

16 March 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

Together with all of the secondary school Headteachers in Huntingdonshire, I am writing to you concerning the very difficult funding situation that our schools are currently facing. This is not a step that we have taken lightly but with the proposed changes being made to the funding formula that allocates money to schools and the significant cut in money in real terms that our schools receive from the government we feel that that we should inform you of the pressures we are under and to ask for your support.

In recent weeks, television, radio, newspapers and internet have given considerable coverage to the proposed National Funding Formula that the Department for Education (DfE) is currently consulting on. As many parents will be aware, for decades Cambridgeshire schools have not been given the same levels of funding per pupil as their counterparts across the county borders or, indeed, the vast majority of other local authorities in the country. Cambridgeshire remains one of the worst funded areas, simply because this was the rate of funding established in the 1980s and it has been seen by successive governments as being too difficult to fix without redistributing significant money from better funded authorities.

We were therefore pleased when the current government announced that they were to overhaul the funding formula and deliver on its promise to introduce 'fair funding' – that for the first time it would not matter which part of the country you lived in, a pupil would receive the same amount of money in order to be educated.

However, it has become apparent over the past few months that this will not be the case. The proposed new funding formula will in fact 'lock-in' the existing poor levels of funding with only minor adjustments. In Huntingdonshire the proposed average increase in funding is only 2.96% and some of Cambridgeshire's schools will in fact lose money under the proposed formula. Very little funding is being redistributed from the best funded authorities in the country to support areas such as Cambridgeshire.

This in itself would be hugely challenging to deal with. But on top of the failure of the National Funding Formula proposal to address our needs, we are also facing financial cuts of 8% between now and 2020, reducing our ability to deliver the outstanding education that we believe is crucial to the life chances of our students. Increases in staff pay of 1%, higher national insurance contributions, higher pension contributions and overall rises in inflation are not being met by the government. Consequently, our fears about reduced staffing levels, increased class sizes and reductions in curricular and pastoral provision could become a reality in either the short or medium term. This is a view supported by the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies (www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8027) and by the National Audit Office (www.nao.org.uk/report/financial-sustainability-in-schools/) which stated that schools across the country had to find £3 billion of efficiency savings in order to maintain current educational standards. In Cambridgeshire and for the St Neots Learning Partnership, there are no more efficiencies to find.

Headteachers in Cambridgeshire schools are dismayed that our financial situation looks so bleak. Together with school leaders, teachers and other school staff across the country, we are united in our belief that the current situation is unfair and unsustainable. We ask the government in the strongest

terms to revisit their proposals for the funding formula to ensure our children in Cambridgeshire are not disadvantaged compared to their neighbours in other counties and also to fund the 8% gap in our funding.

In response, we have spoken to our respective local MPs, have met with the Department for Education and will respond to the consultation on the fair funding formula.

Now we also request your support if we are going to get fair and adequate funding for schools and pupils in this county. We are asking you to consider responding to the consultation on national funding. This is open to everyone. The questions can be quite technical in nature and you may think that responding to such consultations achieves very little but we are assured that this is not the case. The consultation closes on 22 March 2017. The link to it is as follows:
<https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula2/>

In addition, we ask you to contact our MP, Jonathan Djanogly, to express your concerns, copying your letter or email to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond MP, and Education Secretary, Justine Greening MP. Jonathan Djanogly has been a supportive friend to the St Neots Learning Partnership, but it is vital that he hears the strength of feeling in this area so that he can represent our case to the government. If you live outside of Mr Djanogly's constituency, please contact your own local MP.

We will do everything in our power to ensure the highest possible standards of education for our young people, now and in the future, to provide them with the rich and vibrant learning opportunities that are their right, and to care and support them. But it is also important that we let you know how challenging the situation is now and how it is likely to continue becoming more difficult in the months and years ahead. Your support as we continue our campaign is important in getting fair and adequate levels of funding for our students at the St Neots Learning Partnership and across our county.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Rick Carroll
CEO

Together with all secondary school headteachers in Huntingdonshire:

Contact details:

Jonathan Djanogly MP – jonathan.djanogly.mp@parliament.uk

The Rt Honourable Justine Greening MP, Secretary of State for Education, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA – email: greening@parliament.uk

The Rt Honourable Nick Gibb, MP, Minister of State for School Standards, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA – email: gibbn@parliament.uk

Neil Carmichael, Chair of the Education Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

The Rt Honourable Philip Hammond MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Correspondence and Enquiry Unit, 1 Horse Guards Road, London SW1A 2HQ – email: hammondp@parliament.uk