

20/3/17

Dear Parents and Carers,

You will probably have read and heard about changes to the funding of schools in England.

We are writing to you today because we are gravely concerned about the impact of the new funding formula on our school, and the general welfare of our children, young people and families.

The government is seeking to promote a funding formula across the country and, as with any change, there are winners and losers.

The Government has said that the proposed funding formula will mean an increase in funding for schools. In reality, many schools are facing real terms funding cuts because the costs associated with running a school have increased – increases in National Insurance and pension contributions and rising inflation, for instance. Coupled with other significant changes - the Government's reduction in the Education Service Grant, used by the Local Authority for school improvement and to plan for school places, for example, and the introduction of an Apprenticeship Levy that will all impact on nearly all schools and academies – a budget crisis is imminent.

And then, of course, as part of last week's budget announcement, we were told of the Government's plans to spend precious financial resources in pursuing its selective education agenda rather than ensuring schools working in the here and now are properly funded.

These changes and the increased living costs mean that in actual fact we will have less money to spend on running schools and funding additional services, such as speech and language therapy, mental health support, counselling and support services that have become an increasingly valued and necessary provision in the communities we serve.

Decisions on school spending will no longer be driven by what is best for our children, young people and families but rather what we can afford, and are legally required to provide.

As you may have heard, some schools in other parts of the country are asking for parents to contribute money each month to its running costs, others are considering reducing the school week to four days so they reduce their costs. Some schools may be forced to cut teaching jobs, teaching assistants and support staff, increase class sizes or reduce how much they spend on books or IT equipment.

Where should the cuts be made to balance the budget? Of course the deficit will mean different things in each school but is likely to impact on your child's education. Norfolk Primary Headteachers' Association and Norfolk Secondary Education Leaders have met with Norfolk's MPs to discuss the issues and concerns around school funding, and MPs are keen to hear about the impact on schools in their constituencies as well as the views of people living in their communities.

An education system must support and inspire its students, and offer every child and young person the opportunity to learn and be the best they can be...but this system needs greater investment.

The text of this letter has been agreed by NSEL and NPHA, and will be sent by many schools across the county to parents and carers such as yourselves to highlight the national situation. Its intent is to inform you of the national picture and to enlist your support in petitioning our MP for *his* support.

A separate letter to parents and carers which deals with the specifics of Sheringham High is also available on the School's website.

Our local MP has long associations with Sheringham High and we plan to send the letter below to him to express our concerns. If you, too, would like to contact him and add weight to the campaign, please use the following email contact
norman.lamb.mp@parliament.uk

Yours faithfully,

Dr A Richardson (Headteacher) on behalf of the NNAT Board of Directors.

Dear Norman,

I am contacting you with regard to the mounting fears that Head Teachers and Principals have in relation to school funding.

Recently, school leaders from four counties expressed significant concern at the bleak situation that their schools, and the vast majority of others, are facing. Now, school leaders in Norfolk have joined with 13 other counties as we continue to speak with 'one voice'.

In spite of the increasingly damaging financial situation, no adequate response has been provided in terms of our concerns about current and future spending proposals made by the Department for Education.

There is no question that a new National Funding Formula is urgently required but it must be credible and reverse the unsustainable and deeply unsatisfactory methodology that is currently used to allocate school funds.

Rather than making matters better, the new National Funding Formula proposals do not offer meaningful solutions to our current and future school finances. Amongst many issues, key points that remain include:

- The new National Funding Formula is not new. It is based on a flawed and outdated model.
- As a consequence, considerable and completely unacceptable inequalities will persist in our school funding arrangements.
- The new National Funding Formula attempts to ignore inflationary cost pressures that all schools are enduring.
- The Department for Education does not know what the minimum funding required for an individual pupil is and how this relates to minimum school funding for a school to adequately resource staffing and equipment.

- The assumption that schools all have ‘further efficiencies’ to make is fundamentally flawed, especially for those schools that have been severely low funded for an extended period of time.

To make matters worse - far worse - the Department for Education continues to divert significant monies to capital and revenue funding such as Free School provision and Grammar School expansion and this does not always guarantee value for money. At the same time, our schools simply do not have adequate funds to provide the education that every child in our care needs and deserves.

To see such ill-judged spending being prioritised in a time of austerity is unacceptable. The disconnect between a Department making decisions that seem to entirely ignore the wishes and needs of dedicated and committed school leaders provides significant and tangible cause for concern.

School leaders simply want a reasonable settlement that sees every child in every school adequately funded. There is no question that schools with differing contextual challenges should be funded differently but this should not come at the expense of allowing every school to operate effectively on behalf of the pupils’ families and communities that we serve.

As a collective group representing over 3500 schools and 1.5million pupils we do not wish to be ignored any longer. We need, therefore, for our local political representatives to stand up for every school in their constituency and make clear that considerable changes to funding arrangements/proposals must be put in place.

Any permanent new funding formula will require parliamentary approval and this makes your role even more crucial.

The Department for Education has had two years (and huge resources) to produce a sustainable new formula – now is the time for implementing a formula that improves schools’ budgets for the vast majority rather than the few.

We would be grateful, therefore, for you to join us and sign up to the attached statement which we believe to be transparent, fair and reasonable. Schools and their communities will then be able to present a united front to the Department for Education to ensure that the children in our schools receive the educational opportunities that they deserve.

In turn, parents and carers will be able to see, without equivocation, that their child’s education is being put first by local school and political leaders and that meaningful changes to an urgently required new National Funding Formula will be put in place.

Yours sincerely

On behalf of

Brighton (secondary)	East Sussex	Peterborough	Wokingham
Cambridgeshire	Essex	Suffolk	West Sussex
Cornwall	Hertfordshire	Surrey	



Devon

Norfolk

Thurrock

