

Are we ready for the Cuts Tsunami?

The Government's claim that there is no school funding crisis is losing all credibility.

The Government tried to dismiss the NUT's figures about the cuts, claiming that they planned to increase spending on education and that it was higher than under any other government. But the NUT's calculation of the extra costs faced by schools was not, and could not be, effectively challenged as it was based on government figures. Their claims about the impact of the new funding formula turned out to have underestimated rather than exaggerated the problem.

The reality is that, between now and 2020, 98% of schools will see a real terms cut in their funding, whereas the NUT initially thought it would be 92%. The average primary school will see a reduction of £87,117 (£339 per pupil). The average secondary school will have their budget reduced by £405,611 (£477 per pupil) whereas the NUT had originally predicted £290,228 (£365 per pupil). Currently £4,900 is allotted to each primary school pupil and £6,300 per secondary school pupil.

These cuts come with budgets already shrinking and we are seeing evidence of that already here in Notts with redundancy notices. The new funding formula designed to shift money from urban to rural areas is also just a smokescreen hiding cuts across the board. The pot of money available is simply not nearly big enough whatever formula is used.

The Government want the public to focus only on one figure, which is the cash spent per pupil. Under their spending plans they promise that per pupil funding will be maintained in cash terms during this Parliament. That's a cut in real terms, however, as there is no inflation-proofing. The Institute for Fiscal Studies say inflation will be 8% over the lifetime of this Parliament, but

even that only tells part of the story. No additional funding has been provided for the increases in employers' NI and pension contributions.

Just as all of these pressures kick in, a new National Funding Formula will be introduced in April 2018 (changed from 2017). The model favoured by the Government has been promoted by a group of shire counties (the f40 group) which would redistribute the existing funding away from areas of greatest need and deprivation and towards areas of affluence. Depending on whether there is a minimum funding guarantee, this will mean cuts of between 15-25% from April 2018. With the headteacher organisations, the National Governors Association and, recently, the National Audit Office (NAO) joining the ranks of those warning of a crisis, the Government's claim that things have never been better lies in tatters.

The NAO warned that schools would have to find £3 billion in savings by 2019-20. The Institute for Fiscal Studies warned this week that per pupil spending would by that time have fallen by 6.5% in real terms. These will be the first real term cuts in school funding in over 20 years. The fact that there is a funding crisis looming is no longer in serious doubt. Less clear is

how the Unions will respond or what community campaigns will be created. The last time we saw cuts like this, it provoked a mass anti-cuts campaign led by parents. The Fight Against Cuts in Education (FACE) put the issue at the heart of community politics across the country and helped end 18 years of Conservative rule.

In proportion, the planned cuts now are bigger than they were then or in the early 1980s. It is good that there is a growing awareness of the funding crisis that lies ahead but it is only a start. The revival of a campaign like FACE backed up by trade union action to defend jobs and a clear Labour commitment to invest in education is the least that we need if we are to defend and improve education funding. The far-reaching reform that is needed in UK schools, to move away from a data-driven state of permanent testing towards teaching and learning with the personal growth and self-fulfilment of students at its heart, demands good levels of funding, paid for by society's richest.

We can see in Lewisham that where there is determination amongst school staff and the local community, serious campaigns of resistance to cuts can be built. We must build such campaigns across the country.



Forest Hill School in Lewisham is currently facing a deficit crisis of £1 million but parents and staff are not prepared to accept it.

We all need the NHS Huge march in London

On Saturday March 4 upwards of 250,000 people gathered in London to tell the Government to end the funding crisis in our NHS

A succession of reports, including BBC coverage showing hospital corridors crowded with patients on trolleys and floors, testify to the scale of the problem.

Unfortunately, as with education funding, the Government is in denial and continues to spin a yarn that the NHS is safe in their hands.

Quick comparisons between funding in the UK and other countries shows clearly that the Government is telling porkies.

The UK has one of the lowest provisions of beds per head in Europe, and it's falling. BMA figures show that we lost 13,681 beds between 2010 and 2016, a staggering 9.5%. Mental health bed provision has fallen by 44% since 2001. And the numbers hide human misery, like the case of a woman with a brain tumour turned away from three hospitals because no ITU beds were available.

The march in London showed that people are not prepared to see the destruction of the NHS. The NUT must continue to support such campaigns.

Derby TAs fight huge pay cuts

The Conservative Government is not the only source of attacks on schools. Derby's Labour City Council has cut the pay of its teaching assistance by 35% or £6,000 a year on average using the ludicrous claim that this is somehow about equalising pay.

However, as in Durham, Teaching Assistants in Derby have refused to accept these cuts. And the reason is simple - they simply can't live on their revised pay. At the Trades Council meeting in Mansfield on March 7, two TAs spoke emotionally about the impact of the cuts on their living standards. They spoke passionately about the work they do supporting children with special needs and how important that was. Yet Derby City Council has sought to devalue their work. Teaching Assistants first responded with depression and hurt, but this was soon replaced by anger and a determination to fight. Some experienced staff have left but those remaining retain the resolve to see the dispute through to a successful conclusion.

The Teaching Assistants must not be left to fight alone. Some Labour Party constituencies and the Notts Trades Council have expressed their support for the TAs and a speaker from the campaign will be at our next NUT meeting on March 23. We urge teachers to attend the meeting and show solidarity for a group of workers who are vital to the success of our schools.

And their campaign has been an inspiration with strike action amounting to 62 days to date and more to come. The campaign has been imaginative with vigils, encircling the Council building, as well as the strikes. But they need solidarity: nationally within Unison and from other local government workers, including teachers, as well the Labour Party.

Derby TAs, Kate and Nicol, who spoke to the Trades Council on March 7



No U-Turn on grammar schools

In the face of the educational evidence and the huge cuts to the budgets of other schools, the Government is set to press ahead with opening the first grammar schools in generations.

All the research shows that grammar schools have a negative impact on social mobility and generate a two tier education system in which some succeed and others are thrown on the scrap heap.

The Union and political parties committed to comprehensive, inclusive education must mount a serious campaign of resistance to these discredited plans.

It is morally repugnant that the Government will set aside £350 million for new free schools and grammar schools at a time when £3 billion is to be cut from the budgets of all the other schools in the country.

