes

57. Since the start of the 2017/18 budget year, has your school made changes to the way it meets the needs of pupils with SEND because of financial pressures?\*

- No
- Yes – minor changes
- Yes – major changes

58. Over the budget years 2017/18 and 2018/19, what impact do you think responses to financial pressures have had on staff in your school?\*

	No impact	Minor impact	Major impact	Not sure
Increased difficulties in staff recruitment and retention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased teacher workload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	No impact	Minor impact	Major impact	Not sure
Increased education support staff workload (including teaching assistants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased other staff workload (including administrative, maintenance and catering staff)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased staff absence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced staff well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

59. Over the budget years 2017/18 and 2018/19, what impact have responses to financial pressures had on facilities and resources in your school?\*

	No impact	Minor impact	Major impact	Not sure
Deterioration in the quality of the physical school environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in the quality of learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deterioration in the quality of IT equipment/systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased financial risks posed by delayed spending on facilities and resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words)

### How your school plans to respond to financial pressures in the future

60. Over the budget years 2019/20 and 2020/21, does your school plan to take further actions (beyond any already taken in 2017/18 and 2018/19) to respond to financial pressures? If, for example, you plan further reductions in teaching assistants (full-time equivalent), beyond the reductions already made in 2017/18 and 2018/19, you should answer 'yes'.\*

- Yes – go to question 61
- No – go to question 63
- Not sure – go to question 61

61. Over the budget years 2019/20 and 2020/21, what further actions does your school plan to take to respond to financial pressures? Indicate as many as apply.\*

	Yes	No	Not sure
Reduce teachers (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce teaching assistants (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce teaching assistants' salaries (re-grading)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce non-classroom-based staff (full-time equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce spending on premises maintenance and improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce spending on occupation costs (including water, energy costs, insurance and catering costs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce spending on learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce spending on bought-in professional services (professional services, consultancy and advice to staff and governors purchased from the local authority or an external party)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce spending on continuous professional development for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce total weekly teaching hours for pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase total pupil numbers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Request voluntary contributions from parents for mainstream activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase self-generated income (for example, from hiring out school facilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify in a few words):

[If 'Reduce total weekly teaching hours for pupils' is 'Yes' – go to question 62, else – go to question 63.]

62. How much learning time will pupils lose per week on average?\*

Hours

Minutes

### Further involvement

From the data that you have provided so far, we are unable to identify you or your school. However, as part of this research, we are planning to carry out some follow-up telephone calls and some visits to schools. This qualitative research would build on what you have already told us through responding to this questionnaire.

63. Would you be happy for us to contact you to request that you take part in further qualitative research?

- Yes – go to question 64
- No – end of questionnaire

### Contact details

64. Please provide us with your contact details so we can discuss our research further with you.

Your name:	<input type="text"/>
Your school's name:	<input type="text"/>
Your school's postcode:	<input type="text"/>
Your telephone number:	<input type="text"/>
Your e-mail address:	<input type="text"/>

## Appendix 3: Funding project school visits – approach and topic guides

### Aims

To explore the four research questions **in depth** in a sample of schools:

1. What are the main financial pressures schools are currently facing?
2. How are decisions made when responding to financial pressures?
3. What decisions are made?
4. What are the wider implications of the responses to financial pressures?

### Approach

We will identify **key actions** taken in response to the school's financial situation that we want to focus on in the visit (through looking at the questionnaire response and through discussion with the head). We are defining 'key actions' as those decisions made and already implemented by the school, in response to their financial situation, which have had the most significant impact on the school's financial situation (for example, savings made/income generated/scale of deficits), rather than those actions which have had the greatest impact on pupils, staff and facilities and resources.

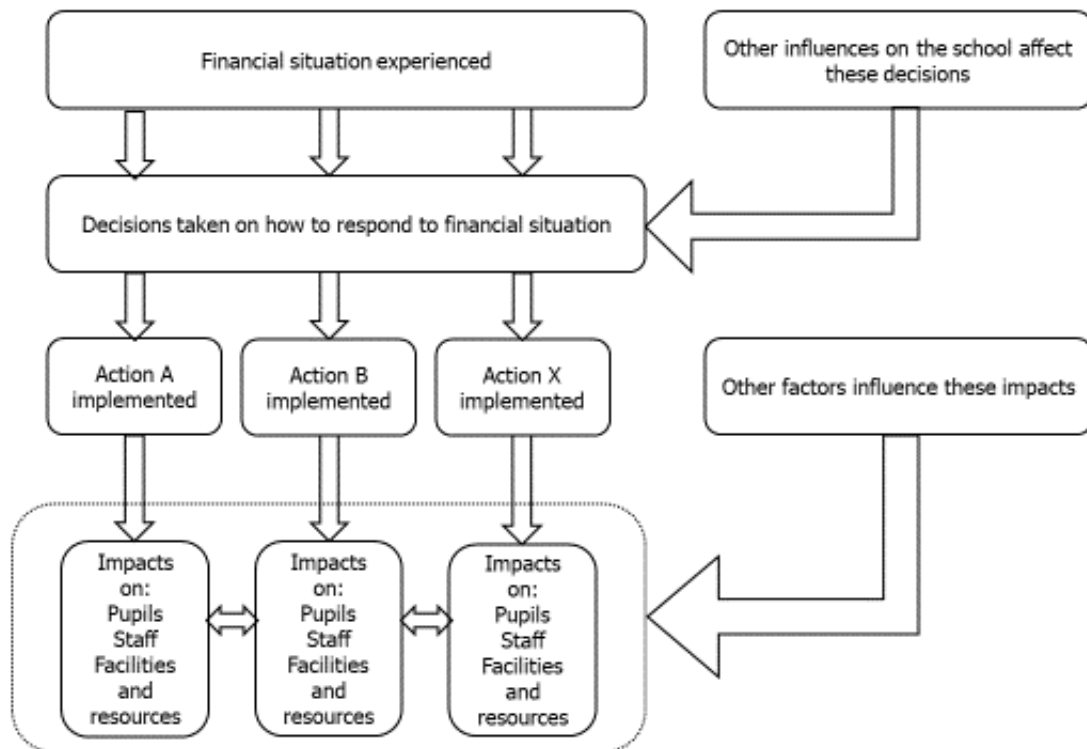
We will explain that we want, through the visit, to understand the '**causal chain**' from financial situation to impacts (financial situation → decision taken in response to financial situation → action implemented → impacts). We need, as much as possible, to identify impacts that can be attributed (at least in part) to actions taken in response to the financial situation. In order to understand this causal chain, and the contribution of the financial situation to particular impacts, we need to:

- identify **other** factors (in addition to the financial situation) that may have contributed to the decision to take a particular action (for example, curriculum narrowing may be in response to financial pressures as well as being influenced by pressures on schools to perform well in core subjects)
- identify **other** factors, other than the actions taken, that may have influenced impacts (e.g. increased difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers may be caused by various factors, including – but not limited to – actions taken in response to financial pressures).

Beyond the impacts resulting from particular key actions taken in response to the school's financial situation, there may be impacts resulting from all actions in combination. We will explore the causal chains around particular actions, but we will also be alert to the impact of all actions in combination.



**Figure 5: Flowchart showing the causal chain of the impact of financial pressures on schools**



The questionnaire (for consistency) defines carefully what time periods questions about decisions and impacts are being asked. Through these school visits, we can be more flexible about the timeframe we are talking about (for example, if a decision was taken in 2016/17 that the school identifies was in response to financial pressures and which the school is keen to explore through the visit, then we can do so (even though this is outside the timeframe explored through the questionnaire) – we do not need to be strictly limited to particular timeframes.

When interviewing different stakeholders, the tailored topic guides should be used. For example, when interviewing teachers and TAs, the topic guide focuses on the implementation and impact questions because these staff will not have been particularly involved in the decision-making process. Similarly, when interviewing individuals from the local authority or MAT, these interviewees may not be well placed to answer questions about implementation and impact, and the topic guide for this group reflects that.

### Key to questions

\* = Only ask contingent on questionnaire response

\*\* = Route for where participant identifies that there have been impacts in the impact area

\*\*\* = Route for where participant identifies that there have not been impacts in the impact area

## Topic guide – headteacher

### Introduction

Ofsted’s Research and Evaluation Team is carrying out a research project into school funding which aims to:

- identify the financial pressures that schools are facing
- understand what decisions schools are making and how they are making them, in response to financial pressures
- understand the impact of responses to financial pressures holistically, both to date and in the future.

We are visiting this school in order to gather detailed qualitative data to help us in this research. This school has been selected as one which fits our sampling criteria, which seeks to have a broad range of schools within the sample.

We have agreed, in discussion with yourself, the key actions that your school has taken in response to its financial situation which this interview will focus on. Confirm the actions (taken in response to the financial situation) that will be focused on in this visit, which should have been agreed during the set-up telephone call. You will have the opportunity to tell us about other actions and their impacts as well.

This research will **not** inform Ofsted’s inspection of this school.

All the information we collect will be anonymised and no schools or participants will be mentioned by name. The information you provide will feed into a published report in the autumn.

Thank you for completing a consent form. You can withdraw your consent at any time.

We envisage this interview/focus group lasting for up to an hour and a half. I will go through a series of scripted questions.

The interviewer should review all information already provided in the questionnaire before the visit and interview with the head, to inform how he/she probes the head’s responses.

### The financial context of the school

**Q FC 1** How long have you been at this school/been headteacher at this school?

**Q FC 2** Has your school experienced financial pressure over the last few years? If so, how much?

Prompt for the degree of financial pressure, for example, level of savings required or timescale

**Q FC 3** What are the major factors (as you understand them) determining the financial situation of this school (rather than schools in general)?

**Q FC 4** What impact do you think the ongoing introduction of the National Funding Formula will have for your school?

**Q FC 5** [\*If the head identified in the questionnaire that reductions in local authority services have had an impact on financial pressures in the school.] Please can you describe what these reductions in local authority services are? How have reductions in local authority services had an impact on financial pressures in the school?

## Questions around key actions

**Q Key Actions 1** Please briefly describe the agreed key actions.

Prompt for:  
dates around implementation  
scale of action

**Q Key Actions 2** What were the financial pressures/drivers that the school was experiencing which led to the key actions?

Prompt for scale of financial pressures/drivers  
Prompt for whether these were different for the two key actions

**Q Key Actions 3** Did any other pressures/drivers that the school was experiencing (other than financial) influence decisions around the key actions?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 4** How were the decisions to implement the key actions made?

Prompt for:  
Who was influential?  
Differences between the key actions

**Q Key Actions 5** What sources of information were useful in making these decisions?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 6** Why were these particular actions chosen, instead of other actions, in response to the financial situation?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 7** How confident are you in the ability of those involved (including yourself) to make good/optimal decisions for your school in response to its financial situation? Why?

**Q Key Actions 8** Have the key actions had any impact on pupils? [If the head says yes, move to Q Key Actions 9. If the head says no, move on to Q Key Actions 13.]

**Q Key Actions 9** \*\*Please could you describe these impacts?

Prompt for impacts on different groups of pupils  
Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 10** \*\*How have key actions led/contributed to these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 11** \*\*What evidence is there of the impacts on pupils?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 12** \*\*Have any other factors (other than the key actions) influenced these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 13** \*\*\*Why not?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 14** Have key actions had any impact on staff? [If the head says yes, move to Q Key Actions 15. If the head says no, move on to Q Key Actions 19.]

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 15** \*\*Please could you describe these impacts?

Prompt for impacts on different groups of staff  
Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 16** \*\*How have key actions led/contributed to these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 17** \*\*What evidence is there of these impacts on staff?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 18** \*\*Have any other factors (other than key actions) influenced these impacts on staff?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 19** \*\*\*Why not?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 20** Have key actions had any impact on facilities and resources? [If the head says yes, move to Q Key Actions 21. If the head says no, move on to Q Key Actions 25.]

**Q Key Actions 21** \*\*Please could you describe these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 22** \*\*How have key actions led/contributed to these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 23** \*\*What evidence is there of these impacts on facilities and resources?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 24** \*\*Have any other factors (other than key actions) influenced these impacts on facilities and resources?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 25** \*\*\*Why not?

Prompt for both key actions

## Questions around all actions

**Q All Actions 1** Beyond the impacts we have talked about resulting from **specific key** actions taken in response to the school's financial situation, are there any *other* impacts resulting from all actions taken in response to the school's financial situation? [If yes, move on to Q All Actions 2. If no, move on to Q Overall Perception 1.]

**Q All Actions 2** \*\*Please could you describe these impacts and how the actions have had these impacts?

Prompt for impacts on different groups of pupils/staff.

**Q All Actions 3** \*\*Have any other factors influenced these actions or their impacts?

## Overall perception of impact

**Q Overall Perception 1** What is your overall perception of the financial situation of your school and the impact of this on the quality of education your school can provide now and going forwards?

## **Topic guide – those able to talk about decision-making but not implementation and impact (probably governors/trust board/LA/MAT staff)**

### **Introduction**

Ofsted's Research and Evaluation Team is carrying out a research project into school funding which aims to:

- identify the financial pressures that schools are facing
- understand what decisions schools are making and how they are making them, in response to financial pressures
- understand the impact of responses to financial pressures holistically, both to date and in the future.

We are visiting this school in order to gather detailed qualitative data to help us in this research. This school has been selected as one which fits our sampling criteria, which seeks to have a broad range of schools within the sample.

We have agreed, in discussion with the headteacher, the key actions that your school has taken in response to its financial situation which this interview will focus on. These are 'A' and 'B'. You will have the opportunity to tell us about other actions and their impacts as well.

This research will not inform Ofsted's inspection of this school.

All the information we collect will be anonymised and no schools or participants will be mentioned by name. The information you provide will feed into a published report in the autumn.

Thank you for completing a consent form. You can withdraw your consent at any time.

We envisage this interview/focus group lasting for up to an hour. I will go through a series of scripted questions.

### **The financial context of the school**

**Q FC 1** Has your school experienced financial pressure over the last few years? If so, how much?

Prompt for the degree of financial pressure, i.e. level of savings required, timescale

**Q FC 2** What are the major factors (as you understand them) determining the financial situation of this school (rather than schools in general).

## Questions around key actions

Describe what the two agreed key actions are.

**Q Key Actions 1** What were the financial pressures/drivers that the school was experiencing which led to the key actions?

Prompt for scale of financial pressures/drivers  
 Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 2** Did any other pressures/drivers that the school was experiencing (other than financial) influence this decision around key actions?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 3** How were the decisions to implement the key actions made?

Prompt for:  
 Who was influential?  
 Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 4** What sources of information were useful in making these decisions?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 5** Why were these particular actions chosen, instead of other actions, in response to the financial situation?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 6** How confident are you in the ability of those involved to make good/optimal decisions for this school in response to its financial situation? Why?

**Q Key Actions 7** Have the key actions had any impact on pupils, staff or facilities and resources? [If the interviewee/s say yes, move to Q Key Actions 8. If they say no, move on to Q Key Actions 9.]

**Q Key Actions 8** \*\*Please could you describe these impacts and how the action has had these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Q Key Actions 9** \*\*\*Why not?

Prompt for both key actions

## Questions around all actions

**Q All Actions 1** Beyond the impacts we have talked about resulting from *specific* key actions taken in response to the school's financial situation, are there any *other*

impacts resulting from all actions taken in response to the school's financial situation? [If the interviewee/s say yes, move to Q All Actions 2. If they say no, move on to Q Overall Perception 1.]

**Q All Actions 2** \*\*Please could you describe these impacts and how the actions have had these impacts on pupils?

**Q All Actions 3** \*\*Have any other factors influenced these actions or their impacts?

## **Overall perception of impact**

**Q Overall Perception 1** What is your overall perception of the financial situation of this school and the impact of this on the quality of education it school can provide now and going forwards?

## **Topic guide – those able to talk about implementation and impact but not decision-making (probably teachers/TAs)**

### **Introduction**

Ofsted's Research and Evaluation Team is carrying out a research project into school funding which aims to:

- identify the financial pressures that schools are facing
- understand what decisions schools are making and how they are making them, in response to financial pressures
- understand the impact of responses to financial pressures holistically, both to date and in the future.

We are visiting this school in order to gather detailed qualitative data to help us in this research. This school has been selected as one which fits our sampling criteria, which seeks to have a broad range of schools within the sample.

We have agreed, in discussion with the headteacher, the key actions that your school has taken in response to its financial situation which this interview will focus on. These are 'A' and 'B'. You will have the opportunity to tell us about other actions and their impacts as well.

This research will not inform Ofsted's inspection of this school.

All the information we collect will be anonymised and no schools or participants will be mentioned by name. The information you provide will feed into a published report in the autumn.

Thank you for completing a consent form. You can withdraw your consent at any time.

We envisage this interview/focus group lasting for up to an hour. I will go through a series of scripted questions.



## Questions around key actions

Describe what the agreed key actions are.

**Key Actions 1** Please briefly describe how key actions were implemented.

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 2** Have the key actions had any impact on pupils? [If the interviewee/s say yes, move to Q Key Actions 3. If the interviewee/s say no, move on to Q Key Actions 7.]

**Key Actions 3** \*\*Please could you describe these impacts?

Prompt for impacts on different groups of pupils  
Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 4** \*\*How have the actions led/contributed to these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 5** \*\*What evidence is there of the impacts on pupils?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 6** \*\*Have any other factors (other than the key actions) influenced these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 7** \*\*\*Why not?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 8** Have key actions had any impact on staff? [If the interviewee/s say yes, move to Q Key Actions 9. If the interviewee/s say no, move on to Q Key Actions 13.]

**Key Actions 9** \*\*Please could you describe these impacts?

Prompt for impacts on different groups of staff  
Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 10** \*\*How have key actions led/contributed to these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 11** \*\*What evidence is there of these impacts on staff?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 12** \*\*Have any other factors (other than key actions) influenced these impacts on staff?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 13** \*\*\*Why not?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 14** Have key actions had any impact on facilities and resources? [If the interviewee/s say yes, move to Q Key Actions 15. If the interviewee/s say no, move on to Q Key Actions 18.]

**Key Actions 15** \*\*Please could you describe how the key actions have had these impacts?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 16** \*\*What evidence is there of these impacts on facilities and resources?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 17** \*\*Have any other factors (other than the key actions) influenced these impacts on facilities and resources?

Prompt for both key actions

**Key Actions 18** \*\*\*Why not?

Prompt for both key actions

## Questions around all actions

**Q All Actions 1** Beyond the impacts we have talked about resulting from specific **key** actions taken in response to the school's financial situation, are there any **other** impacts resulting from all actions taken in response to the school's financial situation? [If the interviewee/s say yes, move on to Q All Actions 2. If the interviewee/s say no, move on to Q Overall Perception 1.]

**Q All Actions 2** [\*\*Please could you describe how the actions have had these impacts?

Prompt for impacts on different groups

**Q All Actions 3** \*\*Have any other factors influenced these actions or their impacts?

## Overall perception of impact

**Q Overall Perception 1** What is your overall perception of the financial situation of your school and the impact of this on the quality of education your school can provide now and going forwards?



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