



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

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Response to Crossley Heath Grammar School - National Funding Formula – February 2017

Thank you for contacting me about school funding, and in particular, the level of funding awarded to Crossley Heath Grammar School.

The Government has announced plans to end the historical postcode lottery in school funding which are intended to ensure every child is funded fairly and according to their specific needs, delivering the Government's pledge to build a country that works for everyone.

The Government has protected the core schools budget in real terms since 2010, but the system for distributing that funding across the country is unfair, meaning a school could get 50 per cent more if it were situated in another part of the country. In order to fix this disparity, the Government has published its fair funding proposals, to ensure that children with similar characteristics and similar needs attract similar levels of funding - regardless of where their families happen to live.

As a result of the proposed national funding formula, due to be introduced from 2018/2019, more than 10,000 schools will gain funding, including more than 3,000 receiving an increase of more than 5 per cent by 2020. Significant protections have also been built into the formula so that no school will face a reduction of more than more than 1.5 per cent per pupil per year or 3 per cent per pupil overall. Here in Calderdale, the total amount of funding that schools receive will increase from £152, 830, 945 in 2016/17 to £156, 264, 029 in 2019/20 – an increase of 2.2%. A clear majority of schools, both primary and secondary, within Calderdale benefit from an increase in funding under the new formula.

Calderdale has traditionally lost out under the current funding formula, even locally where we get less per pupil than every other local authority area in West Yorkshire and I am pleased that the historic under-funding of schools within our area will be addressed by the new formula. The proposals will allow schools and local authorities to manage the transition to fairer funding while making the best use of their resources and managing cost pressures, ensuring every pound is used effectively to drive up standards and have maximum impact for the young people they serve.

I understand that Crossley Heath Grammar School is projected to see its funding reduced by 1.5% in the first year after the new funding formula takes effect. Although I appreciate that the reduction in funding is disappointing for all those connected with the school, it is the role of the Headteacher at the School to efficiently manage the school budget in a way which ensures that a good standard of education can be provided to all pupils. A significant part of the funding that schools receive is 'top-up' pupil premium funding which is linked to pupils who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Crossley Heath has 54 pupils who attract such funding which is proportionately less than you would expect in a school of its size. If Crossley Heath chose to devise proposals to ensure that it attracted more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds it would be able to attract more pupil premium funding, and thus, have a larger budget to spend on each pupil. This is just one of many ways in which the school may choose to revise its admissions policies in order to attract more funding; there are, of course, many similar approaches which the school may wish to pursue.

Please let me reassure you that I am committed to ensuring that both of our local Grammar Schools continue to flourish. In September 2016 the Government published a consultation that asked for views on a range of proposals aimed at creating an education system that extends opportunity for everyone. This consultation has recently closed and the responses are being analysed so I look forward to reading the Government response when it becomes available. The proposals that have been put forward aim to address this by expanding the number of good school places available to families, not just those who can afford to move into the catchment area of the best state schools. The consultation has sought views on creating a more diverse school system, including the role that selection can play in opening up excellent places to more children, particularly the disadvantaged. I fully support relaxing the existing restrictions on selective education and I hope that the changes the Government are looking to make will assist both of our local Grammar Schools in the future.

I sincerely appreciate your concerns in relation to the impact that the fair funding formula may have upon Crossley Heath in the future. Although I acknowledge that the reasons behind why the Government are seeking to change the way in which funding for schools is calculated will not ease your disappointment, I hope that you can understand the reasons why the Government are looking to make this change.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whittaker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig Whittaker MP