

## Mel Stride MP



### HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Judith Hart  
Clerk to Buckfastleigh Town Council  
Town Hall  
Bossell Road  
Buckfastleigh  
Devon  
TQ11 0DD

**Ref: MS/CW/2087**

**Please quote reference when replying.**

**Date: 5 April 2017**

Dear Judith

Thank you for your letter of 27 March regarding the very important issue of local education.

I have campaigned for fairer funding for local schools for over a decade – including several years prior to first becoming a Member of Parliament in 2010. I, along with others, lobbied hard for Devon and I was pleased that in 2014 an additional £16m was made available to us in recognition of our low funding relative to other parts of the country. However, I have always maintained that more needs to be done.

The current proposed national funding formula would see the majority of the schools in our constituency receive more funding than is presently the case although for those who would lose I accept that this will naturally present a challenge. Those who would lose funding would have the reduction capped at a maximum of 1.5% in any one year. Over our constituency as a whole we would receive an additional 1.1% as a result of the proposals.

As you know, the current proposals are not yet finalised and have been subject to a thorough consultation. As part of that consultation I wanted to make sure that I had a very clear understanding of the concerns of local schools right across Central Devon. The consultation period has now concluded but whilst it was live I held discussions on the funding proposals with the Head Teachers of a number of our primaries including Buckfastleigh, Exminster, Chudleigh, Landscore (Crediton), Christow, Okehampton and Bovey Tracey. I also held separate meetings at their schools with Heads and Governors of Okehampton College, QE (Crediton) and South Dartmoor College. Following my local consultations, I met with our Schools Minister, Nick Gibb in Westminster, accompanied by Ian Courtney (Chair of the National Governors' Association and Chair of Governors of Okehampton College) and Daryll Chapman (Head Teacher at Okehampton College). I very firmly pressed the local concerns that have been shared with me. We spent a significant time with the minister and we went through the proposed new formula in some detail with him and his officials particularly focusing on the impact of the sparsity and deprivation elements which I believe need to be reconsidered. I encouraged as many local people as possible to respond to the consultation and the Government is now carefully analysing the submissions it has received.

On receiving your letter I also held a further meeting with Nick Gibb specifically to discuss it with him and to ask that his department responds to your questions relating to local data. He has agreed to do so and I left a copy of your letter with him.

Regarding the views being expressed about the consultation I think it is important to make a general point about some of the information that is circulating on this issue. It is right that policy is

scrutinised but I have been concerned about the accuracy of some of the critical statements that have been made. Many parents have been led to believe that funding itself has been cut right across the board (or that there are just a few schools getting a small additional amount whilst many schools are losing a very large proportion of their funding). This is not the case. In Central Devon more schools would receive more funding than would lose funding with an overall additional £0.5 million going into our constituency's schools over the lifetime of this parliament.

An area of significant misunderstanding has resulted from the promotion of figures from certain campaign sites whilst failing to make it clear that the data they provide includes not just the proposed changes in funding but projections of various cost changes going forward. The cost figures themselves are worthy of clarification. You mention the inflationary figure of 8.7% but I think it is important, without in any way downplaying the challenges that inflation presents, to stress that this figure includes 3.1% that has already been absorbed by schools in the year 2016/17. It is also not the case that NI increases, national teacher pension increases and national living wage increases are additional to the 8.7%. They are included within it as are other inflationary costs.

I am grateful to you for getting in touch. As someone whose mother and father had no choice other than to leave school at 14 and 15 years old and whose own life was transformed by a free education I am firmly committed to achieving the best possible educational provision for our local children especially those who come from the poorest backgrounds. With this in mind I have made education a priority locally. I served as a governor of Okehampton College for many years and I lobbied hard locally for the funding for the new Atrium School at South Dartmoor College - I was honoured to help open this great new facility in January last year.

I have also very much wanted our local children to aim as high as possible and to benefit from the life changing gift that education can provide. With this in mind, for several years I have taken students from our 3 state secondary schools to meet with admissions staff and current students at Oxford University to try and encourage our brightest to have the confidence and self belief to aim high irrespective of where they started in life. Education is the great route for social mobility and I care about it. I am proud that today 1.5 million more children are being taught in schools that are classified as 'good' or 'outstanding' by OFSTED than was the case in 2010.

I will be back in touch when I have a response to your letter from the DfE.

Thank you again for getting in touch.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely



Mel Stride

**MP for Central Devon**  
**Comptroller of the Household and Government Pairing Whip**