

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL
COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY MEETING)
WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH 2017

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Meeting with Education Minister regarding the National Schools Funding Formula

The Government is consulting on changes to the national funding formula for schools. The new formula will take money away from schools in Southwark by approximately £379 per pupil per year. For a two form entry school this amounts to £22,740 for each year group – more than the cost of a teaching assistant. For a three form entry school, this amounts to a £34,110 for each year group – more than the cost of many teachers.

On 10th February I and the borough's MPs wrote to the Education Secretary to ask for an urgent meeting to discuss her department's proposals for changes to the education funding formula. We wanted the Government to understand the impact that the existing funding has had on improving education in Southwark and that slashing that funding will have a catastrophic impact on our children's learning.

I would like to thank local parents and the SPACE (Southwark Parents Against Cuts in Education) campaign who have also been pressing the government hard to reconsider this proposal. Their commitment to this issue is sending a powerful message to ministers not to penalise local children for their success.

The existing funding formula has helped to address the challenges which we face in Southwark. It helps schools handle issues associated with deprivation, mobility, a very rapid increase in demand for Special Education Needs places and other factors such as higher salary pressures, based on the high cost of living in the capital. The impact of this funding has been to vastly improve standards in the borough. Since 2010, the number of schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted has risen from 64% to 93%. Our students are achieving higher grades in external examinations, and on the new attainment 8 measure for GCSEs, we are performing significantly higher than comparator boroughs.

Today I, together with the borough's three MPs met with Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for School Standards to press the case for Southwark schools and the devastating effect that the Government's policy will have on the borough's students.

The Minister's response was that Southwark schools were funded adequately and they needed to expect cuts. He was clear that this was going to go ahead and that headteachers would simply have to find a way of making it work.

It is clear from our meeting that the Government has not properly considered the consequences of the cuts to Southwark. The minister's view was that schools could cut things like electricity bills and IT spending to make up this funding shortfall. However, with around 70 per cent of a school's budget being spent on staff salaries electricity bills will not be enough. This proposal clearly means fewer teachers and support staff posts in schools, as well as increased class sizes and a narrower curriculum.

The Government is of course right to try to raise standards elsewhere in the country. London out performs the rest of the county and it is right that other areas receive the same excellent education levels which our local schools deliver. The solution to raising standards should be to pull the country up to be level of London, not to push London down to the level of the rest of the country. From the Ministers response this morning it is clear that once again this government is putting the needs of Southwark and London second regardless of the consequences for local children.

A prosperous future for London and the UK starts with the very best education for all children. The challenge of a knowledge and skills shortage will only become more acute if we do not protect the excellence that exists in London schools. This administration will continue to oppose these cuts and will stand alongside local parents to get the schools funding that our children need and deserve.