

CAMBRIDGESHIRE PRIMARY HEADS



Tony Davies,
Chair of Cambridgeshire Primary
Heads,
c/o St Matthew's Primary School
19 Norfolk Street,

Commitment

Consultation

Co-operation

30th January 2018

Dear Mr Hammond,



I am writing on behalf of schools and families in Cambridgeshire. We are joined by 31 other counties (they will each write to you separately) who represent approximately 5500 schools and 3.5 million families. Together we form the **Worth Less?** group of schools and academies.

You will recall that Headteachers wrote to you and visited 11 Downing Street in November 2017 requesting a much greater improvement to the budgets of schools in very low-funded counties. We were surprised and disappointed that, after providing a detailed and cogent letter, the response from your office was superficial and inadequate.

Unsurprisingly, the key issues that we pointed out - a chronic lack of funding to support reasonable teacher/pupil ratios, excellent curricular provision and adequate help for our most vulnerable pupils to name but a few - persist.

You will know that new information has also reached the public domain that re-emphasises the points that we have been making over and over again. These include:

- A growing and most unwelcome reliance on parents to 'prop up' our beleaguered budgets. £146 million has been received by schools through voluntary parental contributions over the past year (source: Channel 4 News)
- The education charity, The Sutton Trust, has stated that at least "30% of Headteachers have confirmed that they are using money received for most disadvantaged pupils (The Pupil Premium) to plug gaps in their budget".
- Teacher trainee recruitment targets have been missed for the fifth year in a row (source: Department for Education)
- The Social Mobility Commission report (State of the Nation 2017) confirmed a "mind-blowing inconsistency of practice" when support for most disadvantaged students and their families are analysed. In December 2017 the board of the Commission resigned.

Our relentlessly reasonable campaign has stuck to the facts and championed the rights of every child and family that we serve. None of our information and statistics has ever been disputed. We have never sought to see other better-funded schools (in areas such as London) lose out. But we are not prepared to accept second best for our schools.

Under the new funding formula many of our schools will continue to receive at least 50% less money than an identically-sized school in London. At times, this rises to a staggering 70%. The attached information sheets - which again rely solely on Department for Education statistics - show the ridiculous disparities in our levels of funding (**Attached: 'Funding Comparisons under NFF – 2018'**.)

Bluntly, it is neither sustainable nor credible for the Treasury and Department for Education to keep trotting out the same half-truths and partial information. We are fed up of being told that there is more money in education than ever before when parallel rising costs are completely ignored, or when the ½ million extra children who have swelled our school rolls since 2010 seem to be entirely overlooked.

Our schools need to be given the same “tools” to deliver as other better-funded parts of the country. Our children all sit the same examinations and our schools are judged by the same Ofsted criteria. Different schools in different social contexts should, of course, be funded differently. They should not, however, be compromised and disadvantaged by such vast and persistent financial disparities.

And the differences in the total funding are indeed vast.

The difference between Worth Less? schools (*the total funding received by schools in 32 counties*) and Westminster (*the same number of students funded at the Westminster per-pupil average*) – **is in excess of £3.5bn.**

This gives an idea of how unfairly our schools and students are being treated. These differences will apply in April 2018 and the use of arbitrary caps and increments that underpin the new National Funding Formula have simply served to lock in previous historical funding injustices. If we had chosen to compare ourselves to Hackney the total difference **would exceed £5.5bn.**

In November 2017, The Social Mobility Commission confirmed that 18 of the top 20 areas for upward social mobility are in London. Frequently, the worst areas for mobility are found within our counties, which are also, unsurprisingly, the worst funded areas too. (**Attached: 'Social Mobility and School Funding'**.)

Sadly, we are also hearing that smaller rural schools are under threat of closure because of a lack of finance. We are united in opposing such disastrous measures.

Given the information above (and provided over the past two years) we have now reached the point of no return. Our campaign is growing and growing, as is the support from parents and carers in the communities that we serve. On their behalf, we are confirming two actions and they are as follows:

- Firstly, an invoice (**attached**) is provided to the Treasury and Department for Education for the shortfall in the money that our schools should be receiving. We have matched our own average funding and set it against the London borough of Westminster. The number of students involved is identical.
- Secondly, we request again, a meeting with ministers from the Treasury and the Department for Education to look at how these crucial issues can be

resolved and to find a mutually acceptable way forward. In particular, we will be highlighting the work of the cross-party and independent F40 campaign group. Their work and comprehensive data analysis must be better considered, especially the proposed **increase in the basic unit of funding that each pupil receives before other “pupil-led” factors are factored in.**

We are determined to act reasonably and responsibly. We know that there isn't a bottomless pit of money but the current state of our budgets is unacceptable, as are the funding differences children in our schools face. The new cabinet and new Secretary of State for Education should act in the best interests of all schools and families, not just the few.

Yours sincerely,



Headteacher on behalf of Cambridgeshire Primary Heads and 31 supporting counties in 'Worth Less?'

