School funding cuts could damage economic growth

The LCCI and London Councils are alerting the capital's business community to the threat that funding cuts to London schools could pose to economic growth.

London Councils' analysis of the proposed national funding formula for schools shows that 70 per cent of schools in London will face budget cuts if carried through – more than 1,500 schools.

Moreover the capital's schools will have to make savings totalling £360 million in 2018/19 alone due to the impact of the formula and wider cost pressures. This would be equivalent to cutting 5.6 qualified teachers posts per school in London.

Talent

Young people educated in London are a valuable source of talent for businesses. According to the *Higher Education Journey of Young*

> *"Clearly there is a link between well-resourced schools, a skilled workforce and London being a leading global city."*

Londoners report, 71 per cent of young Londoners graduating in 2014/15 achieved either a first or 2:1 degree.

The total amount of additional funding required to protect every school in the country from a cash cut resulting from the national funding formula is £335 million, which equates to a one per cent increase in the schools block budget.

LCCI chief executive Colin Stanbridge, said: "Clearly there is a link between well-resourced schools, a

skilled workforce and London being a leading global city. London's educational sector gives the capital a real advantage in attracting and retaining business.

"However if the capital is to continue to delivering world-class products and services in a post-Brexit setting, then London schools will require consistent, adequate funding.

"With London facing the challenge of approaching Brexit as well the challenge of an increasing population, now is the time to invest to train and equip young Londoners to be the skilled employees of tomorrow".

Cllr Peter John OBE, deputy chair of London Councils and executive member for Business, Skills and Brexit believes that London's schools are currently the best in the country with 89 per cent rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. "This gives a tremendous advantage to business-

es based here as successful schools are essential to the development of attractive places to live, work and invest in.

"However, should standards in London's schools fall, businesses across the capital will feel the heat, particularly when it comes to recruiting the right mix of skilled staff and fostering innovation and growth.

"Good schools require both excellent leadership and investment. Therefore the government must invest the additional £335 million needed to ensure that schools across the country are supported and that no school loses out with the introduction of the national funding formula."

The Department for Education is currently consulting on plans to introduce a new national funding formula for schools, which closes on 22 March 2017.

Dragons and roosters

Chinese New Year – the year of the rooster – was celebrated in January at the Marianne North Gallery in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew with a lunch hosted by Alison Purvis, co-chief executive of the Kew Foundation and a talk on the Pagoda.

Built in 1762 at the height of the eighteenth century craze for Chinoiserie, the Pagoda was originally designed with 80 brightly-coloured wooden dragons. Long disappeared the dragons will be reinstated when the landmark structure re-opens to the public early next year after an extensive restoration.

Vital

Kew Gardens provide a vital link in the strong partnership between China

and the UK and through their work they find plant-based solutions to global challenges such as biodiversity loss, food and water security, poverty, disease and changing climate. Kew's

scientists, along with global partners such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Hong Kong Department of Health, are discovering new ways of using plants sustainably while

working hard to conserve and restore the world's habitats, particularly those most in danger.

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