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Dear Parents/Carers,

Funding for Camden schools - New 'Fairer Funding Formula'

Camden is proud of the excellent standard of education offered by our schools and early years' services. In July 2015, 94% of all Camden's schools were judged to be good or outstanding. However, we, our schools, children's centres and nurseries are very concerned about the potential impact of the government's spending reforms.

The government plans to introduce a national 'fairer funding formula'. It considers that funding amongst schools in England and Wales is currently unfair with some areas receiving greater resources than other areas without there being an objective method of distribution. Rather than providing more money to those areas which they consider are underfunded, this could mean that Camden, as a relatively well-funded authority, could see a cash reduction in its funding for schools to pay for uplifts in the school budgets of less well funded authorities.

This would be on top of a cash freeze in schools' funding that Camden's schools have suffered since 2011/12. We know that across London thousands of schools could be hugely affected by both the DSG cash freeze and the national funding formula.

London Councils estimate that, overall, London schools could lose £260million which would amount to 6,253 full time teachers with Camden schools potentially losing 5.2% of their funding, equating to £322 per pupil.

Thousands of schools across London could be significantly affected by both the cash freeze and the 'fairer funding formula'. This could damage all the incredible work that has made the London education system as strong as it is today. We are committed to working with all London boroughs to present to the government a compelling case for London's schools to be protected from the scale of possible spending reductions that the government might be contemplating.

The Council has always prioritised investment in education in Camden, making us one of the highest spenders per pupil in England. This reflects our view of the importance of education in transforming the life chances of children and young people and a recognition

of the higher costs of providing education in a central London borough with high levels of deprivation and higher living costs for staff.

The cash freeze since 2011/12 means that Camden schools have already suffered a reduction in their spending power of 13% in real terms. Even without the introduction of 'fairer funding', the government's proposed further cash freeze to well-funded authorities will see schools budgets eroded because of rising prices. The Council estimates that Camden schools will see a further 10% real terms' reduction in their budgets over the lifetime of the current parliament, up to 2020. This equates to an eventual £12m reduction in schools' spending power out of a total of £116m. If a cut of 5.2% were also introduced that would mean an effective total reduction of £18m.

The government has also been looking at changes to funding for special educational needs (SEN) in special and mainstream schools. Again, Camden currently has one of the highest levels of funding and stands to lose out if the government tries to make SEN funding more equal across the country without increasing the overall budget. We think we could eventually lose about £5 million per year out of a total of £32 million. For mainstream schools any share of this cut would be in addition to the cuts outlined above. With demand for SEN support growing, this would represent a huge challenge for our entire school system and neighbouring boroughs which use Camden's provision.

Camden is also proud of our investment in early years' services, from our full-time nursery provision for three and four year-olds in schools and children's centres to our Camden Sure Start children's centres, which provide a wide range of services for parents to help them give their children the best start in life. The government plans to introduce full-time nursery provision for working parents of three and four year olds. The Council is concerned that a national funding formula won't take Camden's higher costs into account and we could lose as much as £7m from our early years' budget of £18m to help pay for national policy initiatives. This could have a disastrous impact on local investment in early years' education.

As Cabinet Member for Children, I am working with governors, headteachers and others with an interest in education, to ask for the following from the government:

- No cuts to the cash we get in Camden for our schools, SEN or early years
- Recognition of higher costs in Camden due to the cost of living and higher levels of deprivation than most local authority areas
- Gradual phasing in of any changes from the national funding formula to minimise disruption to Camden's schools and early years' providers

The government has not yet published its consultation proposals but it is important that parents in particular express their views now as well as participating in the consultation in the summer.

I would also like to invite you to a meeting the Council is organising with local teachers, governors and parents where more details about the impact and workings of these

proposals will be given. The meeting is being held at 7pm on 16 March at the Town Hall, Judd St.

You can obtain further information about this issue from organisations active in the funding debate: 'Keep London Schools Great' (<http://keeplondonschoolsgreat.org>) and the F40 group (<http://www.f40.org.uk>) set up by those authorities that receive less funding. If you have any views on this issue please write to the Secretary of State for Education to express your views about these proposals at ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk. In addition please also take part in the consultation when it begins.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Mason". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

**Councillor Angela Mason CBE
Cabinet Member for Children
Camden Council**