



Mr J. Brooks
Headteacher
Maplewell Hall School
Woodhouse Eaves
Loughborough
LE12 8QY

Date	2 March 2018
Ref	PM957/msb
Your Ref	
Contact	Paul Meredith
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Dear Mr Brooks

I refer to your letter dated 14th February 2018 sent to me by email on 16th February 2018 relating to the audit report and statutory proposal concerning the residential facilities at Maplewell Hall School.

As I mentioned to you, I think it would have been very helpful if we could have had a discussion about this at the meeting which was scheduled for 1st February with the Lead Member Mr Ould and myself which unfortunately you did not attend.

I am unclear as to the status of your letter dated 14th February. It has been received after the closure of the representation period for a response to the Statutory Notice and cannot therefore be considered as a response to that notice. I note also that your letter states that it is submitted in response to the audit report although much of the content is wholly unrelated to that document and instead makes general representations in relation to the future arrangements for the provision.

However, taking those points that you have made about the audit report (and having taken advice from the Head of Service) I would respond as follows:

Con't...

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Paul Meredith, Director of Children and Family Services

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- a. You make the observation (page 3 para 4) that *'The audit report refers to the school using excess residential funds being used to pay off the school's existing deficit. This is not and never has been the case. Such assumptions simply serve to feed conspiracy theories that Maplewell has somehow misled people.'*

If the level of residential funding is significantly in excess of the costs of provision then it follows that the 'excess' has been utilised elsewhere within the School budget, and subsequently has helped to reduce the deficit. The report is clear (i) that the reduction to the deficit is an indirect consequence of 'overfunding'; but (ii) is not considered by the Auditor to have been an unlawful use of funds.

- b. I do not accept that the report *'is written in such a way that it implies that Maplewell Hall School has somehow mismanaged funds to get itself into deficit'* as alleged in your letter (page 4 para 2). The scope of the audit did not include making any judgement about the school's historic deficit and no work was undertaken to review this nor were any comments made about why the deficit was so high in the past. The report is clear that there is no suggestion of financial impropriety on the part of the school or governing body in the management of the delegated budget.

- c. You state (page 3 para 3) that the Officer who undertook the audit was *'...at pains to point out that he could not understand why he had been asked to undertake such work'*.

The officer concerned has informed me that he has no recollection of making such a statement but he recalls explaining to you that he had not been involved previously in any issue to do with the Maplewell residential provision and so was asking questions about something in relation to which, at that time, he had limited knowledge.

Save for the three issues commented on below, I do not intend to go through point by point the other matters that you have raised in your letter as these are covered either in the cabinet report, will be addressed directly to cabinet at the meeting or relate to other SEND services which do not directly relate to the matter in hand.

Fire safety

I confirm that there is no link whatsoever between the fire safety visit referred to which took place in October 2017 and the proposal in relation to the residential facility. As you are aware from the various correspondences we have had on this matter the visit was made as part of the review of fire safety risk in all Leicestershire schools following the tragedy at Grenfell Tower. One of the main areas of fire risk identified by the DFE relates to schools with a residential facility; Maplewell Hall School is the only LA maintained school in this category which accounts for your school alone being visited in this way. It is disappointing that you have chosen to view the Council's diligence in relation to this vitally important safety issue as a negative event or act of harassment.

The Council's commissioning arrangements

You refer to the Council '*brokering deals with private providers in order that they can support with transition. In one such instance they were asking for a daily fee to be paid by a maintained school to a private provider*'

The Children and Family Service does commission places from independent providers to support the education of young people if their assessed need indicates that this would assist them to achieve their outcomes. Where the child is on the roll of a maintained school, part of the costs of this provision may well be met by that school. This is an entirely appropriate arrangement.

The Council's staff

I note that your letter refers specifically to a member of staff within my department who has been working throughout under my direction to advance these proposals. You have focussed on one member of a team who were all engaged in this work and who were all party to discussions with you about the proposed changes. I am deeply concerned about this and I regard your comments in relation to this member of my staff and your colleague as overly personal, inappropriate and unprofessional. Whilst I was aware that some tensions existed between you and members of my staff emanating from the proposals at no time have the detailed assertions in your letter been raised formally via the correct procedure. I have a duty of care towards staff in my department which I take seriously and I cannot see any basis in your letter for the allegations that you have made about the way in which this task has been approached as being accurate. It is inappropriate and professionally damaging to the member of staff in question for your unfounded allegations to be placed into a public facing document. Accordingly, I have taken steps to remove these references from your letter in order that this material may be presented to the Cabinet in due course when they consider the proposals. I have no option other than to bring the allegations you have made to the attention of the member of staff concerned and will ensure that they are supported in relation to this matter particularly bearing in mind your comment that you have '*taken the liberty of sending this letter to all elected members*'.

I trust the above sets out my position.

Yours sincerely



Paul Meredith
Director, Children & Family Services

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