



The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
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**Councillor Tudor Evans OBE**  
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Dear Secretary of State

The demand for high needs funding is out-stripping the budgets available to local authorities across the country, resulting in serious deficits in the high needs block in over half of all local authorities. Many are finding it extremely difficult to recover these deficits and cuts to existing high needs services and pupil top-up funding makes what provision that is available simply unsustainable. It is no different in Plymouth and the consequence is that needs are not being met in schools and we are seeing a rise in the number of SEND Support pupils being 'off-rolled' in one form or another.

It is clear that there is a crisis in high needs funding, created in part by the continued use of historic funding levels, and we urge the government to address before permanent damage is done to very many vulnerable pupils. Plymouth welcome the Secretary of State for Education's announcement of additional High Needs Block funding as an indication that the problem is acknowledged. However, this does not fix the problem we face. The complexity of the high needs services demanded by more and more children (and their parents) is far greater than was the case just a few years ago, more accurate medical assessment and improved methods of treatment increase demand still further. Such increasing needs requires recognition through the national high needs formula.

We are demanding a permanent injection of new funding, in line with increased costs and demand since 2015 and the introduction of an annual review for this block. A review of SEND policy and guidance is also required to help manage down demand more effectively. In Plymouth for example we have seen the introduction of the extended age range for young people with SEND leading to a cumulative increase in demand for support with no commensurate funding to support educational placements or transport. Doing the right thing for families is simply not affordable within existing budgets.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Tudor Evans OBE  
**Leader, Plymouth City Council**