



Bassingbourn Village College

South End, Bassingbourn, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 5NJ

Telephone: 01763 242344 Fax: 01763 248122

Email: Office@bassingbournvc.net

Website: www.bassingbournvc.net

Part of the Anglian Learning Trust

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Registered address: Lode Road, Cambridge CB25 9DL

Mr D Cooper
Principal

10th March 2017

Dear Parents and Carers

Together with all of the secondary school Headteachers in South and East Cambridgeshire I am 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, however, 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 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 the 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 Bassingbourn Village College, when reductions in other funding grants are reduced, we are projected to **lose £16,000 in funding each year**. In South Cambridgeshire the average increase in funding is only 0.5% under the proposed formula. Very little funding is being redistributed from the best funded authorities in the country to support those areas such as Cambridgeshire.

This in itself would be hugely challenging to deal with. 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. This will materially affect our ability to deliver the outstanding 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 (<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8027>) and also by the National Audit Office (<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/financial-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 all Cambridgeshire schools are dismayed that our financial situation looks bleak so, 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 and we are asking the government in the strongest terms to revisit their proposals for the funding formula to ensure our children here in Cambridgeshire are not disadvantaged compared to their neighbours in other counties. We are also asking them to restore the 8% gap in our funding. We are now reaching breaking point.

In response we have spoken to our respective local MPs, 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.

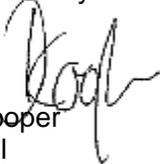
But we desperately need your support if we are going to get fair and adequate funding for schools and pupils in this county.

We urge you to respond to the consultation on fair funding. This is open to everyone. We have drafted our responses to the questions in the consultation we are attached. The questions and answers can be quite technical in nature and you may think that responding to such consultations achieves very little but 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, please contact our MP, Heidi Allen, to express your concerns and copy your letter or email to the Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond MP and Education Secretary Justine Greening MP. Heidi is supportive of our position but it is vital that she knows and can demonstrate to the DfE the strength of feeling in this area. Details of how to contact Heidi and government ministers are listed below. It is essential we make our case. If you live outside of Heidi's constituency, please contact your own local MP.

As Principals and Headteachers, in both primary and secondary schools, we will do everything in our power to ensure the highest possible standards of education for your children, 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 to be 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 Bassingbourn Village College and across our county.

Yours sincerely



Mr D Cooper
Principal

Together with all secondary school headteachers in South and East Cambridgeshire:

Mr D Cooper, Principal, Bassingbourn Village College;
Mrs J Rankin, Principal, Bottisham Village College;
Ms C Coates, Principal, Cambourne Village College;
Mr P Law, Head of School, Comberton Village College;
Mr S Lock, Headteacher, Cottenham Village College;
Mr R Spencer, Principal, Ely College;
Mr R Campbell, Executive Principal, Impington Village College;
Mr R Kelsall, Principal, Impington Village College;
Ms Helena Marsh, Principal, Linton Village College;
Mr S Holmes, Principal, Melbourn Village College;
Dr C Taylor, Executive Head, Soham Village College;
Mr A Daly, Principal, Swavesey Village College;
Mr C Terry, Principal, Witchford Village College;

Heidi Allen : Email: heidi.allen.mp@parliament.uk
Constituency office address: 153 St Neots Road, Hardwick, CB23 7QJ

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP : Email: hammondp@parliament.uk
Address: House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Justine Greening MP : greeningj@parliament.uk
Address: 3 Summerstown, London SW17 0BQ