

From the Leader of the Council
Our Ref: **Leader/2017-03/010**

Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings,
20 Great Smith St,
Westminster,
London
SW1P 3BT

Wednesday 22nd March



Dear Minister

I am writing to you regarding the proposed National Funding Formula. Lambeth council has responded to the stage 2 consultation which closed today but I wanted draw out some of our key concerns to you because of the disproportionate impact that this policy could have on Lambeth. I would also like to invite you to Lambeth to meet with us and to see for yourself the educational success that our schools provide and why we believe that cutting their funding could put that success at risk.

Schools in Lambeth stand to lose up to £29 million by 2020 as a result of the cash freeze on per pupil funding, the proposed cuts to Education Services Grant and the further reductions proposed under the National Funding Formula. Over the last month we have engaged extensively with local head teachers to understand both practical implications of the loss of funding on their schools, as well as the potential impact on poorer students and other marginalised groups who face additional barriers.

Head teachers have told us that the combined loss of funding through the National Funding Formula and other additional pressures threatens to undermine their capacity to retain staff. Many schools already have a large staff turnover rate as a result of London's higher than average cost of living. This could be exaggerated as schools lose the capacity to reward staff for taking on additional responsibilities or invest in professional development.

In relation to support staff, head teachers told us that further reductions may mean schools lack the funding to employ additional support staff unless they have a specific legal duty to do so (should a child have special education needs and/or disabilities, and therefore be entitled to extra support). Head teachers have little doubt that reducing the amount of support available to pupils overall will both impact upon attainment and school performance in the medium to long-term, and could mean that the workload of teachers becomes increasingly untenable.

In addition, as the overall funding envelope available to schools reduces, it will become increasingly difficult for schools to address the diverse needs of Lambeth's community. For instance, head teachers we spoke to suggested that they will soon have no option but to reconsider arrangements to support children who are learning English as an additional language. Others suggested this may also be the case

where schools employ counsellors or learning mentors for children with mental ill-health to support their capacity to learn. This is extremely concerning as it undermines the ability of schools to meet their equalities duties to their pupils.

As well as an impact on targeted provision, the funding situation facing schools will mean that their capacity to offer a broad and diverse curriculum will be reduced. Some head teachers suggested that they may have to reduce their breakfast club, after school club and specialist music offer significantly, while others suggested that they may not be able to fund enrichment opportunities currently targeted at their most vulnerable students.

In summary, Lambeth's schools have been on a journey of steady improvement over the past two decades. This has taken us from being one of the worst educational authorities in the country to one of the best, largely as a result of the hard work put in by teachers, pupils, parents and the Council, underpinned by a commitment to invest in education. However, on top of a range of other pressures, the National Funding Formula has the potential both to undermine the stability of schools by making it harder to retain staff across a range of important roles, and to undermine fairness in the educational system as targeted provision for groups with additional needs becomes increasingly unfeasible. In turn, this may well mean that our improvement journey is put under threat.

For these reasons, we urge the government consider London Councils' key asks in response to this consultation agreed by its Leaders' Committee which represents the diverse political leadership of all of London's Boroughs:

- That all children receive a great education
- That the government finds an additional £335 million for the schools that stand to gain through the National Funding Formula without taking money away from other schools
- That the government revises the draft National Funding Formula to better reflect London's needs and to avoid a decrease in educational standards.

Yours sincerely,



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