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 Secretary of State for Education  
 House of Commons  
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22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023

Dear Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education,

Following a meeting of the Leicestershire Schools Forum, of which I am Chair, all members were very concerned about the recent changes in 2024/25 school funding announced by the Department for Education, following a quite severe reduction in 2024/25 National Funding Formula allocations due to a miscalculation by the Department.

*“The Department first published the 2024-25 NFF in July 2023. Following the discovery of a technical error made by officials during the initial calculations, an update was made to the schools NFF in October 2023. This document reflects that update. The technical error was due to incorrect processing of pupil numbers in the initial calculations. This error meant that the overall cost of the schools NFF was underestimated, and incorrect factor values were published in July.*

*This update contains the new, correct, factor values. No other changes have been made to the structure of the NFF, or the rules governing the local formulae, since July. The total amount of funding in the core schools budget (which includes funding through the schools NFF, high needs NFF, and CSSB) will remain at £59.6 billion in 2024-25.*

*The high needs NFF and CSSB are unaffected by this update.”*

This is because of an error in processing pupil numbers by the department, which were underestimated resulting in the cost of the National Funding Formula exceeding the National Funding Settlement. This means that the minimum per pupil funding has been reduced from £4,665 per primary pupil and £6,050 per secondary pupil to £4,610 and £5,995 respectively.

As we understand it, the DfE have instigated an inquiry over how this error occurred and have apologised for it. However, there is no indication of whether the inquiry into this funding calculation will be made public, and if so when that may be. This error is not one of our schools making and we would urge the department to deliver the funding values for 2024/25 as published in July.

New analysis of school funding, compiled by Schoolcuts.org & ASCL Union, shows that in spite of our schools already being understaffed and physically crumbling, suggests that nationally 92 per cent of mainstream schools face real terms cuts from April 2024.

For Leicestershire schools the position is alarming, particularly given we have a high number of small rural schools. Largely these schools sit on the funding floor, are either have deficit budgets or moving to that position with very lean staffing structures and low non staffing expenditure. As a result of under inflation budget increases these schools are faced with staffing cuts that will reduce the curriculum offer. Many of these schools are moving towards a position of financial unviability despite them being at the heart of their community and essential for the communities they serve.

	Primary		Secondary	
	October	July	October	July
<b>Number of Schools:</b>				
Funding Floor +0.5% per pupil	34	15	6	1
Gains up to 2% per pupil	110	26	32	8
Gains of up to 3% per pupil	32	92	4	28
Gains up to 5% per pupil	36	63	1	5
Gains over 5% per pupil	16	32	1	2
<b>Total Gain £m</b>	<b>£3.270</b>	<b>£5.738</b>	<b>£6.665</b>	<b>£9.018</b>
<b>Overall Movement £m</b>		<b>-£2.468</b>		<b>-£2.353</b>
<b>Overall Movement %</b>		<b>-43.0%</b>		<b>-26.1%</b>
<b>% per Pupil Gain from 2023/24 Baseline</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>

Leicestershire schools desperately need more funding. Running costs are soaring, buildings are deteriorating and in desperate need of repair. A further example of the financial pressures on small schools the NFF Formula to contribute towards renting communal spaces for small schools. This currently totals £70k and gives 7, some of which clearly as a result of the National Funding Formula, is exceptional funding for schools needing to rent additional space to allow them to deliver the curriculum. We have provided funding in this way since the introduction of the NFF, for 2024/24 the DfE are putting significant pressure not to provide this and indeed are asking for disproportionate levels of evidence. Overall, these allocations are immaterial to school funding in general but significant to the schools affected. If this is not allowed from April 2024 these schools will not be able to fully provide the curriculum, for many alternative spaces are simply not available and if they were then disproportionate levels of capital would be required to address the shortfall in space which is simply unavailable. We would urge the DfE to approve the submitted disapplication request with some urgency.

Leicestershire Schools Forum feel very strongly about these issues and as the voice of Leicestershire schools we urge the Department to act. All mainstream schools in Leicestershire are doing their best against considerable financial difficulties, the financial position of schools is a significant factor driving the Leicestershire High Needs Dedicated School Grant deficit.

We are especially concerned, as the education of all children is essential to support the UK in retaining its position in the world as a leader. The outstanding education of the UK's population is the only way in which this can be assured.

Something must be done to stop this. Children only have one chance at education and this Government needs to act now to save our schools.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Towers

Chair of Leicestershire School Forum  
Finance & Operations Director of Welland Park Academy  
Chair of Governors at Huncote Primary School