



NEWS RELEASE

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MPs urge Chancellor to increase education funding and make it fairer

More than 80 cross-party MPs have written to Chancellor Philip Hammond urging him to increase school and special needs funding before permanent damage is done to the education of children across England.

MPs Gary Streeter (Cons), Laura Smith (Lab) and Layla Moran (Lib Dem), who are all vice chairs of the f40 education fair funding campaign group, have been joined by a host of fellow Members of Parliament in asking the Chancellor to invest more cash into education and to make the National Funding Formula fairer.

In a letter to Mr Hammond, the MPs – many of whom represent the lowest-funded local education authorities – said the f40 campaign group sought fairness and equal opportunities in education for children, regardless of where they lived.

At present, some schools receive as much as £3,000 less per child a year than other schools – which would amount to almost £1m a year less for a school with 330 students – leaving them struggling to meet the curriculum and provide the teaching support required.

Some schools are even closing on Friday afternoons, to give teachers the preparation and planning time required, because they cannot afford to pay for an additional teacher to cover those sessions.

The MPs have urged the Chancellor to consider in this year's Comprehensive Spending Review:

- Removing historic inequalities and funding protections in the system
- Significantly increasing funding for all schools
- Raising basic entitlement to ensure costs of running a school are met
- Injecting at least £1.4bn immediately in High Needs

The letter states: “The f40 group continues to have fundamental concerns about the new formula. We believe the Government has replaced one unfair system with another, as some of the historic unfairness has been locked into the new formula.

“We are concerned that the formula does not give enough basic entitlement to schools and allows too much for add-ons, enabling big differences in funding to occur between different local authorities and schools.”

They also said they had grave concerns about a lack of funding in schools and the growing crisis in the High Needs sector, with many schools and local authorities reporting huge deficits in funding for children with special educational needs.

Mr Streeter, MP for South West Devon, said: “Schools are being asked to take on more and more work that traditionally was undertaken elsewhere, such as youth work, parental support and mental health.

“Schools need to be suitably funded and trained for this work. In real terms, funding has not kept pace with costs and demands and, as a result, schools are finding it extremely difficult to meet basic expectations.”

Ms Smith, MP for Crewe and Nantwich, said: “Headteachers, on a daily basis, are having to make incredibly difficult decisions about where cuts can be made and this is ultimately impacting on the education of our children. Education should be the core of this country, yet we have schools having to close on a Friday afternoon because they cannot afford to stay open. That should not be allowed to continue.”

Ms Moran, MP for Oxford West and Abingdon, said: “Schools in Oxfordshire have suffered for years from underfunding compared to schools in more urban areas – 231 schools in our county have suffered from real-terms Government cuts to per-pupil funding since 2015. Their new formula hasn’t fully resolved this.

“Worse still, schools across England are under huge financial strain, stopping pupils getting the education they deserve. Schools should not have to sack teaching assistants and crowdfund for basic supplies just to balance the books. We cannot fail our children, particularly those with high needs who have borne the brunt of these cuts.”

Headteachers back f40 campaign

Headteachers have also spoken out and urged the Government to make the National Funding Formula fairer, and to increase the per pupil allocation.

Martin Casserley, Headteacher of Black Firs Primary School in Cheshire, said increases to third party payments, such as national insurance and teacher pay rises above the expected 1%, had caused the school’s salary bill to rise by £45,000 last year.

“It’s not going to be long before a school goes bankrupt,” he said.

“The National Funding Formula was supposed to be equitable, but it will never be equitable. Children need extra funding for deprivation, I get that, but what has deprivation got to do with special needs? If I have a child with Down Syndrome, whether that child is here in Cheshire, Nottinghamshire, London or Cornwall, the needs of that child are the same.”

Paul Gosling, Headteacher of Exeter Road Community Primary School in Devon, said schools are in crisis over lack of funding. He said he had reduced the number of teaching assistants at the school from 24 to 18 in order to cut costs and was facing a budget deficit of £100,000 this year.

“We have been through everything – curriculum, books, paper suppliers, and unfortunately we still can’t make the budget balance, so we are going to have to make more staff cuts.”

Andrew Taylor, Headteacher of Upper Wharfedale Secondary School in North Yorkshire, said rural schools were experiencing real difficulties. He said the issue with the National Funding Formula was that it treated all schools as if they were the same.

He said the funding cuts, and the fact that his school did not receive the same financial add-ons as some other schools in other areas of the country, meant he was struggling to make ends meet.

“A school like this receives almost £3,000 less per child than a school in Hackney, for example. In a school with 300 pupils, that is around £900,000 less a year,” he said.

“We desperately try to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum. To do so costs money, but it’s money that we don’t have.

“We have recently been rated Outstanding by Ofsted, but to maintain this level of provision, with this level of funding, will be extremely challenging.”

Ends

For more information about this press release or the f40 group, call:

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About f40

The f40 campaign group was launched more than 20 years ago with the central aim of influencing significant change in the way Government allocates funding to local authorities and schools. The group is made up of 42 local authorities who are among the lowest funded for education in England.

f40 seeks fairness and equal opportunities in education for all children, regardless of where they live, and wishes to see schools properly funded and equipped to enable them to provide a quality education to meet the future needs of Britain.

For more information about f40, go to www.f40.org.uk