



Hardwick & Cambourne Community Primary School

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New Government Funding

Dear Parents and Carers,

Together with all of the primary school headteachers in South Cambridgeshire, we are writing to you concerning the very difficult funding situation that our schools are currently facing. This is not a step that we have taken lightly but with the proposed changes being made to the funding formula that allocates money to schools and the significant cut in money in real terms that our schools receive from the government we feel that we have no choice but to inform you of the unsustainable pressures we are under and to ask for your support.

In recent weeks, television, radio, newspapers and internet have given considerable coverage to the proposed National Funding Formula that the Department for Education (DfE) is currently consulting on. As many parents will be aware, for decades Cambridgeshire schools have not been given the same levels of funding per pupil as their counterparts across the border in Essex, Hertfordshire or, indeed, the vast majority of other local authorities in the country. Cambridgeshire remains one of the worst funded areas, simply because this was the rate of funding established in the 1980s and it has been seen by successive governments as being too difficult to fix without redistributing significant money from better funded authorities.

We were therefore pleased when the current government announced that they were to overhaul the funding formula and deliver on its promise to introduce 'fair funding' – that for the first time it would not matter which part of the country you lived in, a pupil would receive the same amount of money in order to be educated.

However, it has become apparent over the past few months that this will not be the case. The proposed new funding formula will in fact 'lock-in' the existing poor levels of funding with only minor adjustments. For a school such as Hardwick and Cambourne Primary, when reductions in other funding grants are reduced, we are only projected to receive a very small additional amount in funding each year. In South Cambridgeshire the average increase in funding is only 0.5% and some of the county's schools will in fact lose money under the proposed formula. Very little funding is being redistributed from the best funded authorities in the country to support areas such as Cambridgeshire.

This in itself would be hugely challenging to deal with. But on top of the failure of the National Funding Formula proposal to address our needs, we are also facing financial cuts of 8% between now and 2020, reducing our ability to deliver the quality education that we believe is crucial to the life chances of our pupils. Increases in staff pay of 1%, higher national insurance contributions and overall rises in inflation are not being met by the government. Consequently, our fears about reduced staffing levels, increased class sizes and reductions in curricular and pastoral provision are likely to become a reality in either the short or medium term. This is a view supported by the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies (www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8027) and by the National Audit Office (

sustainability-in-schools/) which stated that schools across the country had to find £3 billion of efficiency savings in order to maintain current educational standards.

In Cambridgeshire, there are no more efficiencies to find.

Headteachers in Cambridgeshire schools are dismayed that our financial situation looks so bleak. Together with school leaders, teachers and other school staff across the country, we are united in our belief that the current situation is unfair and unsustainable. We ask the government in the strongest terms to revisit their proposals for the funding formula to ensure our children in Cambridgeshire are not disadvantaged compared to their neighbours in other counties and also to fund the 8% gap in our funding. We are now reaching breaking point.

In response, we have spoken to our local MP, have met with the Department for Education and have responded to the consultation on the fair funding formula. Professional associations will also be using social media to make the case for improved funding, including via Twitter #WhatWouldYouCut. But we desperately need your support if we are going to get fair and adequate funding for schools and pupils in this county.

We urge you to respond to the consultation on fair funding. This is open to everyone. We have drafted out our responses to the questions in the consultation and these can be found on the school website on the parents page of our Its Learning site (if you are receiving this letter by email, you will find it attached). The questions and answers can be quite technical in nature and you may think that responding to such consultations achieves very little. We are assured that this is not the case, i.e. numbers do count and it is **absolutely vital** that the voice of Cambridgeshire is not lost when all local authorities in England are arguing for additional funding, including those in relatively better funded areas. Our responses are suggestions; please do use our responses to the questions if you wish.

The consultation closes on 22 March 2017.

In addition to filling in the consultation, you may wish to sign the petition held at the school reception. You can also write to the Education Secretary, Justine Greening MP. Our MP, Heidi Allen is very supportive of our position and is making her own representations to government. However, it is vital that parents, teachers and governors add their voices by completing the consultation and signing the petition. Heidi will deliver completed petitions from every school directly to Number 10 Downing Street. It is essential we make our case. If you live outside Heidi's constituency, please contact your own local MP.

As headteachers we will do everything in our power to ensure the highest possible standards of education for our young people, now and in the future, to provide them with the rich and vibrant learning opportunities that are their right, and to care and support them. But it is also important that we let you know how challenging the situation is now and how it is likely to continue becoming more difficult in the months and years ahead. Your support as we continue our campaign is crucial in getting fair and adequate levels of funding for our pupils at Hardwick and Cambourne Primary and across our county.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth French and Andy Matthews
Headteachers