



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Billings
St John's Green Primary School
Abbey Field
5 Circular Rd East Lower
Colchester
Essex
CO2 7SZ

7 March 2019

Dear Mr Billings

Further to my letter of 21st February, I am writing to inform you of my recent work on school funding.

Supporting Colchester's schools is of paramount importance to me. Access to a good education is essential to success in later life, to ensure social mobility, and is of value in and of itself, but it is not possible to deliver a good education if schools do not have the resources they need.

I know the difficulties that local schools are facing, I have met with head teachers, governors and parents and I have a good idea of the challenges but should you have any further comments for me, my door is always open.

The hard figures show that the core schools budget was increased to £42.4 billion this academic year, and is set to rise to £43.5 billion in 2019-20. This follows an additional £1.3 billion of funding over and above what was promised in the last Spending Review. However, while funding has increased, so have costs. Rising costs have negated much of the effect that these spending rises should be having.

Therefore, while it may be true that more money is going into our schools than ever before, and that school funding is at a record high, it is also true that costs have risen, and now schools are having to take decisions which they feel are to the detriment of their pupils.

I am working to raise awareness of this issue in Parliament.

On February 26, I spoke in the Commons Chamber on the Department for Education's spending estimates debate, and have enclosed a copy of my speech. In this debate, I highlighted that I genuinely believe that we are on the precipice. Cost-cutting guides have been used to exhaustion, and now there is no more fat left to trim.

As I highlighted in my speech, the vast majority of any school budget - anywhere between 80% and 90% - is spent on people. They are the asset in our education system, and if there are no more efficiencies to be made but the costs keep rising, the only option left is to reduce staff. This will have a detrimental impact on pupils' attainment and outcomes across the board.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR COLCHESTER

Westminster Address: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA Telephone 020 7219 8049

Constituency Office: 37 Layer Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 7JW Telephone: 01206 545 990

www.willquince.com

will.quince.mp@parliament.uk

I know that there are already schools in Colchester that are letting support staff go and not filling vacancies.

I also recently spoke in the Westminster Hall debate on School Funding on March 4. The debate was in response to a petition urging increased funding for schools, which 214 people from Colchester signed.

I was first elected in 2015, but in this speech I still raised that fact that while there were no cuts to education funding (to 16) between 2010 and 2015, nevertheless the effect of costs outpacing funding increases has had a detrimental effect. I also highlighted that the 16-to-19 budget has been frozen since 2013-14, which only adds to the cost pressures faced by sixth forms and colleges.

Another issue I raised was certainty of funding, because it is unreasonable to ask a school to plan a three year budget without concrete knowledge of what funding they will receive.

I have also recently supported an application for a debate in Parliament on the issue of Further Education Funding, and hope to secure time for this shortly.

I am currently supporting a Backbench Debate application on school funding and the financial pressures that I know schools are facing, and hope that time will be made for this soon.

I know that reeling off the number of speeches I have made may sound like a lot of hot air, but keeping an issue like this in front of the eye of government keeps the political pressure on, and has a concrete effect on the funding decisions taken.

In recent weeks and months I have met with teachers, headteachers, the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Schools Minister, the Further Education Minister, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and the Secretary of State for Education to make the case for increased funding for our schools and further education providers.

I have also co-signed a letter with Richard Graham MP and Nic Dakin MP on education funding, which calls on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to address the rising costs faced by schools and colleges.

In terms of concrete action I am taking locally, I am also organising a petition to be signed by parents, which I can present to the Government. I have enclosed a copy. Please accept my apologies for the somewhat clunky wording of the petition, but it is required to be in a specific format in order to be presented in the House of Commons.

I would be grateful if you would kindly circulate this petition as widely as possible, and I will collect the signatures and present it in Parliament in due course.

Finally I want you to know that I am on your side, and hope that together we can bring about some real change. Education is one of the most important policy areas, and together we are responsible for the future of Colchester's young people. We cannot afford to let them down.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Will', is written below the text.