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Dear Ed

We are concerned about a Department for Education (DfE) evidence document, "Schools' Costs 2022 to 2024"¹, and a follow-up blog, "Teacher strikes: Everything you need to know about the teacher pay offer"², which are being used by the Department for Education to justify their claim that schools can afford to fund eight ninths of the teachers' pay offer. The Secretary of State has used these documents to make strong claims which we do not believe are merited, for instance, on the Peston Show on 29th March when asked, "To be clear the pay rise will not cut into school services?", Gillian Keegan said "no".

We believe these documents do not meet the standards set by your Code of Practice because these documents are too opaque.

In paragraphs 21 and 33 of *Schools' Costs 2022 to 2024*, the Department defines core funding for mainstream schools. The element "*High needs funding (we include only funding that goes to mainstream schools)*" is not described anywhere in the methodology and they have not published an estimate for its size. Without the High Needs funding element, core funding would have increased by 6.4 per cent in 2022-23 and 6.2 per cent in 2023-24. But with the High Needs funding, the DfE claims that core funding rose by 6.8 per cent³ in 2022-23 and 6.7 per cent⁴ in 2023-24. This unexplained element of funding makes a big difference to the rate of increase in core school funding and is central to the Government's claim that schools do not need to cut educational provision to cover costs.

¹ DfE, *Schools' costs 2022 to 2024*, February 2023

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1137908/Schools_costs_2022_to_2024.pdf

² DfE, *Teacher strikes: Everything you need to know about the teacher pay offer*, 28 March 2023

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/03/28/teacher-strikes-latest-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-teacher-pay-offer/>

³ DfE, *Schools' costs 2022 to 2024*, paragraph 22

⁴ *Ibid*, paragraph 34

The *Schools' Costs* document also relies on “unpublished internal modelling of teacher numbers”⁵ to calculate staff cost increases, and it gives such a vague description of pupil numbers that we have not been able to replicate the published figures.

The *Schools' Costs* document does not publish all figures in a consistent way, for example, paragraph 16 gives per-pupil price inflation figures for 2022-23; however, none are given for 2023-24 and therefore it is impossible to know the change in pupil numbers the DfE are using for 2023-24.

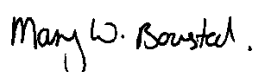
In addition to the problems with the DfE's *Schools' Costs* and *Teacher strikes* documents, we believe that the Secretary of State has given an assurance that is not reasonably supported by them.

The *Schools' Costs* document is clear that it is giving national average figures for costs: “Our estimates of costs cover mainstream English primary and secondary schools and exclude special schools and other high needs providers. The analysis is done at the national level by examining the average cost increases that schools are forecast to face.”⁶ It also says: “Our analysis looks at schools' costs and the growth in funding in a traditional financial year (April-March). In the case of academies, we recognise that their financial year follows an academic year cycle and therefore, over the short term, the implications will be somewhat different.”⁷ Half of mainstream schools are academies or free schools, so the document is clear that the schools' estimates will not be accurate for them. However, there is another issue. The Government has funded schools at significantly different rates per pupil. The Secretary of State cannot reasonably claim that the pay offer would not cut into school services based on these documents. Instead, it suggests that even on the evidence provided, a significant proportion of schools will indeed have to cut into services to afford the increase.

The Secretary of State made no mention of these very important caveats and gave parents a false reassurance that their children's schools will not have to cut into their services, contradicting the huge concern being expressed by head teachers.

We are happy to share the work we have done to understand these issues.

Yours sincerely



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⁵ Ibid, paragraph 41

⁶ Ibid, paragraph 3

⁷ Ibid, page 3