



# #FlatCashEd

## East Sussex Schools' Campaign for Fair and Sufficient Funding

24 May 2018

BLW/TER

Mr Huw Merriman MP  
Conservative (Bexhill & Battle)  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Huw

We are writing on behalf of the East Sussex Headteachers to thank you for enabling us to meet on 15 May. We, and the Headteachers we represented, appreciate both the investment of your time and the willingness to listen. We also acknowledge and are grateful for the fact that the letter from our primary colleagues had been read and considered.

It was helpful that in the course of just one hour that a wide range of points were discussed, and some misconceptions were addressed by all parties. As Headteachers we understand and appreciate that our Members of Parliament do not view school funding as a closed topic and understand there is still much work to do. Equally it is appreciated that simply stating schools do not have sufficient funds, whilst true, is too wide a message for MPs to be able to meaningfully lobby about.

Therefore, it was a useful outcome to determine a priority of critical factors that MPs from all parties could meaningfully lobby on. We attempt to set these out below.

### **1. Teaching and support staff pay rises need to be funded outside of the current schools budget.**

It is important that this is applicable from September 2017 as not all Local Authorities have been able to implement the full recommendations of the STRB and the STPCD, including East Sussex. Therefore, any resolution to this situation would always be “playing catch up” if it is not backdated and unable to match pay scales nationally.

The implications of not being able to do this are widely accepted by Headteachers, Local Authorities and Unions. The national crisis in recruitment and retention has not escaped East Sussex and if our students are to be able to have quality, permanent staff we must be able to provide comparable pay. The impact of relying on inadequate or temporary staffing as in NHS models of working will be detrimental to our young people's education and future will have a significant and lasting impact on the education and future prospects of many young people.

**2. Going forward, there is a need for far fewer individual “projects” but instead that all available funding within an education budget support the application of an enhanced basic AWP that is at least inflationary linked.**

This would help to ensure adequate funding for all schools and the ability to financially forward plan with some certainty within the anticipated benefits of the National Funding Formula.

Without this safeguard going forwards, even if the staffing costs were met for the next 3 years it is highly likely MPs post bags would fill up again after this point as Heads and Governors point out a repeated inability to manage a static income linked to rising costs.

**3. There is a need for a review of SEND funding.**

The new provisions under the Children and Families Act raised expectations and demands on schools and Local Authorities to make a broader range of provision for children and young people with SEND. These ambitious reforms have been underfunded at a national level and the additional costs are borne by schools and Local Authorities. Combined with the increasing numbers of children with SEND, this position is unsustainable.

With the raising of parental expectations, we are also seeing an increase in demand for high-cost Independent and Non-Maintained specialist placements. Independent schools have exploited the provisions in the Act and offer provision beyond what is required to meet needs; these costs are pass-ported onto Local Authorities and local schools. Again, the High Needs Block has not increased to match the growth in the Independent Non-Maintained Special sector and to address this pressure resources have to be drawn away from all children across the county.

The unfunded expansion of the age-range, has meant that more young people age 16-25 are progressing onto provision with funded statutory plans. The costs of post-16 placements are increasing as schools and colleges experience funding pressures and rely on the High Needs Block to make inclusive provision. The pressure on the High Needs Block has been relieved by drawing funds from the schools block, this further impacts on the resources available to schools.

Heads are well aware of the increasing pressure on MPs time created by the complaints and concerns regarding SEND provision; and these pressures are replicated at school and LA level. There is a willingness within East Sussex to ensure that every child is well supported to achieve their potential, however the pressure on funding to support the increase in need is creating a crisis.

The current situation is compounded by pressures on school budgets as the need to balance budgets has led to reductions in pastoral and support staff and, in some cases, the ability to provide support beyond that which is statutory for students who most need it. The consequent disparity is a contributing factor in a national concern around increasing exclusions and increases in crime and anti-social behaviour.

#### **4. A review of 6th Form funding.**

Whilst it is acknowledged that schools do not have the VAT disadvantage that Colleges experience, there is a long standing disparity between the funding received by schools for 11-16 students and that received post-16 in the same establishment. Over time this has been exacerbated. We request that the 20% cut in Sixth Form per pupil funding is reversed back to 2010 levels. As the financial pressures have grown, funding that might once have supported a school sixth form to its desirable breadth, no longer extends to this luxury.

In a rural area such as East Sussex, the ability for students to study to the highest level and have access to Higher Education depends on their ability to succeed in their local school. This will not be possible if sixth forms have to close or reduce their offer so greatly that routes to Further and Higher Education are restricted. Parity of funding will enable equality of opportunity for all our students in a rural area.

#### **5. A full review of capital funding would ensure the condition of the school estate is able to be improved and maintained going forward.**

Many East Sussex schools were built in the 1950s and are now showing increasing signs of age. The Comprehensive spending review of 2010 reduced capital budgets by around 80% and since that time there has been little to no investment in maintaining or improving the condition of schools that applies to all schools.

For illustration for 17/18 alone, a significant number of maintained schools have had to make a contribution to capital spending from their revenue funds. A total contribution of over £700,000 has been made across the county. Indications for balance reviews going forward are that schools are having to earmark revenue funds for specific capital projects and these contributions will continue to be significant over the next year and beyond.

The ability for academies to apply for CIF support diminishes as more academies create a greater demand on the same fund. Within the Local Authority, as central budgets have been squeezed, the available resource for which schools have to bid, has also reduced to addressing only the unsafe or urgent.

#### **6. A review of the apprenticeship levy.**

Currently employers with a payroll bill below £3m are exempt from paying the levy, this exemption applies to many voluntary aided schools, SATs and smaller MATs. Meanwhile, maintained schools, whose payroll is managed by the local authority as the employer, are all subject to the levy irrespective of their individual size or employment bill. This is not fair. Furthermore, no additional funding was provided to schools for this (additional cost of £447k for E Sussex schools for 17/18.) Whilst paying the levy gives access to the apprenticeship levy vouchers, in reality, many schools in East Sussex are too small or under too much pressure to be able to employ an additional apprentice or take advantage of the training credits in any effective way. The levy is therefore in effect an extra tax for many schools, adding to their financial pressures.

Finally, as East Sussex Headteachers we would once again wish to assure you of our commitment to provide the highest standards of education possible for our young people. It is in all our interests and our ambitions that students from our schools go on to highly successful and productive lives, ultimately returning to enhance the environment in which they grew up.

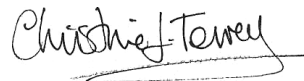
No current Head expects to return to the “old days” of educational spending, but there is a level beyond sparsity which will enable us to provide students with safe and stimulating environments alongside a talented stable teaching staff who are able to lead students to high quality outcomes and aspirational futures. At present we are far from this position and we need your support to ensure East Sussex schools are resourced to be able to provide the vision that we all share for our young people.

Thank you for your time and your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely



**CAROLINE BARLOW**  
Chair of East Sussex Secondary Heads Group  
Heads Strategic Board



**CHRISTINE TERREY**  
Chair of East Sussex Primary

cc:

Cllr Bob Standley (ESCC)

Mr Stuart Gallimore (ESCC Children's Services)

Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP (Lab, Brighton Kemptown (includes Peacehaven)

Stephen Lloyd MP (Lib Dem, Eastbourne)

Amber Rudd MP (Con, Hastings and Rye)

Maria Caulfield MP (Con, Lewes)

Nus Ghani MP (Con, Wealden)