

January 2017

Dear Mr Herbert



### **Worth Less? Worth Enough?**

Along with other colleagues in your constituency I am contacting you with regard to school funding from April 2017 onwards.

You are aware, of course, that our school budgets are under extreme strain at present. As a result my school - and others - are having to reduce staffing levels, increase class sizes and make cuts to a raft of curricular and pastoral provision.

Sadly, the proposals made under the new National Funding Formula do not provide a meaningful remedy to the problems outlined above and in previous correspondence to you. Whilst the formula itself provides greater transparency and fairness for schools across the country, other significant factors, particularly those connected to core funding levels and the introduction of huge unfunded cost burdens (stealth taxes on schools), have undermined the whole process.

For ease of reference a detailed breakdown of the impact of such funding arrangements can be accessed here:



National Funding  
Formula – response

Along with other school leaders I am able to positively acknowledge the introduction of a new funding formula. I also recognise that along with other local representatives, you have lobbied the DfE both on emergency funds required for 2017/18 and the importance of a new national formula.

The fact remains, however, that no school in West Sussex has been offered any additional support for the financial year 2017/18. Even when the DfE's own statistical projections are used, the majority of West Sussex schools, including my own, are likely to find themselves in a "standstill" or worse financial position over the next 3 – 4 years.

School leaders and I have also been disappointed that a meeting with colleagues from the DfE mooted by West Sussex MPs in November has not taken place.

I must emphasise again that the financial outlook for my school and others is extremely bleak. It seems that no matter how clearly we state our position or how reasonable our approach is, no improvements are made to either the financial or associated staffing crises that so many of our schools are facing. In the case of the new NFF proposals/consultation the DfE is simply 'giving with one hand whilst taking away with two'. With this in mind I feel obliged to pose the following questions:

- Why is the DfE failing to provide emergency funding to West Sussex schools in 2017/18?
- Where has the £500million earmarked for wholesale academisation gone?
- What has happened to the government's commitment to protect per pupil funding in the lifetime of this parliament? (Please see National Audit Office Report Dec 2016)
- Is it acceptable that even after the introduction of the National Funding Formula West Sussex schools (as a whole) will still be the 148<sup>th</sup> worst funded Local Authority in England? (This is mainly due to the 3% cap of school funding changes proposed under NFF)

- Where should school leaders make the cuts and savings required to balance their budgets – staffing reductions, further increased class sizes, withdrawal of counselling and pastoral services, modified school hours, reduction in books, IT and equipment?
- In light of the chronic funding shortages noted in this letter, do you support other costly DfE initiatives such as the introduction of grammar schools or the opening of Free Schools where there is no “basic need”?

Along with other colleagues, I believe that it is important that school leaders in West Sussex work with their political representatives in order to secure a much better deal for the pupils and families that we serve. Once we have been able to ascertain your position on each individual question (noted above) we look forward to being able to work together to achieve this fundamental aim.

Yours sincerely

Becky Linford

Upper Beeding Primary School Headteacher

And on behalf of Primary, Secondary and Special School Headteacher Executives