



October 7, 2021

Plea to prioritise education and SEND in the Comprehensive Spending Review

Dear Prime Minister

I write as Chair of the f40 fair funding in education campaign group, which represents more than 40 local authorities and hundreds of schools across England.

As we await the Comprehensive Spending Review, we urge Government to provide significant extra funding to education, including special educational needs, and to publish the long-overdue SEND review to enable major reform to follow.

We believe that as we emerge from the pandemic, we need to look at how best we can bolster our education system to ensure young people reach their potential – despite disruption to their learning.

In years to come Government, and the country as a whole, will be judged on how well we supported our children and how we invested in our schools, so it's vital that we act now to prevent irrevocable long-term damage to young people.

We are asking:

Covid recovery – Additional funding is required for all schools to ensure children are supported academically and emotionally to ensure they are able to catch up on lost learning. We welcome the additional funding provided so far, but more investment is needed, including in Early Years, where the greatest impact has been felt. The Recovery Premium Funding announced in September only caters to Pupil Premium children, so many will not qualify. Some schools will receive very little of this funding but still need to provide support to pupils.

SEND – This continues to be a major concern. The number of children with special educational needs, and their complexity of need, continues to grow, with demand far outstripping budgets. While we appreciate the increase in SEND funding during the last two or three years, significant additional funding is required for both mainstream and special schools. We urge Government to publish the long-overdue SEND review and to overhaul the SEND system to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Increased funding - The pandemic has placed greater stress on already tight budgets. For a number of years, education funding has not kept pace with inflation, while the demands on schools and teachers have grown rapidly. In real terms, school funding is at 2010 levels. Education requires a substantial uplift to ensure schools are able to provide quality teaching for all.

Fairness – While Government is attempting to level up funding, the process is very slow and schools in some areas continue to receive far less funding than schools in other areas as many of the historic inequalities continue to be locked in. Many large rural communities and 'shire' local authorities still receive inequitably less funding, despite having sizeable pockets of deprivation. The basic entitlement should be enough to run a school, before extra money is added on for deprivation and higher area living costs.

Early years - Early Years has become a major concern throughout the pandemic, with the future of many providers hanging in the balance. The pandemic has also impacted on the readiness of young children to learn. Without additional funding, the effects will be felt for many years to come.

We urge Government to do right by our children and to invest in education now to ensure they are able to reach their potential without long-term consequences of the pandemic. Arguably, they have suffered the most during the past 18 months and we must do everything now to ensure they recover.

Kind regards

James McInnes
Chair of the f40 group and Cabinet Member at Devon County Council