

The Grove Primary School

Campkin Road, Cambridge. CB4 2NB

Tel: 01223 577017 Fax: 01223 577018

Email office@grove.cambs.sch.uk Web www.thegroveschool.net

Headteacher Ms Karen Martin



Friday 17th March 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

'This will be the first-time since the 1990's that school funding has fallen in real terms'
Institute of Fiscal Studies - October 2015

Together with all of the primary school headteachers in Cambridgeshire, 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 we have no choice but to inform you of the unsustainable pressures we are under and **to ask for your support.**

Why is there an issue for The Grove?

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 border in Essex, Hertfordshire 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.

Current proposals mean our children will get much less money spent on their education than most other children in the country.

- The average amount of funding per pupil in Cambridgeshire will be **£340 less per pupil than the national average**
- This amounts to **£10,200 less funding than the national average for every class of thirty pupils.**
- Cambridgeshire will receive **£2,451 less for every child than the highest funded local authority**

What happened to the promise of 'Fairer Funding' for Cambridgeshire?

We were 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.** For a school such as The Grove we will remain poorly funded. In Cambridgeshire the average increase in funding is only 0.5% and some of the county'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 pupils. Increases in staff pay of 1%, higher national insurance 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** are likely to become a reality in either the short or medium term. This is a view supported by the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8027> and by the National Audit Office <https://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, there are no more efficiencies to find.

What can we do?

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.** We are now reaching breaking point.

But we desperately need your support if we are going to get fair and adequate funding for schools and pupils in this county.

We urge you to respond to the consultation on fair funding. This is open to everyone and can be found at <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula2/>

The questions and answers can be quite technical in nature so we have drafted out our responses to the questions in the consultation and these can be found on the school website at www.thegroveschool.net Our responses are suggestions; please do use our responses to the questions if you wish.

You may think that responding to such consultations achieves very little. We are assured that this is not the case, i.e. numbers do count and it is **absolutely vital** that the voice of Cambridgeshire is not lost when all local authorities in England are arguing for additional funding, including those in relatively better funded areas.

The consultation closes on 22 March 2017.

In addition to filling in the consultation, you may wish to **sign the petition held at the school office.**

You can also write to the Education Secretary, Justine Greening MP and/or your local MP.

Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner and Cambridgeshire South MP Heidi Allen are very supportive of our position and are making their own representations to government. However, it is vital that parents, teachers and governors add their voices by completing the consultation and signing the petition. Heidi will deliver completed petitions from every school directly to Number 10 Downing Street. Details of how to contact government ministers are on the school website at www.gthegroveschool.net under 'Parent Information'. It is essential we make our case. Contact details for all of the above are listed at the end of this letter along with a model letter that you may wish to use as a template.

It is vital that parents, teachers and governors add their voices by completing the consultation and signing the petition.

As headteachers 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 crucial in getting fair and adequate levels of funding for our pupils at The Grove and across our county.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Karen Martin
Headteacher

Contact Details

Heidi Allen MP for South Cambridgeshire- email: heidi.allen.mp@parliament.uk

Daniel Zeichner MP for Cambridge – email daniel@danielzeichner.co.uk

The Rt Honourable Justine Greening MP, Secretary of State for Education, House of Commons, London SW1A0AA – email greening@parliament.uk

The Rt Honourable Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for School Standards, House of Commons, London SW1A0AA – email gibbn@parliament.uk

Neil Carmichael, Chair of the Education Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A0AA - email neil.carmichael.mp@parliament.uk

Rt Honourable Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer, House of Commons, London SW1A0AA – email Philip.hammond@parliament.uk

Model Letter for Justine Greening, Secretary of State for Education

Right Honourable Justine Greening, MP,
Secretary of State for Education,
Department of Education,
Ministerial and Public Communications Division,
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester M1 2WD.

Dear Justine Greening,

I am shocked to learn that the new National Funding Formula for schools will not see schools across the country being funded more equally. My child attends school in Cambridgeshire which has been one of the worst funded schools in the country for years. Despite this, almost a third of schools in Cambridgeshire are going to lose money if the proposed changes are introduced and others will see only a small rise.

This will mean that Cambridgeshire children will receive much less than the national average for their education.

As a parent I had thought that the aim of the reforms was to make funding fairer. Instead, my child's school will continue to receive much less money to pay for his/her education than children in most other schools in the country. This is not fair for my child or for his/her school.

I believe that the proposed National Funding Formula needs to be changed so that funding is more equal. Every school should receive enough money to cover its basic running costs. There should be more money in the lump sum and the funding that every child receives for their education to cover these basic costs. Only then should money be distributed to tackle issues such as poverty.

I urge you to change the proposed National Funding Formula for Schools so that my child's school receives a fair amount of funding to pay for their education.

Yours sincerely,