

10<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

In collaboration with all of the secondary school headteachers in South and East Cambridgeshire, I am writing to you concerning the very difficult funding situation that our schools are currently facing. This is not a step that we have taken lightly. With the proposed changes being made to the funding formula that allocates money to schools, and the significant real terms cuts that our schools face in terms of the money we receive from the government, we feel that that we have no choice but to inform you of the unsustainable pressures we are under and to ask for your support.

The media has given considerable coverage in recent weeks to the proposed 'National Funding Formula' that the Department for Education (DfE) is currently consulting on. As many parents will be aware, for decades Cambridgeshire schools have not been given the same levels of funding per pupil as their counterparts across the border in Essex, Hertfordshire or, indeed, the vast majority of other local authorities in the country. Cambridgeshire remains one of the worst funded areas, simply because this was the rate of funding established in the 1980s. This has been seen by successive governments as being too difficult to fix without redistributing significant money from better funded authorities.

We were therefore pleased when the current government announced that they were to overhaul the funding formula and deliver on its promise to introduce 'fair funding' – that for the first time it would not matter which part of the country you lived in, a pupil would receive the same amount of money in order to be educated.

However, it has become apparent over the past few months that this will not be the case. The proposed new funding formula will in fact 'lock-in' the existing poor levels of funding with only minor adjustments. In South and East Cambridgeshire the average increase in funding is only 0.5%, and some of the county's schools will in fact lose money under the proposed formula. Very little funding is being redistributed from the best funded authorities in the country to support those areas such as Cambridgeshire.

Although we at Ely College do stand to see a modest uplift if the proposed formula is implemented, this will not compensate for rising costs and reductions in other funding streams. All schools are facing financial cuts of 8% between now and 2020; this hits our ability to deliver the outstanding education that we believe is crucial to the life chances of our pupils. Increases in staff pay of 1%, higher national insurance contributions and overall rises in inflation are not being met by the government. Consequently, our fears about reduced staffing levels, increased class sizes and reductions in curricular and pastoral provision are likely to become a reality in either the short or medium term. This is a view supported by the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies (<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8027>) and by the National Audit Office (<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/financial-sustainability-in-schools/>) which stated that schools across the country need to find £3 billion of efficiency savings in order to maintain current educational standards. In Cambridgeshire, and for Ely College, there are very few more efficiencies to find.

Headteachers in all Cambridgeshire schools are dismayed that our financial situation looks so bleak and, together with school leaders, teachers and other school staff across the country, we are united in our belief that the current situation is unfair and unsustainable. We ask the government in the strongest terms to revisit their proposals for the funding formula to ensure our children here in Cambridgeshire are not disadvantaged compared to their neighbours in other counties, and also to fund the 8% gap in our funding.

In response we have spoken to our respective local MPs, have met with the Department for Education and have responded to the national consultation on the fair funding formula. Professional associations will also be using social media to make the case for improved funding.

**But we desperately need your support if we are going to get fair and adequate funding for schools and pupils in this county.**

We are asking you to respond to the consultation on fair funding. This is open to everyone. We have drafted out our responses to the questions in the consultation and these can be found on the College website (<http://www.elycollege.com>) under the 'Parents' section. The questions and answers can be quite technical in nature and you may think that responding to such consultations achieves very little but we are assured that this is not the case. The numbers responding will count, and it is absolutely vital that the voice of Cambridgeshire is not lost. Our responses are suggestions: please do use our responses to the questions if you wish. The consultation closes on 22 March 2017. The link to it is as follows: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula2/>

In addition, we ask you to contact our MP, Lucy Frazer, to express your concerns, copying your letter or email to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond MP, and Education Secretary, Justine Greening MP. Lucy Frazer has been a loyal and supportive friend to Ely College, but it is vital that she hears the strength of feeling in this area so that she can represent our case to the government. Details of how to contact Lucy and government ministers are on the school website at <http://www.elycollege.com> under the 'Parents' section. If you live outside of Lucy's constituency, please contact your own local MP.

As principals and headteachers, in both primary and secondary schools, we will do everything in our power to ensure the highest possible standards of education for our young people, now and in the future, to provide them with the rich and vibrant learning opportunities that are their right, and to care and support them. But it is also important that we let you know how challenging the situation is now, and how it is likely to become increasingly difficult in the months and years ahead. Your support as we continue our campaign is crucial in getting fair and adequate levels of funding for pupils, both at Ely College and across our county.

Yours faithfully



Richard Spencer  
Principal

Together with all secondary school headteachers in South and East Cambridgeshire:

Mr D Cooper, Principal, Bassingbourn Village College;  
Mrs J Rankin, Principal, Bottisham Village College;  
Ms C Coates, Principal, Cambourne Village College;  
Mr P Law, Head of School, Comberton Village College;  
Mr S Lock, Headteacher, Cottenham Village College;  
Mr R Spencer, Principal, Ely College;  
Mr R Campbell, Executive Principal, Impington Village College;  
Mr R Kelsall, Principal, Impington Village College;  
Ms Helena Marsh, Principal, Linton Village College;  
Mr S Holmes, Principal, Melbourn Village College;  
Dr C Taylor, Executive Head, Soham Village College;  
Mr A Daly, Principal, Swavesey Village College;  
Mr C Terry, Principal, Witchford Village College;