

Paying for local schools

I renewed my request for better settlements for local schools in my meeting yesterday with the Education Secretary. I have regularly lobbied for a better overall settlement for Education, and for a better share of the total for Wokingham and West Berkshire. We have a strong case as the per pupil amounts for our schools are low by national standards. The government has accepted the need both to increase the total, and to improve the relative position of areas like ours that are at the bottom of the table for cash. We are discussing the magnitude and speed of improvement.

I also made the point about the problems for schools adjusting to sudden declines in pupil numbers. In order to operate a system allowing parent and student choice, and to cope with rising pupil numbers overall, it is necessary for more places to be available than there are pupils to fill them. If one or two schools suffer a sharp fall owing to say the opening of a new school nearby, this can cause problems for them in handling the budget consequences.

The Secretary of State promised to get back to me with a considered written reply to these points.