

Meg Hillier MP
Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

17 March 2021

I know how concerned you are about educational disadvantage in general and how the pandemic may have further widened the gap between children from low income families and their more well-off peers.

By its own admission, the government's current catch-up funding to address this challenge only scratches the surface of what will be required in the long term.

There are of course other sources of revenue for schools to draw upon, including the Pupil Premium, which is a well understood and established funding mechanism for schools to tackle disadvantage directly.

This letter is to draw to your attention some alarming new data which shows that, for many schools, Pupil Premium losses this year will almost certainly wipe out the recently announced Covid recovery funding, leaving schools no better off to cope with the unprecedented challenges ahead of them.

Normally schools report the number of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium each January. But for the 20/21 academic year the government changed the date for this census to October 2020. This has meant that any children who became eligible during the intervening time will not receive any extra funding until next year.

In a survey of our members last week, which received 1,316 responses, we asked 'how many pupils in your school became eligible for pupil premium between the October and January census, and will therefore not receive pupil premium for 2021?'

62% of respondents said that they had five or more pupils who had become eligible for Pupil Premium between the October and January census.

Currently, primary schools receive £1,345 for each child. The lost funding for five pupils is equal to £6,725 – more than the £6,000 'catch-up' funding allocated to primary schools on average.

Thousands of children who most need the government's help are not getting the money they should be eligible for, just at the moment where it could be most critical.

NAHT warned the government that this could be the unintentional consequence of making this administrative change during the pandemic, and we have raised our members' concerns about the situation they now find themselves in repeatedly. But the government has failed to heed our warnings.

The government is giving with one hand while knowingly taking away with the other, at the worst possible time for some families. This is taking vital funding away from schools and can only serve to further entrench educational disadvantage for the poorest families.

This is not a request for additional money, only for what schools would have received if this census date change had not been implemented.

In sharing this data with you, I hope that you will be able to hold ministers to account for this change and to urge the government to put this right.

We will be publishing our findings on Thursday 18 March.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P Whiteman', with a stylized, flowing script.

Paul Whiteman
General Secretary, NAHT