

Dear Parent/Carer

We are writing to you as Headteachers of the Secondary and Middle schools in North Tyneside. We work very closely and collaboratively as a group of schools to provide the best possible educational experience for all students in North Tyneside. GCSE and A level results were excellent across our schools last year and above national average. We are a top performing local authority in the North East and we are particularly proud that 95% of children in North Tyneside attend good and outstanding schools in Ofsted terms. This is, we understand, a higher proportion than any local authority outside of London. There is much to be proud of here in North Tyneside.

However, we feel it is our duty to alert you to our serious concerns about the funding of Education by the government and its impact on all middle and secondary schools in North Tyneside. Schools and academies in our local authority remain significantly under-funded when compared to the national average or London. For next year (2017-18), North Tyneside schools will receive funding of £4,452 per student from the government. This is around £1,500 less per student than the average London borough. We are constantly compared to and reminded about how successful the London schools are with regard to their students' progress and achievement. Is it any wonder when the London schools have been so generously funded compared to the rest of the regions for years? For example they had £120 million invested in their schools under the 'London Challenge' initiative a few years ago. This has been the standard set that all schools and academies must aspire to but our regions have to achieve the same outcomes with no additional money; in fact with cuts to our budgets.

This unfairness is having a crippling effect upon schools across our region. The government continues to maintain that our schools financial situation will improve with the introduction of a National Fair Funding Formula that should have been in place by April 2017 but has been delayed until 2018–2019. The DFE say they are introducing this national funding formula to make funding fair for schools and children. They have launched a consultation which is open until March 22nd. We urge you to respond to it. They have published the effect on each school and area in their impact tables. Unfortunately, secondary and middle schools in North Tyneside will collectively get £1,424,000 less per year. There is only one school in the whole of the North East that will fall by the maximum 3.0% but next worse off are seven of North Tyneside's High schools who are facing a 2.9% reduction. All of our High schools will lose at least 2.7% of their funding going forward. This makes an already unfair situation even more disadvantageous for us.

The government keeps saying it is putting more money than ever into education. The overall education budget may well be rising. This, however, is due solely to the increase in the number of pupils in the education system (7.367 million in 2016 to 7.835 million in 2020: A 6.35% rise). The per-pupil funding rate is not increasing. Costs in areas such as pensions, unfunded pay rises, the new apprenticeship levy and National Insurance contributions are estimated, by the Independent Institute of Fiscal Studies, to have further slashed our budgets. The report from the IFS finds that between 2010/11 and 2015/16, funding for education fell by around 14 per cent in real-terms – taking us back to 2005/06 levels.

Furthermore, the report says that spending per-pupil is expected to fall by a further 6.5 per cent in real-terms between 2015/16 and 2019/20. The IFS also warns that the new National Funding Formula proposals will create "winners and losers" in terms of overall school funding. It is clear that North Tyneside Secondary and Middle schools will be losers.

The National Audit Office report think the cut will be an eight per cent real-terms reduction in per-pupil funding between 2015 and 2020 and warned that schools will have to find £3 billion in savings during this period. However, the government is not listening to schools and Jonathan Slater, the permanent secretary at the DfE, has stated that efficiency savings of £3 billion expected by government are “doable” without larger class sizes, curriculum changes or damaging pupil performance. This is simply not true. Many schools have already cut as much as possible and are now down to the bare minimum required to run an efficient, effective and safe school. Any more cuts would be disastrous. The situation has not been helped with the recent Budget allocating £360m extra funds for new free schools and grammars, but nothing more for running costs for existing schools.

School leaders have made every conceivable cut to our provision and now we are faced with reducing basic services still further, all to the disadvantage of your child. Our finances are so bad that we are all having to consider actions such as: increasing teacher to pupil ratios again; reducing basic services such as cleaning and site and premises work; stopping any investment in books and IT equipment; designing curriculum offers that fulfil only basic requirements and not replacing staff who leave.

As you can imagine, such radical considerations are the very last thing that any school wishes to do but we are being given no option. We do not understand why children in our region are worth less to the government than children in other areas of the country

It is the belief of all school leaders that the time has come for immediate action that will enable us to provide the service that your child deserves. To that end, we are again urging the government to pledge to close the financial gap between our region and the London schools and fund schools properly for the new financial year beginning April 2017. The issue is worse for North East schools where a legacy of underfunding has left schools exposed. Analysis by SCHOOLS NorthEast shows that, on the basis of the current 2016-17 funding levels, our region would benefit from an extra £323m per year if it were funded at London levels, and around £42m if funded at national levels.

Much of the above analysis is directly from what the DfE are telling us. However, the situation is likely to be even worse. A number of the teacher Unions (including NAHT, NUT and ATL) have produced a calculator of their own. They have used published Department for Education data to calculate cuts to England’s primary and secondary schools over this Parliament (from 2015 to 2020). This coalition of unions are behind the School Cuts website, which is forecasting how increased costs and the National Funding Formula will affect schools between 2015 and 2020. Their analysis shows that 98 per cent of schools in England will be worse off in real-terms by 2020. The situation for schools in North Tyneside is particularly bleak. The prediction is that by 2020 there will be a total estimated reduction across all schools in North Tyneside in real terms of -£8,891,162. This equates to £346 less for every one of our 25,697 pupils. You can find out your school’s position via this website www.schoolcuts.org.uk.

We urgently need your support. There is a petition on the website that we would like to ask you to sign (<http://www.schoolcuts.org.uk>) and if you feel strongly we would urge you to contact your MP in writing asking him or her to raise these concerns with the Education Secretary as a matter of importance. School leaders will always act responsibly on behalf of the children we educate and care for. We need your support in order to do this to the best of our abilities.

Yours faithfully

North Tyneside Secondary and Middle Headteachers