

# **FACSIMILE**

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DENI PRESS RELEASE

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**TONY WORTHINGTON ACCEPTS MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COOPERS & LYBRAND**

Tony Worthington MP, Minister responsible for Education, today announced that he had accepted the central thrust of the recommendations of the Coopers & Lybrand Report on formula funding in schools.

Following discussions with Education and Library Boards earlier in the summer, all schools are now being asked to comment on a range of changes which it is intended should take effect from 1998/99 in the five Boards' existing formulae. These changes will ensure a common approach within all Boards to a range of issues such as age weightings, premises costs and the funding of small schools.

The Minister said: "I do not think that it is defensible, equitable or sensible to have seven different formulae for allocating resources to schools in Northern Ireland. My policy objective is for full commonality across the Province, which will ensure that schools with the same needs would have the same level of LMS funding, regardless of the area or the sector in which they are located. The changes planned for 1998/99 are an important first step in this process. However, more work remains to be done. In particular, the Report recommends changes to the existing arrangements which target significant resources to schools on the basis of the incidence of free school meals. It is important to allocate additional resources to schools most in need but as the Report recommends, there are more effective means of doing this. A revised approach is now being worked up and there will be further widespread consultation in due course".

#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. About 76% of total school recurrent expenditure is delegated to individual schools on the basis of local formulae in each Board area and separate formulae for Voluntary Grammar Schools and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools.
2. Under the existing formula some 80% is determined by pupil numbers and the balance takes account of the premises, size of school, social/educational need and a range of other minor factors.
3. While all Board formulae confirm to a broad framework set down by the Department there are a number of differences at present. This means that similar schools receive different funding, depending on where they are located.
4. Coopers & Lybrand were appointed to review these existing arrangements, consider the potential for greater commonality and make recommendations accordingly.