



Impact on Primary Schools of Rising Birth Rate

A report on the impact of the increasing birth rate on Primary school budgets in England - June 2012

David Edwards - Sales & Client Services Director

Jem Education Direct Ltd

Staplehurst Road Sittingbourne Kent ME10 2NH

T: 01795 415115 E: info@jem.co.uk W: www.jem.co.uk

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- ❖ **55% of primary schools will see an increase in pupil roll this September**
- ❖ **61% of these will be receiving extra funding to provide for the increase**
- ❖ **22 Authorities have had their Basic Need Allocation more than doubled by the extra Government Funding**
- ❖ **640 schools will average more than £200k of additional funding**
- ❖ **336 schools will average more than £350k of extra funding**
- ❖ **114 schools will average over £0.5 million of extra funding**
- ❖ **In total, 13,500 schools will gain extra budget**

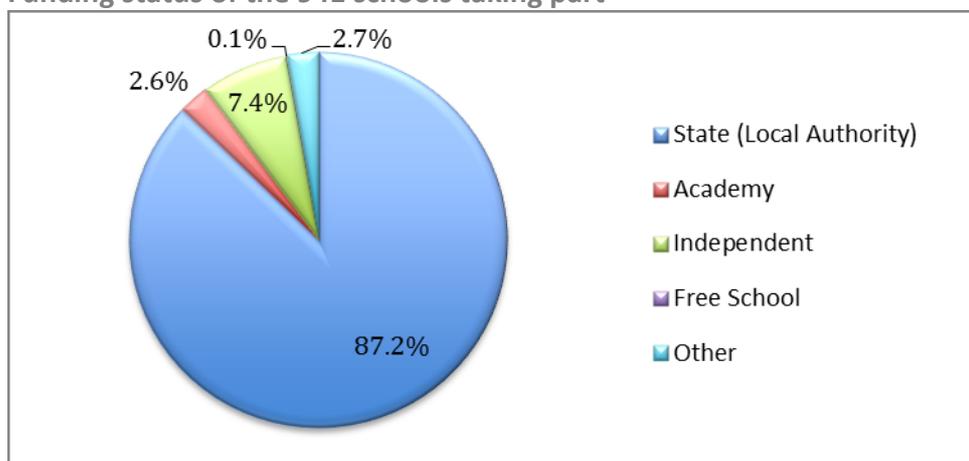
Earlier this year, the government announced £600 million of extra funding for Primary schools to cater for the substantial increase in pupil numbers affecting schools from September 2012. Research conducted by Jem Education Direct in May 2012 showed that around half of the participants expect their pupil role to increase in September 2012.

Government funding has been specifically targeted at those local authorities expecting to bear most of the impact from the increase.

Of the 941 schools responding to the survey the majority of the establishments were local authority funded. There was some indication in the open text responses at the frustration with poor funding through the Local Authority which appears to precipitate applications for Academy status.

However, as more schools are becoming Academies, Free Schools or become a part of federations, the makeup of schools is changing and there is recent evidence to suggest that the financial advantages of Academy status are diminishing. (Reported in The Guardian 4th June 2012).

Funding status of the 941 schools taking part

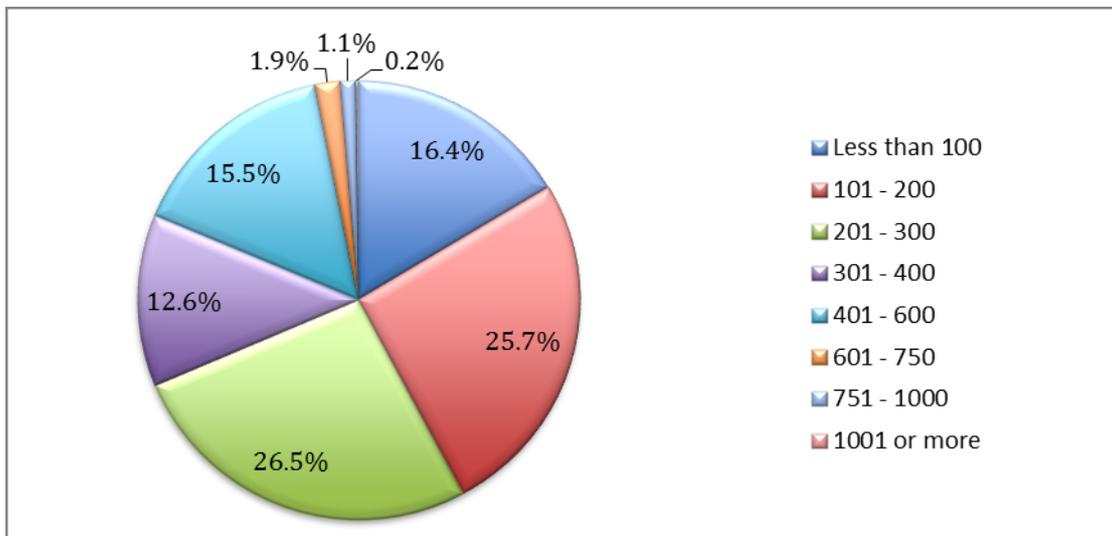


In March 2011 a survey of 1471 Head Teachers by the Association of School and College Leaders showed that 46% had converted their schools to Academy status or intended to do so. Three quarters were driven by the belief that their schools would benefit financially not educationally.

Only one free school took part. This is not surprising as only eight of the original 24 Free Schools that opened in September 2011 described themselves as "Primary". The number of pupils enrolled is generally very small, sometimes as low as 15.

The number of independent schools taking part in the survey reflects the national picture. There are around 2,500 independent schools in the UK, which educate around 615,000 children, that is just over 7% of all British children, rising to around 18% of pupils aged over 16.

Breakdown of the participants by current pupil roll

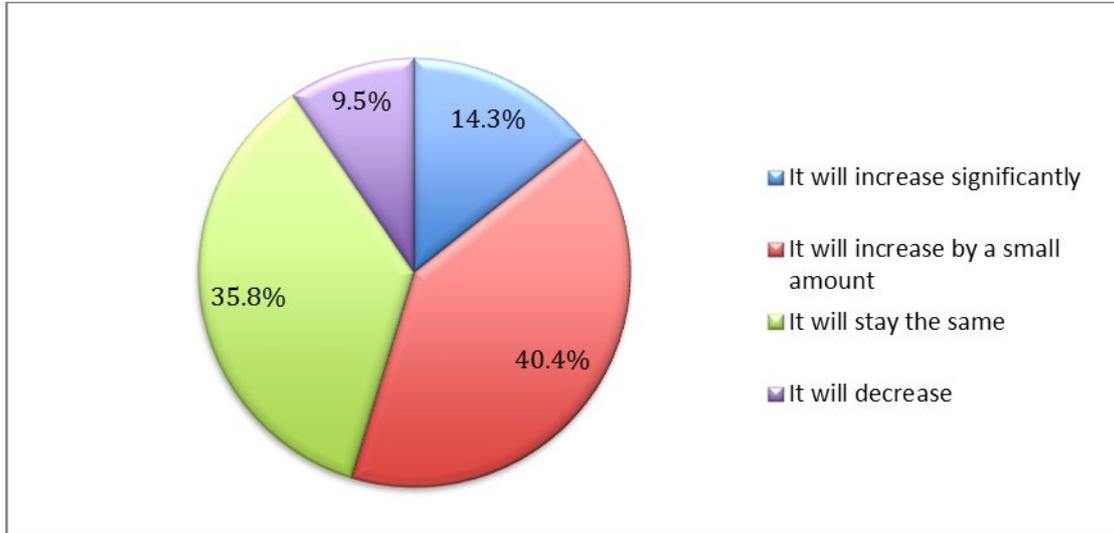


The average primary school has just over 200 pupils and these responses broadly reflect that data with just over 50% of the responses coming from establishments with between 101 and 300 pupils on roll.

There were only two responses from primaries with over 1,000 pupils. This group, however, may be growing in number. As reported by the BBC in March this year, more schools have been given permission to expand to as much as six forms of entry from the current average of two. Schools building regulations have also been changed so that new schools can occupy a smaller space. The government, however, make play that this is not a reflection on the growing number of primary applications. But there is no doubt that the rise of the so called "supersize" primary schools reflects the need to find places for the growing numbers of pupils - with official figures showing that an extra 455,000 places will be needed in England by 2015

Schools with very small numbers of learners may also be growing as more Free Schools are set up. These are likely to be specialist or niche schools where parents and others feel that small groups of pupils are not adequately provided for locally.

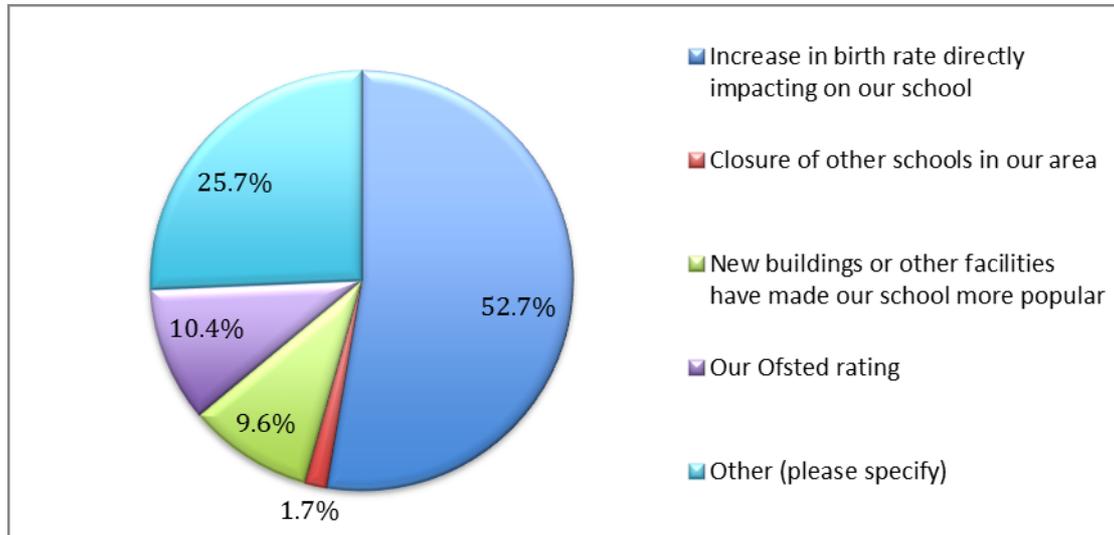
Respondents' expectations about their school roll in September 2012



Nearly 55% indicated that the number of pupils will increase either significantly or by a small amount this September, however, the need for more primary places is not spread evenly across the country. The Local Government Association's David Simmonds says the number of bigger schools is going to increase.

If expansion proposals are implemented it would mean Birmingham, Brent, Waltham Forest, Newham, Redbridge, Hillingdon, Bromley and Barking could all have examples of primary schools with capacity for about 1,000 pupils and in some cases up to 1,200. Brent Council, in north London, has published a report showing it will need another 23 classrooms. It already has more than 500 primary-age children which are not placed in any school - enough to fill a traditional size school. The shortage is not only in the biggest cities - there are pressures in places such as Winchester, Bristol and Bournemouth.

What do schools consider to be the main reason for the increase?



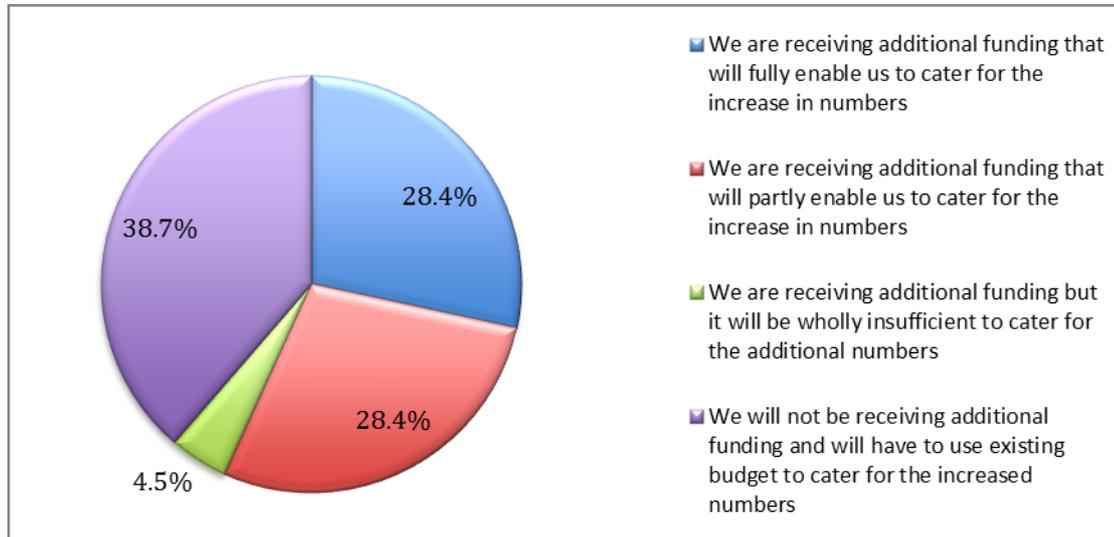
Russell Hobby, National Association of Head Teachers says:

“Compounding the challenge ... of increasing numbers... is that the pattern of population growth is very uneven - with a surplus of places in some parts of the country. There are even bigger differences within cities. In Birmingham, the birth rate rose by 25% between 2000 and 2007 but within this average, there are wards with a primary-age population projected to rise by more than 50% and others where there is zero increase expected”.

Higher birth rate and increased parental choice are the two major reasons generally cited for an increase in pupil numbers. The higher birth rate, in some cases, may be associated with “class” or different traditional family size within some immigrant communities although some evidence shows that this changes after a generation. However, these are not the only reasons.

Publication of league tables and other information readily available to parents clearly makes high achieving schools more popular. This obviously poses problems for parents who are trying to enroll their children in what they perceive to be the “best” school for their child but also provides a problem for local planning. In Surrey, of three infant schools within a small geographic area, two are deemed by Ofsted to be Outstanding and a third is in Special Measures. Two are highly oversubscribed and one has places readily available. How is this to be turned around? This is a very common dilemma. Changes in other local schools, such as a neighbour gaining Academy or Free School status also has an impact.

How are schools prepared financially for September?



Of the 61% indicating they would receive at least some additional funding only 24% stated that funding would be coming from to the extra £600 million provided by the Government. Whilst there may be some lack of awareness amongst the 76% about where their funding is coming from, that is likely to be minimal.

In April 2012, Michael Gove wrote a letter outlining how the £600 million would be allocated

“The £600 million will be directed to those local authorities that show a shortfall in pupil places as at 2013-14. 100 local authorities will receive a proportionate share of the £600 million, based on data from the 2011 Schools Capacity Forecast collection. This ensures a fair and proportionate allocation to the local authorities facing the most urgent pressure for school places.”

He then went on to say:

“I am also considering how we can improve the collection of local data on pupil numbers and available school places, so that allocations for the remainder of the spending review period can be more closely targeted.”

This last comment highlights the problems acquiring accurate pupil roll data when there is a growing mix of schools inside and outside the audit capabilities of the local authority.

Respondents cited a number of sources when prompted to identify where their additional funding will be coming from, if not the additional £600 million. These included

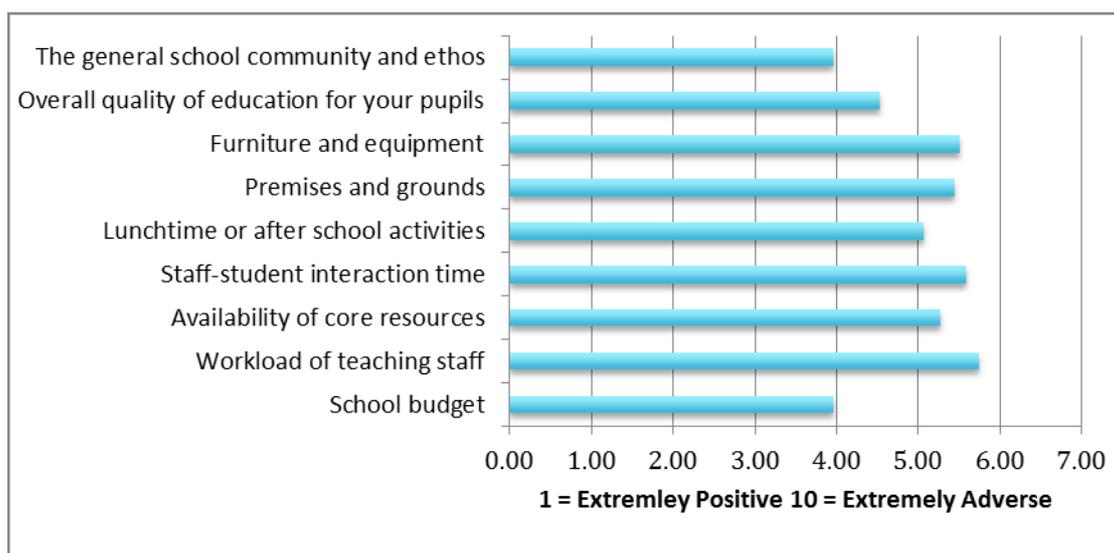
- Increased parents' fees
- Capital Building Programme
- AWPUP Age Weighted Pupil Unit
- EFA Education Funding Agency
- EYFS Adjustment Early Years Foundation Stage
- Per head normal funding
- PTA Fundraising/Parental contributions

How do those facing an increase in pupil roll, perceive the impact on their school?

Respondents were asked to rate a number of areas using a scale of 1 - 10 with 1 equating to extremely positive and 10 equating to extremely adverse

It is clear that schools are trying to shield their learners from any negative impacts of higher numbers such as larger class sizes or lack of space but they are concerned about impact on teachers and other school staff in terms of workload. However answers are clustered in the middle range and it is likely that only over time that the true impact can be measured.

In practical terms, there is a significant adverse impact indicated on schools furniture and equipment. Over the past years of reducing pupil number, schools have significantly downsized and cleared out surplus furniture and equipment. There will be an immediate need to provide a whole range of materials and items to allow schools to function over the next academic year.



What one positive thing do schools see about the increase in numbers?

Given the opportunity to provide an open response to this issue, a number of common strands emerge. These include:

- More numbers means more funding.
- Positive image of the school.
- Allows for building works on the school.
- Full classes - Greater interaction in lessons, a wider range of extra-curricular activities.
- More competition for sports selection.
- Stability for staff.
- Diverse school and local community good for everyone.
- Able to hire more staff so reduction in some class sizes.

It is interesting that although funding and image are mentioned most schools are focusing on the educational benefit to their pupils. Extra Curricular Activities, more detailed planning for specific groups of learners and greater staff/pupil contact all figure strongly in the responses.

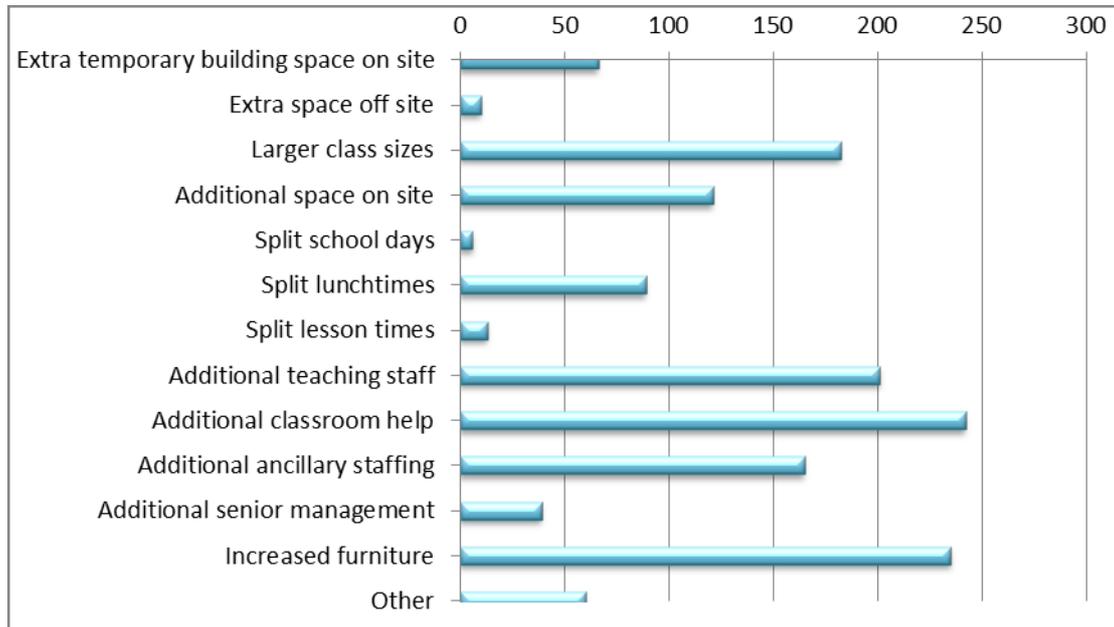
What one adverse thing do schools see about the increase in numbers?

Then given the opportunity to provide an open response to the contrary aspect the common strands emerging are:

- Larger class sizes
- Loss of intimacy in small school and personal knowledge of pupils
- Lack of space – impact on outside play as well as class room fit
- Funding
- Demands on teachers
- Staff-student interaction time
- Mixing age groups
- Admin/HR issues/Facilities management

Once again it is interesting to note that the responses are focused on the educational impact of the changes on learners.

What do schools need in order to cater for the extra intake?



Respondents were encouraged to select as many items that they felt were necessary.

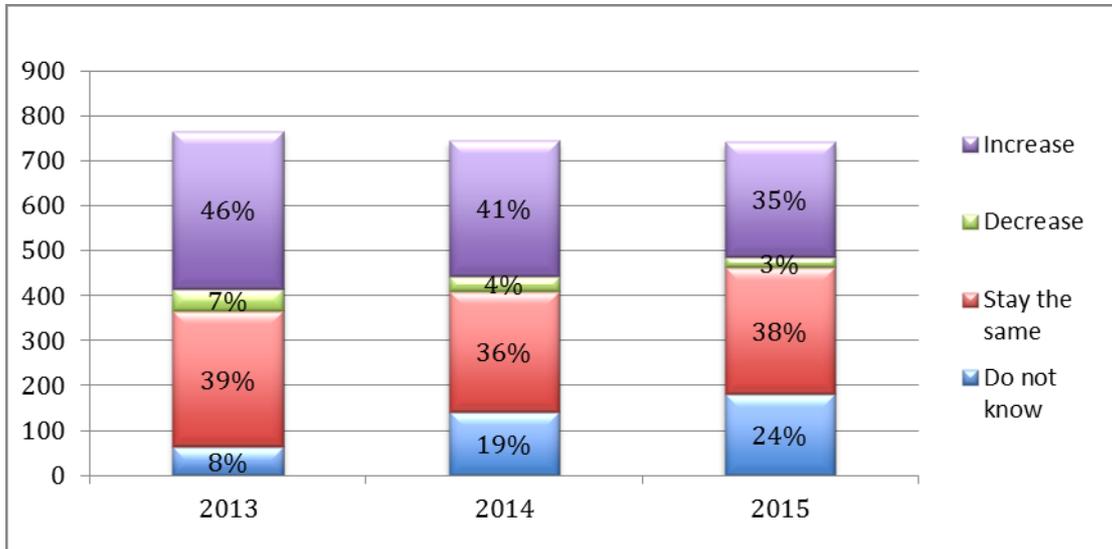
Additional classroom help and increased furniture yield the most responses. This is not surprising. This was followed by additional teaching staff, larger class sizes and additional ancillary staff.

Classroom support is cheaper than extra teachers and Classroom Assistants/Teaching Assistants have become an increasingly important part of any schools' armoury in raising standards. If average class size is increased more of this kind of help is often considered vital.

Schools that are good or outstanding are concerned about maintaining their high standards as they try to scale up their successes. They are developing rigorous staff training programmes and teacher support to ensure that what is done well continues throughout the school.

Leadership teams are (anecdotally) being bolstered to ensure that good practice is spread within their schools and often beyond as Federations are formed and Academy status spreads. This trend is NOT reflected above although the answers are about intent rather than practice. Concerns about too many leaders and their pay scales have also been raised within, mainly secondary, Academies as reported by Stephanie Northern in The Guardian at the end of 2011. There is also some evidence to show that the added pressure on Senior Leadership Teams may lead to a higher turnover of staff than may normally be expected. Middle Leaders are also finding themselves under new pressure as they are responsible for more colleagues and more pupils than they are accustomed to.

And the Future?



One important role of a Local Authority in the past, with mixed success, has been forward planning to take into account changes in the school roll. As schools become more independent, demographics change and greater parental choice impacts predictions become more difficult.

In Bexley several years ago, schools were asked to predict their future intake. All schools taking part predicted an increase which, when the numbers were added together, produced a figure which would have necessitated 2 new housing estates to be built to accommodate the new pupils. Schools are trying to be realistic but it is not easy, particularly at a time when schools are able to change their status within a short time frame.

What is clear, given the significant number of schools showing an increase or stability in their pupil roll, that government recognises the need to provide the additional funding that will follow the roll increase as it migrates up the year groups. This is clearly good news for educational suppliers as resources, furniture and equipment expenditure will follow with this.

Jem Education Direct conducted the survey across 21,143 state and independent primary schools in England. 941 schools responded.

Comments on the results were provided by Vicky Shearn. Vicky has been successfully engaged with education for more than 30 years as a teacher, senior leader, local authority adviser and consultant.

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❖ Total number of schools receiving extra allocation	13,534
❖ Total number of authorities receiving allocation	109
❖ Highest allocation to one authority	£30,883,239
❖ Number of schools in authorities receiving at least double their existing Basic Need allocation	1,231
❖ Number of schools expected to receive on average more than £100k of additional funding	1,282
❖ Highest average additional funding per school	£744,071

For further detailed counts and statistics, contact us, info@jem.co.uk 01795 415115