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**Cllr Chris Barnham**  
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## **From London Lead Members for Children (listed at end)**

Dear Nadhim,

### **Funding for Schools**

Many congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Education. We know that your previous experience as Minister for Children and Families will have given you insight into the challenges faced by vulnerable families and children, and we welcome the aspiration you have expressed to: “*ensure every child and adult receives the education they need to fulfil their potential.*” We share that aim, but we must draw your attention to a policy you inherit that puts it at risk.

Your department is developing a national funding formula for schools. A consultation which began in July includes proposals effectively to end from 2023/24 the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant. This funds local authority services for schools, including admissions; attendance, and welfare; as well as indirect support, such as elements of legal, human resources, IT, audit, data protection etc. The level of funding varies from area to area and to some extent is based on the historic commitment that a local authority has made to its local schools.

The impact will accordingly differ by area, but as an illustration in one of our London authorities, Lewisham, ending this grant will represent a cut of £4.85m by comparison with 2019/20. Other authorities will suffer higher losses. There appears to be no commitment to transfer funding cut from a local authority to the schools in that area. This will mean a substantial cut in funding for our schools, coming on top of real terms reductions in school funding in earlier years. At the very least we would expect funding lost to the local community of schools through this reduction to be ring-fenced for those schools, so that they can make a local choice about the support they will receive in the future.

London schools serve many children who may face severe challenges. Many of our children are growing up in poverty. This has been made worse by the impact on many families of the pandemic. A good education is the most important thing

we can offer our young people. But the task is not made easier by the impact on children and families, and our wider community, of a decade of damaging austerity. Nor is repairing the educational damage done by the pandemic helped by the disappointing funding settlement for recovery, far below that recommended by the government's own recovery adviser, Kevan Collins.

Against that background, the impact of this proposed funding change will be that maintained schools will have to decide how to replace the services they currently receive from the local authority. We hope and expect that they will choose to pay for a continued service from their local authority. The alternative, of course, is that schools joining a multi-academy trust (MAT) would have to contribute 8-10% of their budget for support the local authority currently provides at a much lower cost. In either case, schools will have to find money from shrinking budgets to pay for what they currently receive at no cost to them.

We understand that this funding approach is of a piece with the government's desire to push more schools to join MATs. Pursuing that aim in this way is unfair, and detrimental to the interests of children. The funding penalty will be most acute in areas where fewest schools have so far chosen to join MATs.

Your predecessor said that the government's "*ambition is for all schools to be in a strong family of schools.*" We agree with this. We disagree however with the suggestion that this can only be achieved by schools who belong to multi-academy trusts. Our councils are committed to all our schools and education providers, and to working with them to continue to improve the education and life chances of all our children and young people. Where fewer schools have become academies, it is because their governing bodies and communities have chosen not to, and they have also not been rated inadequate by Ofsted (avoiding a forced academisation). It is unfair and perverse that children should face a financial penalty and educational damage because of these choices made by their school governors, and for their schools not failing Ofsted inspections. "Levelling up" should not involve cutting funds to schools serving some of the most disadvantaged children.

We are ready to work with you to build a stronger and fairer schools system. In the light of the consultation, we hope that you will take the opportunity to reconsider this damaging policy. We would of course be very glad to welcome you if you wanted to visit us, and talk to school staff and governors.

Best wishes,



**Cllr Chris Barnham**

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Performance

Also signed by:

**Cllr Anntoinette Bramble** - Deputy Mayor, London Borough of Hackney

**Cllr Ed Davie** – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Lambeth

**Cllr Thomas Stephens** - Lead Member for Education, Employment and Skills,  
London Borough of Brent

**Cllr Alistair Strathern** - Lead member for Children and Young People,  
Waltham Forest

**Cllr Evelyn Carpenter** - Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and  
School Improvement, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

**Cllr Jasmine Ali** - Deputy Leader, Southwark Council & Cabinet Member for  
Children, Young People & Schools

**Cllr Zena Brabazon** - Cabinet Member, Early Years, Children and Families,  
Haringey

**Cllr Sarah Ruiz** - Cabinet Lead Member for Children's Social Care and  
Education, Newham

**Cllr Eleanor Stringer** - Joint Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children  
and Education, Merton

**Cllr Alisa Flemming** - Cabinet Member – Children, Young People & Learners,  
Croydon