



2021-0043359POSoS

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/df

Cllr James McInnes
Chair of f40, Deputy Leader at Devon County Council
By email: karen@dtw.co.uk

Dear James,

5th December 2021

Thank you for your kind letter of September 29, regarding my recent appointment as the Secretary of State for Education, and your letter to the Prime Minister of 7 October, about education and the Spending Review. Your letter to the Prime Minister has been passed to me and I have been asked to reply.

It is an absolute honour to be appointed to this position, and I am delighted to be leading a department that does such vital and important work. It is a privilege to be able to work with our brilliant teachers, college staff, lecturers, social workers and support staff who are making such a difference to people's lives with their commitment and professionalism. By working collaboratively, we can face the challenges of the day and ensure every young person has the opportunity to realise their full potential.

Every child and young person in the country has experienced unprecedented disruption to their education as a result of COVID-19, and those from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds will be amongst the hardest hit. Over the past year, we have made several major announcements to support education recovery. Each has been a step in our efforts to make sure children and young people are supported through their ongoing education recovery, using evidence-based practice.

In February 2021 the government announced the recovery premium, a new one-off grant worth over £300 million for state-funded schools in the 2021-22 academic year. Building on the pupil premium, the recovery premium will help schools to deliver evidence-based practices to support the most disadvantaged pupils.

We recognise that educational loss is significant and widespread. However, we also know that disruption has been more acute for some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable. The one-off recovery premium allocations will reflect disadvantage funding eligibility. In this way, schools with more disadvantaged pupils will receive larger amounts.

We have included a 'floor' to ensure that no eligible primary school will receive less than £2,000 and no secondary school, special school, pupil referral unit or hospital school will receive less than £6,000.

Schools have flexibility in how they choose to spend the recovery premium, and they are encouraged to consider using it to support a wider cohort than the pupils who attract the funding. The premium for the academic year 2021-22 is being paid as a grant to all eligible schools in England in four payments over the course of the year.

The department has updated the Using Pupil Premium guidance with a short guide to help schools make best use of their pupil and recovery premium, alongside their pupil premium funding, which is available at: tinyurl.com/22k6ae5v.

On 2 June, the government announced an additional £1.4 billion to support education recovery for children ages 2 to 19 in schools, colleges and nurseries. This includes £1 billion for tutoring, which, combined with the funding for tutoring we have already announced, will allow us to provide up to 100 million tutoring hours for children and young people across England by 2024.

In October, the government announced that schools will receive an additional £4.7 billion in core funding in 2024-25, including £1.6 billion in 2022-23. This is in addition to the previously planned increases from the 2019 spending review, equating to a total increase of £1,500 per pupil between 2019-20 and 2024-25. This additional investment will also support the delivery of a £30,000 starting salary for all new teachers.

This funding sits alongside a further £1.8 billion dedicated to supporting young people to catch up on missed education, following on from the existing investment in catch up for early years, schools and colleges, including for tutoring and teacher training opportunities.

The funding takes the government's direct investment in education recovery to almost £5 billion, building on the high-quality tutoring for millions of pupils and world-class training for thousands of teachers and early years staff, already being provided. This additional investment in recovery will mean every school and college will have extra dedicated funding to support those who most need help catching up.

Primary schools will continue to benefit from the same per pupil rate as this year's recovery premium, while secondary schools are expected to receive nearly double that amount, meaning an average secondary school could attract around £70,000 a year. This extra support at secondary level reflects evidence showing the larger gaps in older pupils' learning and the amount of time those pupils have left in education.

The dedicated education recovery funding will complement the significant expansion of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP), with millions of children set to benefit from high quality tutoring over the next three years, alongside world-class training for thousands of teachers and the summer schools that took place up and down the country through the school holidays.

There is extensive evidence that tutoring is one of the most effective ways to accelerate pupil progress. The NTP is an ambitious scheme which supports schools to access targeted support for disadvantaged pupils who need the most help to catch up. The NTP is comprised of three elements: a tuition programme for 5 to 16-year-olds, a 16 to 19 tuition fund, and a targeted early language support programme for reception-aged children. In order to maximise the impact of tutoring and to support schools, the Education Endowment Foundation has provided a guide on how to get the best out of tutoring, available at: [tinyurl.com/Y4Jv2Glr](https://www.tinyurl.com/Y4Jv2Glr).

The tuition programme for 5 to 16-year-olds consists of two pillars. All schools can access high quality subsidised tuition from approved tuition partners, and our most disadvantaged schools are supported to employ in-house academic mentors to provide intensive support to their pupils. Children aged 5 to 16 in receipt of tutoring will receive up to 15 sessions of small group or individual tuition to support them to catch up. Further details are available at: [tinyurl.com/YY6ecbPJ](https://www.tinyurl.com/YY6ecbPJ). Additionally, schools serving the most disadvantaged areas are being supported to employ in-house academic mentors for their pupils. Information about this is available at: [tinyurl.com/Y6rP5d84](https://www.tinyurl.com/Y6rP5d84).

The tuition partner and academic mentor pillars of the NTP will be provided with £218 million of new funding. This is addition to the £215 million already announced to be invested in the academic year 2021-22.

The special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Review is also a high priority for me and this government. I am determined to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND so that they are better prepared for later life and adulthood.

It is so important to get this right. We have been taking time to properly consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the extensive feedback we are receiving from parents and carers, charities and those working in local government, education, health and care services about our ongoing work, to make sure our proposals help everyone build back better.

I understand the urgency of moving forward with improvements to the current system, and we will be bringing forward proposals for public consultation as soon as possible.

This government is also delivering the biggest funding boost for schools in a decade which will give every school more money for every child.

High needs funding will increase by £780 million, or 9.6%, in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22; this follows the increase of more than £1.5 billion over the previous two years. This will bring the total high needs budget to £8.9 billion, an increase of over a third since 2019-20.

The national funding formula (NFF) continues to distribute this fairly, based on the needs of schools and their pupil cohorts. The significant majority of schools' funding is allocated through the basic per pupil factors, and over 90% of the NFF funding is pupil-led. The NFF is levelling up school funding: increasing core factors of the formula (such as the basic per-pupil funding rate, and deprivation factors) by 3%, while also ensuring that every school is allocated at least 2% more pupil-led per pupil funding.

The purpose of the NFF is not to give every school the same level of per pupil funding. It is right that schools with lots of pupils with additional needs – such as those indicated by measures of deprivation, low prior attainment, or English as an additional language – receive extra funding to help them meet the needs of all their pupils. In addition, schools in more expensive areas, like London, attract higher funding per pupil than other parts of the country to reflect the higher costs they face.

There is no consensus on the minimum operating cost of a school. Each school is unique, and we believe it should be for heads and governors to decide their operating model. However, we are targeting funding to the lowest funded schools through the minimum per pupil funding level to ensure every secondary school attracts at least £5,525 per pupil through the formula in 2022-23, and every primary school attracts at least £4,265 per pupil. The minimum per pupil levels recognise that every school should attract a minimum level of funding regardless of their cohort – this was a message we heard in the consultation when we introduced the NFF and have heard from schools and educational professionals since. While there is no 'right' answer on the minimum level of sufficient funding, we are responding to feedback from those working in schools today.

We have made the use of the national minimum per pupil funding levels compulsory for local authorities to deliver, to assure school leaders that they receive at least these levels locally. As well as delivering gains to all schools and the biggest increases to the historically underfunded, the minimum levels provide every school the foundation to deliver a world-class education for its pupils.

With regard to early years education, we have spent over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on our early education entitlements and the government continues to support families with their childcare costs. At the Spending Review on 27 October, we announced that we are investing additional funding for the early years entitlements worth £160 million in 2022-23, £180 million in 2023-24 and £170 million in 2024-25, compared to the current year.

The government has also confirmed continuation of maintained nurse schools supplementary funding throughout the Spending Review period, providing the sector with long-term certainty.

We continue to evaluate the support on offer and endeavour to provide support to both parents and providers to ensure the sustainability of the sector.

We will confirm the 2022-23 hourly funding rates for individual local authorities in due course, followed by the initial allocations in December.

Funding for early years also remains one of my department's top priorities. In June we announced an investment of up to £153 million in training for early years staff to support the very youngest children's learning and development, with a focus on the most disadvantaged areas.

Improving and expanding the training for early years practitioners is one of our key levers for driving up quality. We will provide further detail on the training programmes in due course.

This new recovery package is in addition to the £27 million previously announced to support early language development for children in light of the pandemic. Of this, £17 million is to deliver the Nuffield Early Language Intervention in schools that would particularly benefit, and 60% of primary schools have already signed up for the programme. The remaining £10 million will support the second phase of the Early Years Professional Development Programme to support staff in pre-reception settings in 50 new local authorities to work with children who are at risk of falling behind.

Thank you for your kind invitation to meet. My office is aware of your request and will be in touch if I am able to do so in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Zahawi', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education