

**Letter from Barnet Secondary Headteachers Forum to the Secretary of State
concerning funding for SEN provision**

15 November 2018

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State for Education
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Hinds

We are writing to you as head teachers of secondary schools in Barnet regarding a proposal from the borough to transfer 0.5% of the schools block funding in to the high needs block. This is the first time that such a request has been made in Barnet, a reflection on the careful financial management in the borough. In previous years underspends in the overall schools budget have been used to address new pressures. There are no more reserves left.

Barnet children start school with high levels of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The schools are working hard to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure the best outcomes for all pupils. However, it is now clear that the high needs funding we receive is not sufficient to meet these needs.

Our high needs block budget is projected to be overspent by more than £1m in 2018-19. This is due to:

- an increase in the number of children who require an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP). There has been a 30% increase in the number of children and young people with an EHCP between 2014 and 2017
- an increase in post-16 numbers and associated costs for young people aged 19-25 who need specialist support. The expenditure needed in this area has increased by 89%
- an increase in complexity of need, requiring more funding
- rising costs of providing additional specialist support in our schools. Barnet Council has worked in collaboration with mainstream and special schools to create over 200 additional local specialist places to respond to the demand and increasing complexity of demand

Barnet is a very inclusive borough and it has a successful record of achievement by pupils with SEND. The proposed transfer of money from the schools block will result in a reduction in school budgets. This is at a time when school budgets are under a

lot of strain. Growth funding in Barnet has simply been based on increases in pupil numbers. However, income has not kept up with costs. The pressures on school budgets in general are having an increasingly significant and serious impact on what schools are able to provide. We are now in a position where we cannot adequately fulfil our statutory duty of care for our children living with SEND.

We need a fair, sustainable funding system for SEND that will respond to the individual needs of our children and young people, acknowledging the complexities of providing high quality SEND education.

We are calling for a significant increase in Barnet's high needs block to allow for the urgently needed additional funding for local SEND provision.

Yours sincerely