

Association of Sandwell Governing Bodies

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School Funding

Dear Mr Watson,

As the Association of Sandwell Governing Bodies, which represents a majority of schools in your constituency, we are writing to you to highlight the funding challenges we are facing and ask that you support an increase in the overall schools' budget.

Despite determined efforts to find savings, we have been forced to come to the conclusion that current levels of funding are unsustainable. The governing boards and senior leadership teams in many of our schools have been grappling with the funding challenges, leading to an increasing number of tough decisions being made.

All of our schools would be able to give you examples of the decisions they have been forced to make. These would most certainly include a reduction in the number of support staff in school, with the resultant impact on some of our most vulnerable SEND pupils and reduced investment in computing equipment and skills, thereby depriving our students the much needed appropriate skills for their future.

Sandwell schools are not alone. Each year the National Governance Association, the representative organisation for school governors and trustees, conducts a large-scale survey in conjunction with *Tes* magazine. In 2018, just half of respondents' schools had a balanced budget and almost a third had an in-year deficit, with the vast majority expecting reserves to run out within two years. Like us, schools were taking drastic measures to stay afloat, including reducing the number of teaching and support staff, delaying building maintenance, increasing class sizes, not investing in much needed equipment and reducing the number of subjects and qualifications available to pupils.

It's clear to see why. The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) has [calculated](#) that total school spending per pupil has fallen by 8% in real terms between 2009-10 and 2017-18. This is in part due to a 55% cut in local authority spending on services for schools, meaning schools have had to replace them from their own budgets, and cuts of over 20% to sixth-form funding. Funding provided per pupil to primary and secondary schools has also been hit hard over the past few years, falling 4% since 2015. The government tells us that school funding is at record levels but this is a hollow claim – the reality is that pupil numbers and costs are both rising.

While our schools work hard to ensure that financial pressures have as little impact on pupils (outcomes) and staff (wellbeing) as possible, rising costs and having to do more with the same amount of money means that many tough decisions have been made. Like almost three quarters of governors and trustees across the country, we cannot manage these pressures without immediate damage to pupils' education and long term damage to our education system.

As our MPs, we ask that you fight on our behalf for the overall schools budget to be increased in order to combat the impact of rising costs and pressures to increase performance. To that effect, please write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in time for the autumn budget and continue to make your voice heard in the run up to the comprehensive spending review

As this is an issue which affects us all, we will of course keep parents and the wider school community informed about your action in response.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Bob Patel MBE,
Chair of the Association of Sandwell Governing Bodies,
Sandwell