

28/10/2022

Dear Secretary of State,

Ahead of the Autumn Statement, I am writing to highlight the demographic trends that we are currently experiencing in Lambeth, the effects of this on the financial stability of our schools, and the challenge this poses in terms of both ensuring sufficient pupil places and maintaining the quality of educational provision in the borough.

In Lambeth, like many other local authority areas within London, we have seen a dramatic decrease in the birth-rate, as well as outward migration, due to Brexit. Further, the cost-of-living crisis is squeezing residents out of our borough, and London more broadly, which is having a big effect on student numbers applying to our schools.

As you will be aware, school funding is distributed on a per-pupil basis. This means many schools in Lambeth face having to spend more than they receive in funding to provide educational provision, resulting in significant budget deficits.

In Lambeth, we have worked closely with our schools to do all that we can to keep schools running without the need to consider closures. This is a course of action that many other council areas have already done, which I'm sure you will appreciate is a distressing situation for pupils, parents, carers, teachers, and staff, as well as the communities' which schools serve.

This increase in pressure on the education budget is also being exacerbated by the increase in demand, and complexity of cases, for Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision as well as adequate Early Years funding.

The reality is that many schools across London are reaching a point of financial crisis.

In response we are urging the government to work with local authorities and schools to ensure that additional financial support can be directed to those schools and councils most in need, to save more schools from falling into budget deficits and ensuring that a quality education can be maintained for all children, wherever they are.

Without further government intervention, especially on early years provision for inner city areas, school closures will inevitably follow across London. Additional funding that accurately reflects the higher costs associated with providing education in London must be provided to councils and schools in London.

We will continue to offer families and school staff our firm support, practical help and assurance that we want schools to continue to offer the exceptionally high standard of education that children and young people receive in Lambeth schools – 95 per cent of which are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. We continue to work with schools to find solutions than minimise disruption and maintain this high-quality of educational provision.



However, this is becoming increasingly difficult. It is imperative that dialogue between the Department for Education, local authorities, and schools, is maintained so that you are fully aware of the difficult financial situation some of our schools find themselves in.

Government must work with local authorities and schools to find a financial solution that minimises disruption for our families and school staff, avoids the distressing threat and deleterious effects of school closures, and maintains the high-quality educational provision that pupils in Lambeth and London should expect.

I would be delighted to invite you to Lambeth to meet with myself and headteachers so that you are able to hear first-hand the challenges they face in balancing their budgets whilst delivering a high quality of education in our schools.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin Kind", set against a light grey grid background.

Cllr Ben Kind, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People