Dear Lord Beecham,

I refer to your point about Atkinson Road Primary Academy in Newcastle Upon Tyne which requested a grant from a local charity to buy books, made during the Adult Education Functions debate on 01 October 2019. I also acknowledge your point about the performance of schools within the same academy trust as Atkinson Road Primary – Laidlaw Schools Trust.

School Funding

Since 2017, we have given every local authority more money for every pupil in every school. But we have gone further in announcing a total additional investment of £14 billion in core schools funding in England across three years.

This is made up of cash increases to the schools budget of £2.6bn next year, £4.8bn in 2021-22, and £7.1bn in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20. This is on top of an additional £1.5bn each year to fund additional pensions costs for teachers, which takes the overall schools budget to £52.2bn in 2022-23, up from £43.5bn this year. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said that this will restore schools’ funding to previous levels in real terms per pupil by 2022-23.

For schools, this means that funding is increasing by 5% next year alone. Per-pupil funding for every school can therefore rise at least in line with inflation next year, and greater than inflation for most. The biggest funding increases will go to historically underfunded areas. We are also levelling up the lowest funded schools so that all secondary schools receive a minimum of £5,000 per pupil, while all primary schools get a minimum of £3,750 per pupil, on the path to £4,000 per pupil from 2021-22.
This additional funding has continued to be allocated through the National Funding Formula (NFF). The NFF has been used to calculate school and local authority level funding since 2018-19. It bases funding allocations on schools' and pupil's needs and characteristics, as opposed to the old system which funded schools based on accidents of geography and history. The need for reform was widely recognised, with calls to address the manifest unfairness in the previous system. The NFF is now directing mony where it is most needed most, and schools and local authorities have already begun benefiting from its fairer distribution.

This year, under the NFF, funding for schools in Newcastle upon Tyne has increased by 3.8% per pupil compared to in 2017-18. This is equivalent to an extra £10.9 million in total, when rising pupil numbers are taken into account. And next year, the additional investment announced in August means that schools in Newcastle upon Tyne are attracting 4.49% more per pupil compared to in 2019-20, a total of £9 million of additional funding. This amount will be confirmed in December when local authorities receive final allocations for next year.

At the school-level, this additional funding means that that Atkinson Road Primary Academy is attracting £1.96 million in total next year under the NFF based on their current pupil numbers. In cash terms this amounts to £4,989 per pupil, which is an increase of 4.01% in pupil-led funding compared to last year. This amount will be confirmed early next year when Newcastle upon Tyne distribute actual allocations to schools in their area based on their local funding formula.

In addition to extra funding, schools such as Atkinson Road Primary Academy will continue to benefit from government support to ensure they can make the most of every pound of their budgets, following the launch of the Department for Education's School Resource Management Strategy last year. The strategy provides schools with practical advice on savings that can be made on the more than £10 billion non-staffing spend spent across England last year.

It includes, for example: recommended deals on things schools buy regularly, such as printers and photocopiers; a deal to support schools with getting value for money when hiring supply teachers and other agency workers; a free teacher vacancy listing to support recruitment needs and drive down recruitment costs is currently in phased national roll-out; and access to sector experts provide tailored advice to schools on how to make best use of their resources to deliver educational outcomes.

Performance of schools within Laidlaw Schools Trust

The Department closely monitors the performance of all schools within trusts across England, and officials maintain regular contact with trusts' leadership teams to discuss the steps being taken to improve academic outcomes.
At a recent meeting with the Regional Schools Commissioner for the North, the Laidlaw Schools Trust outlined a number of structural changes that are being implemented to strengthen governance, leadership and school improvement across the organisation. Primary outcomes in 2019 show good improvements compared to previous years, and the Department is confident these changes will result in improved outcomes for pupils in all schools across the trust.

I hope this answer has been useful and I will place a copy in the house libraries.

THEODORE AGNEW