

Dear Geoff Raw,

I am submitting the following letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Children, Young People and Skills Committee meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

Recent Government announcements of £14 billion in extra funding for schools have been met with some delight. However, I am concerned that we should not allow political spin to confuse our understanding of the position our schools still find themselves in in Brighton and Hove. I want to ask that when we in this council talk about the funding of our schools we deal only in sober reality.

The fact is that our local schools have endured a decade of cuts which have left them struggling. Teaching Assistants have been lost, repairs have been cancelled, old equipment has not been replaced, and parents are being asked for 'voluntary donations' to pay for the basics.

When our Government announces an enormous figure like £14 billion extra for schools it is meant to create the illusion that the problem is, or is about to be, solved. I feel very strongly that we owe it to our family of schools to level-headedly examine the reality of the situation.

I have been dismayed to see in print and to hear at Full Council our Conservative colleagues joining in with the smoke and mirrors of Boris Johnson's education funding pledges: the £14 billion which becomes £7.1 billion as soon as you look at it in direct sunlight. To be clear: the figure is arrived at by adding the extra spending of £2.6 billion for next year and the £4.8 billion for the year after to the final increased spend of £7.1 billion which is planned for 2022-23. This is not how spending increases are calculated.

The fact is that our school funding crisis is not over. Boris Johnson's promised extra investment will not even begin until the next school year and will not reach its full £7.1 billion until 2022-23. When this money does arrive, the IFS tells us it will bring funding back to roughly the level it was in 2010 in real terms. In other words, I feel it will be most welcome, but it will still represent a 13-year period of no net growth in school spending per pupil. I want us to remember that this is the real situation in our schools.

Our children's education is too important to be spun for political gain. The repetition of the Government's smoke-and-mirrors figures by local councillors seems particularly distasteful when we all, no matter what our political persuasion, represent residents whose children are in schools which have cut support staff, mental health support and outside services. Our schools do an amazing job, but they are often doing it with holes in the roof. If any of us pretend otherwise then how can we also pretend that we support them?

The spin which comes from our government has recently been thrown into sharp relief by the work of local campaigners. I would like to congratulate the parent-led Save our Schools on their ongoing efforts to bring together and empower school communities to take a stand against the cuts and to disseminate their usual meticulously researched information about what is happening in our underfunded and overstretched schools. I would also like to highlight their current social media hashtag #DontBelieveTheHype as being advice I would like us all to take. If and when the increase in education funding arrives it will be hugely useful. In the meantime, to score political points through exaggerated claims shows an unhelpful lack of respect for our still-struggling schools. I would like to request that when we discuss education funding on this committee and in this council we stick to the facts.

I would be grateful if this committee could consider requesting council officers to provide details of the cuts to the Dedicated Schools Grant budget over the last decade, including outlining any loss of ring-fenced grants (e.g. admissions) now included as a liability under the DSG and what an increase in funding to our schools would look like.

Councillor Sarah Nield

