

Fairer Funding for our Schools – proposed by Cllr Carpenter, seconded by Cllr Twomey

“With 9 out of 10 schools judged Good or Outstanding, the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham remains committed to delivering the best possible education opportunities for all children. We are proud of our schools and those who work in them.

The impact of the pandemic over the last year means there has never been a greater need to increase funding for our schools which play such a vital role in our children’s and young people’s learning and development.

The government’s own Education Recovery Commissioner recently called on them to invest £15bn in our schools to repair the damage caused by the pandemic. Instead, they have chosen to invest less than 10% of this, or £1.4bn. The government has spoken of its commitment to levelling up the poorest parts of the country, but it has broken this promise.

The government’s funding commitment to schools, amounting to just £50 per pupil per year, is woefully inadequate. In some instances, our schools are being forced to make cuts to staffing and resources. Parents and teachers and all those who work in our schools deserve better and feel rightly let down.

The government has added insult to injury following their decision to alter funding for the most disadvantaged pupils by moving the goalposts for those eligible to the Pupil Premium. This equates to a £150 million funding cut in places like Barking & Dagenham.

It is not only in our children and young people’s interests, but also in the interests of the long-term prosperity of communities up and down our country that the government thinks again.

The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham therefore calls on the government to reverse its decision to cut the Pupil Premium and reinstate the Education Recovery Commissioner’s recommendations which would provide the funding our schools need so we can deliver the best by our children.”

Comment from Section 151 Officer

The Government have provided additional funding to allow schools to increase their provision for disadvantaged pupils as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each school will receive funding from the Covid Recovery Premium Fund (£6k per primary school, £22k per secondary school) and have access to register for the National Tutoring Programme and Summer School funding. The COVID Education Recovery Plan (worth £1.4bn nationally over three years) will provide £50 per pupil to support tutoring courses and provide training and support to teachers.

As Section 151 Officer, my opinion is that this funding falls far short of the funding required to support the most disadvantaged pupils in LBBD to catch up on the learning they have lost

over the past 16 months. The prolonged period of lockdown followed in many cases by multiple periods of self-isolation will have a significant impact on the educational achievement of the most disadvantaged pupils.

In addition, the Department for Education have changed the timing of when they calculate pupil premium funding. Instead of using January as the annual point for measuring numbers of eligible pupils, the government has used October 2020 data. This change was introduced without notice or consultation. Many children will have become eligible during the period between October 2020 and January 2021, in part due to the effect of the pandemic. Additional funding to support the needs of these pupils (£1,345 per pupil in primary and £955 per pupil in secondary) will not be received.

Nationally this has created a £150m funding shortfall for the 2021-22 school year. We estimate the funding shortfall for schools in LBBDD to be £1.2m. My view as Section 151 Officer is that the DfE should have made this change only after consultation with schools and with consideration of funding a transition period to address shortfalls arising from this change. In the context of increasing need it does not seem the correct approach to move the funding goalposts in this way. As a borough with significant levels of deprivation, this change is likely to disproportionately affect schools in LBBDD. The Government should consider introducing an interim payment to make up the shortfall created by this policy change.