

7th March 2019

Dear Parent / Carer

The school needs your help to make sure we have enough funds to protect your child's education.

I am writing to you because I need to ask you to write to your MP in order to lobby the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, to increase school funding as part of his 2019 Comprehensive Spending Review. If you do not know the name of your MP, you can identify her/him by putting your postcode into this website <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>. All MPs have an e-mail address and they are obliged to respond to your concerns, so long as you are a member of their constituency and you include your address.

My request is not politically motivated. I feel, alongside the other secondary Headteacher in Sutton, that you have a right to know how little priority is being given to funding your child's education by the government. These issues are not isolated to Sutton or to the secondary sector. They are common up and down the country. Levels of concern are so widespread amongst Headteachers that we are working together with a united voice, linked closely to the Worth Less campaign. This is an informal community of school leaders representing 64 local authorities, thousands of schools and millions of families.

The leader of this campaign has written to the Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds, on three separate occasions since September 2018. You will no doubt be dismayed that he has chosen not to respond directly and to refuse repeated requests to meet. On 13th December 2018, we were informed by a junior civil servant that "***I am afraid that, on this occasion, the Secretary of State and the Minister of State must decline your offer to meet. I hope you will understand that their time is heavily pressurised and their diaries need to be prioritised according to ministerial, Parliamentary and constituency business.***" On 14th January 2019, we wrote again asking that he reconsider meeting with representative leaders. We are yet to even receive a response.

Summary of Concerns

Whilst I am more than happy to provide more detail to any parent who would like me to, below is a summary of the most difficult:

- **The National Funding Formula is** flawed. There is not enough money for the basic costs of educating students, meaning that over half of the secondary schools in Sutton are below the government's stated minimum per pupil funding (in Years 7-11) of £4800 (when area costs are taken into account). The government will not confirm whether this figure will be adjusted to recognise the fact that, as an Outer London Borough, we are required to pay our teachers and support staff on the Outer London salary scales which are higher than that of Boroughs outside of London. If the government does not take this into account, then Sutton schools will be disadvantaged and shortfalls will only be able to be met by cuts to your child's education.
- **Sixth Form funding has reduced dramatically.** Since 2010 it has fallen in real terms by 20%. The base funding is only £4000 per annum, or £21 per school day.

- **The Education Services Grant (ESG) to academies was removed.** This was a per pupil grant to academies to cover the costs of services that would have previously been paid for by the Local Authority. This changed from £135 per pupil in 2010 to £0 in 2016.
- **Employer costs have increased dramatically.** The government has announced pay rises for teachers without any thought about how they are to be paid for. These are therefore de facto cuts, as I simply have to find these sums from other areas of my budget. The most recent increases (2018) for teachers were *partly* met by the government, but this support is due to end in April 2020. Furthermore, a recent two year deal for support staff increases salary costs between 4% and 16 % over two years. No additional money has been provided to deliver these increases which impact particularly where schools are supporting mental health, pastoral or SEN needs. As such, the money available to support your child is being eroded by ever increasing costs. National Insurance and pension contributions have also all increased, both for teachers and support staff. Increases announced by the government fail to cover these additional costs, meaning that the real-terms budget continues to shrink.
- **SEN Costs.** These costs are growing at such a rate that schools are having to pass on part of their budget so that the Local Authority can balance spend. This is in addition to schools having to fund the first £6,000 for each child's SEN support. For some schools, EHC Plan support costs alone exceed £200k, putting further pressure on schools' budgets at a time when funding does not take into account real costs.
- **Rising Costs:** As you will know, the costs of running any institution – gas, electricity, IT services and cleaning costs – have increased significantly and set against the problems outlined above, this is causing ongoing problems.

It is rarely that I seek parental support in this way, however this is a vital campaign to achieve a much improved level of funding for our schools and students. I would therefore ask for your support in writing to your MP, politely asking for the following as a result of the 2019 Comprehensive Spending Review:

1. For the base minimum level of £4800 to be adjusted to take into account Outer London employer costs (sometimes called an Area Cost Allowance).
2. For the impact of the proposed National Funding Formula to be reviewed to ensure sufficient basic funding to deliver education and support for students in all schools.
3. For cost of living increases to be recognised within the budget allocations.
4. For a significant increase in the base funding for Sixth Form students recognising the importance of this period of education in terms of future life chances.
5. For any government recommended pay rises / National Insurance / pension costs to be fully funded.

You may also want to ask why the Secretary of State for Education has refused to meet representatives of the Worth Less campaign.

Thanking you in advance for your support.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs Vivien Jones
Headteacher



Girls' Learning Trust

