



Fair Funding for All Schools – Briefing Note

Who are we?

We are a network of parents that want the government to listen to our concerns about the funding situation facing state schools across England.

We were established in December 2016 by parents coming together from London, Wokingham and West Sussex and our network now encompasses parents across the country.

What do we want?

Our campaign is calling on the government to:

- Increase investment in all schools by protecting per-pupil funding in real terms for the life of this Parliament
- Provide the additional funding needed to implement the National Funding Formula that increases funding for maintained schools and academies in comparatively poorly funded areas of England without cutting funding per pupil for schools in any other part of the country, so that no school loses out.

What is happening to pupil funding?

Despite the Department for Education's claim that the government has "protected the national schools budget in real terms for the duration of the Parliament", evidence shows that per pupil funding is set to decrease over this period.

Per pupil funding is not keeping pace with inflation

The National Audit Office say that the government's spending plans do not provide for funding per pupil to increase in line with inflation. With over 450k growth in pupil numbers, funding per pupil is only rising by 1.3 per cent between 2015/16 and 2019/20.

Schools are facing big cost pressures

Pay rises, the introduction of the National Living Wage, higher contributions to National Insurance and the teacher pension scheme, non-pay inflation and the Apprenticeship Levy mean significant additional costs for schools.

Schools therefore need to find major savings

The NAO says that these cost pressures will force schools to find £3bn – equating to an 8 per cent real terms reduction per year in pupil funding by 2020. Schools have not experienced this level of reduction in spending power since the mid-1990s.

These pressures might be even bigger

These figures don't take into account other cost pressures created by the government, for example by reducing the Education Services Grant which provides funding to local authorities and academies for education services, e.g. school improvement and Special Educational Needs, schools will now need to pay more for those services.

Emma Knights, Chief Executive of the National Governors Association says:

The organisations who speak for school leaders, including business leaders, are saying the same thing as we are: there simply is no longer enough money in the total pot to sustain adequately all schools in England.

What will the impact be on schools, pupils and parents?

It is clear that every state school in the country is facing a worsening financial situation. The number of Secondary schools spending more than their income doubled to over 60 per cent in the last five years.

The government expects schools to find over half of the £3bn savings through cutting staff costs. The NAO reports that spending on teaching staff fell from 56 per cent to 51 per cent from 2010 to 2015 in maintained schools and from 55 per cent to 52 per cent in academies over the same period.

The National Association of Head Teachers states that in 2017:

Parents will start to see staff being let go this year. They will see bigger class sizes, fewer subjects on offer. They will see the person looking after special education needs go, and all those other additional services disappear.

The National Governors Association state that:

Funding is now the biggest concern for governing boards across the country. Unless there is urgent reform an increasing number of schools will be unable to balance their budgets in 2017 without significant staffing reductions which will affect the quality of education provided to pupils.

The latest schools census shows that last year there were 17,780 state secondary pupils taught in classes with 36 or more pupils – the highest number for a decade. The days of large classes are returning.

Schools facing increasingly difficult financial positions have turned to asking parents for termly cash payments to supplement core school budgets.

What will be the impact of the National Funding Formula?

In April 2018 the government will be introducing a National Funding Formula – the aim of which is to ensure more transparent and equal funding for pupils across all schools in England, addressing historical imbalances.

However, the government will achieve this by redistributing money between schools from a total pot that is shrinking in real terms. And therefore, according to the government's own figures, 49 per cent of schools in England will lose even more funding with over 2 million children in the worst affected schools.

The impact of the NFF will be felt most obviously in large cities such as London and Manchester – London Councils report that 70 per cent of schools across Greater London will face budget cuts in a climate when school finances are already struggling.

But all schools in England will still be worse off

The Times Education Supplement notes that the majority of those who are set to gain out of the NFF changes will still stand to lose out as a result of the real terms cuts in funding highlighted by the NAO.

Analysis by teaching unions indicates that around 98 per cent of schools in England will be net losers as a result of the combination of real-terms reductions, additional costs, growing pupil numbers and the impact of the National Funding Formula.

What do we want to happen?

We want fair funding for all schools, but it should not come from levelling down school spending in an already impossibly tight situation. Shifting money between schools while the entire budget is shrinking is doing no-one any favours.

At a minimum, we want to see the government ensure that no school loses funding as a result of the new National Funding Formula. London Councils say this would cost £335m a year to achieve. That is less than 1 per cent of the annual schools budget.

But we also want to see investment in our schools. We want per pupil funding to be protected in real-terms over the life of this parliament.

And we want funding that allows schools to deal with the additional costs placed on them, without losing staff, without increasing class sizes, without cutting subjects and activities, without reducing support services and without calling on parents to fund core budgets.

We are one of the richest countries in the world, we can and must invest in a decent education for all our children and invest in our future.