

10<sup>th</sup> September 2014

**FAO – All Cumbrian Schools**

**Application for Consideration for Eligibility for the Sparsity Factor in the 2015-16 Cumbrian Schools Funding Formula**

Dear Headteacher,

This letter accompanies the consultation documents on School Funding Reform for 2015-16.

A sparsity factor is included in the 2014-15 Cumbria School Funding Formula.

As explained in the consultation documents, for 2015-16, there has been a slight mandatory change to the eligibility criteria for sparsity. Schools must meet the following criteria:

- Have a 'sparsity distance' greater than or equal to 3 miles.
- Primary schools must have on average fewer than 21.4 pupils per year group, and secondary schools fewer than 120 pupils per year group

The data used for the above criteria is provided by the DfE. The 'sparsity distance' comprises the average distance to the next nearest school for all pupils in school at the October census date. This is a complex calculation taking the distance from every pupil's home post-code to the post-code of their next nearest school. It then takes an average of all of these distances. The distances used are based on "crow flies" measures.

As for 2014-15, schools can make an application to the local authority where they believe the sparsity distance provided by the DfE is not appropriate, and would be significantly different had road distances been used. Road distances will generally be greater than crow flies distances, and therefore the reason for the greater road distance should be due to particular geographical features (such as a lake or mountain). The local authority will assess these applications and present them to the Chair of the Cumbria Schools Forum, who under delegated authority from the Cumbria Schools Forum, will decide which applications to submit to the DfE for approval.

Appendix A within the School Funding Reform consultation documents details for each school the sparsity distance (based on October 2013 pupil data); whether the school qualified for sparsity funding in 2014-15, and also the average year group size (based on October 2013 pupil data). The appendix details in column H whether the school meets the eligibility criteria for 'average year group size' based on the October 2013 data. Schools should note that the actual data that will be used for 2015-16 will be that at October 2014.

Schools may wish to review the information in Appendix A and based on an assessment of whether they are eligible under the average year group size, consider their sparsity distance and decide whether, if below 3 miles, this does not reflect the true road distance, owing to significant geographical features. Schools that are close to the 3 mile threshold (either just under or just over) may wish to consider submitting an application, as this data is sensitive to change – the actual 2015-16 funding formula will be based on the October 2014 dataset.

Schools which applied to the local authority in 2014-15 and were successful do not need to apply again. Schools that applied in 2014-15 and were not successful may apply again, however, please ensure that justifications meet the requirements of the form below, particularly in regard to 'significant geographical features'.

To make an application, schools should complete the form appended to this letter and return it to Amanda Chew ([amanda.chew@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.chew@cumbria.gov.uk)) ( Schools and Learning Finance Team, Cumbria County Council, The Parkhouse Building, Baron Way, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle, CA6 4SJ by **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014**. Forms received after this date will not be considered. Please send the form electronically wherever possible.

It should be noted that as much detail as possible must be included on the form and the following criteria must be satisfied:

- The average road distance to the next nearest school is justifiably higher than 3 miles
- The reason for the higher road distance is significant and must relate to the presence of geographical features such as mountains/ lakes.

Yours sincerely,



**CAROLINE SUTTON**  
**Assistant Director – Schools & Learning**

## Appendix



### **Application for consideration for eligibility for the sparsity factor in the 2015-16 Cumbria School Funding Formula**

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

DfE Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Road distance to the next nearest school: (The school must be of the same phase (eg primary or secondary) as your school. The road distance must be justifiably higher than 3 miles for both primary and secondary schools).

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Explanation as to why you consider your school to be a 'sparse' school. (this should include specific references to geographical explanations, eg the presence of a lake/ mountain, which means that the road distance to the next nearest school is higher than 3 miles).

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Signed (Headteacher) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Chair of Governors) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this application to Amanda Chew

([amanda.chew@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.chew@cumbria.gov.uk))

Schools and Learning Finance Team, Cumbria County Council, The Parkhouse Building, Baron Way, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle, CA6 4SJ