

Spending increases: the case for schools

The government has admitted that schools in areas like Wokingham get too little per pupil compared to the average, and too little in absolute terms. They have under pressure given us a modest uplift. Some of this has come from changing the formula to limit the losses of the lowest paid areas. Some has come by way of a general increase for all schools.

More needs to be done. Schools need to be able to recruit and retain enough good teachers, and teachers deserve a professional salary to reflect their training, commitment and responsibilities. I would like to see a bit more cash provided overall, with a further improvement in the formula for the lowest paid areas.

Schools have considerable discretion over their budgets. The state needs to ensure the average and the minimum level of per pupil funding is sufficient for a well run school to do a good job. Some schools are better than others at getting value for the money they spend. Some are better at attracting great teachers who encourage high standards and motivate pupils well. In such a decentralised system there are limits to what the central government can achieve. We look in particular to the teaching profession to set standards, to innovate, and to manage the school budgets well.

I see the Secretary of State is challenging the Treasury on this issue. There is money available without raising tax rates. Cutting some tax rates would also bring in more revenue. The government continues to collect more tax than Treasury forecasts.