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D. Hinds

Thank you for your letter of 26 June, addressed to the Prime Minister, about school funding. Your letter has been passed to my department and I am responding as the Secretary of State for Education. I would be grateful if you could share this response with your co-signatories.

We know that children only get one chance of a great education. That is why this government's record has been to prioritise spending on schools. Core funding for schools and high needs has risen to £43.5 billion this year. The Institute for Fiscal Studies figures show that in real terms, per pupil funding for 5 to 16-year olds in 2020 will be more than 50% higher than it was in 2000.

We want this to build on the significant progress we have made in ensuring school funding supports an education system that offers opportunity to everyone. The national funding formula is now directing money where it is most needed, based on schools' and pupils' needs and characteristics, to ensure that funding is distributed fairly.

Since 2017, we have given every local authority (LA) more money for every pupil in every school, while allocating the biggest increases to the schools that have been most underfunded. We have also announced a School Resource Management Strategy, which provides practical advice on savings that can be made on the £10 billion non-staff spending costs across England last year.

Our ambition for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is exactly the same as for every other child and young person, which is to achieve well in school and college, find employment and go on to live happy and fulfilled lives. That is why we have increased high needs funding for children and young people with the most complex SEND, from £5 billion in 2013 to £6.3 billion this year, including an additional £250 million announced in December.

We are investing a total of £23 billion capital funding in schools between 2016-17 and 2020-21. This will deliver new school places and provide allocations to LAs and academy trusts to maintain and improve their estates. The Chancellor of the Exchequer provided an additional £400 million capital funding for schools at Budget 2018. Our Priority School Building Programme is rebuilding or refurbishing buildings in the worst condition at over 500 schools across the country. A new school Condition Data Collection, due to complete in autumn 2019, will provide updated information on the condition of state funded schools in England, so that we can carry on targeting funding in the most effective way.

It is worth noting that educational standards are on the rise. The proportion of pupils in good or outstanding schools has increased from 66% in 2010 to 85% in 2018, and this is partly down to our reforms, while our primary school children achieved their highest ever score on the most recent international reading tests in 2016.

We do, however, recognise the pressures that schools face as we ask them to do more. As you will know, the government is yet to set revenue budgets beyond 2019-20. We will, of course, consider very carefully the right level of investment to enable headteachers to carry on delivering a world-class education, to build a highly skilled economy, and to ensure future generations can meet their full potential, no matter their circumstances.

I am committed to securing the right deal for education, and I would like to assure you, headteachers and school leaders that I am setting out a very strong case for education as we approach the Spending Review.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely
D. Hinds

Damian Hinds
Secretary of State for Education