

The Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP
Secretary of State for Education
DfE
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1 0AA



20 September 2022

Dear Secretary of State

Re: School Budgets in Crisis

Congratulations on your appointment to this important role. It is a critical time for our schools and I hope you and your team will provide the support they need.

Like schools across the country, our schools in Haringey are facing the biggest financial crisis for many years.

At the beginning of this academic year, as we enter the autumn term, schools are having to deal with several problems, which together, will force them into deficit or into making decisions which could seriously and permanently undermine children's education.

The energy crisis facing us all will devastate school budgets – of that there is no doubt. Increased energy prices are making a serious dent in their budgets which, even with the assistance announced last week, they will not be able to cover.

I welcome the announcement of a six-month support scheme for the public sector, and I look forward to more details of this scheme. However, as indicated above, school leaders have warned that schools are already facing an impossible financial burden, and the equivalent of the support provided to households may not be sufficient to keep the heating on whilst they work to balance their books. They are also concerned that the support is too short term.

This dire situation is further exacerbated by the requirement for schools to fund staff pay awards from their existing budgets.

We fully support teachers and all school staff being awarded their pay increase. Their contribution to our children and our country has been magnificent, which was made clear during the pandemic. But the plain fact is, our schools cannot balance their budgets and meet their obligations to staff, pay their huge utility bills, and meet other increasing costs, such as food, without additional government funding through the Dedicated School Grant. Our schools need this additional funding as a matter of urgency, to see them through this bleak period, if they are to avoid losing staff and/or cutting vital activities which enrich children's lives. Education is central to promoting equality of opportunity and improving life chances, but if we lose teachers and skilled staff, how will our schools deliver?

In addition to the need for increased funding for our schools, I would also urge you to fund – from central government – free school meals for all children in primary schools. Children are innocent victims of this cost of living crisis, and we know families are finding it much harder to make ends meet.

We are doing all we can to assist families, including supporting an additional 500 children where family income is just above the FSM eligibility criteria. But the need is much greater and this can really only be met through central government funding and intervention.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zena Brabazon". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a long, sweeping horizontal line.

Cllr Zena Brabazon
Cabinet Member for Children, Schools, and Families
Haringey Council

CC: The Rt Hon David Lammy MP
Catherine West MP
Cllr Peray Ahmet, Leader of Haringey Council