

Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

15 November 2023

Dear Chancellor,

We, the Fair Education Alliance members and its partners, write to you ahead of the Autumn Statement as a cross-sector coalition of businesses, charities and social enterprises, think tanks, unions, universities and schools, all working towards a shared vision where no child's opportunity is limited by their socio-economic background.

This is a moment of high stakes for our country: as we approach a General Election, we also face challenges related to the cost-of-living, energy security, and threats to global peace. To tackle any of these issues in a meaningful way, we must start with education, and we must have cooperation from business, civil society and government, both at a national and local level. Education is a crucial foundation to everything we want for our future, from widening employment and economic opportunity¹, to reducing crime², to improving health outcomes³. We will rely on today's young people to help solve some of the greatest challenges humans have yet been faced with.

That's why we were pleased to hear the Prime Minister announce this October that education will be his main funding priority in every spending review from now on. As he stated, 'It is the best economic policy, the best social policy, and the best moral policy. It is the best way to spread opportunity and create a more prosperous society.' We vehemently agree.

However, the education system is in urgent need of investment to prepare our society to prosper in the future. Increasingly, there is a wedge being driven between poorer and wealthier pupils. Teacher and school leader recruitment are each at their lowest rate, and attrition at its highest rate⁴, and this is more severe in schools serving the poorest communities⁵. Attendance is also a growing concern, with one in five pupils persistently absent in the last school year⁶ – the root causes of which are complex. This will only exacerbate the attainment gaps, which were widening before the pandemic and are now wider than ever at every stage:

- *Early Years*: Disadvantaged reception-age children are an average of 4.6 months behind their better-off peers.⁷
- *Primary*: The disadvantage gap index, used by government to track the gap between poorer and better-off pupils, stands at 3.21, the highest point in over a decade.⁸
- *GCSE*: The disadvantage gap index stands at 3.76 (or a gap of 1.34 grades), the highest gap in over a decade.⁹

¹ [OECD, How does education affect employment rates, 2012.](#)

² [IPPR and the University of Bath, The effect of education participation on youth custody, 2023.](#)

³ [Health Action Research Group, The role of education in reducing inequalities, 2021.](#)

⁴ [NFER, Teacher labour market Annual Report, 2023.](#)

⁵ [The Sutton Trust, The recruitment gap, 2019.](#)

⁶ [The Guardian, One in five pupils in England were persistently absent in past school year, 2023.](#)

⁷ [Education Policy Institute, Education in England: Annual Report, 2018.](#)

⁸ [Department for Education, Key Stage 2 Attainment, 2022.](#)

⁹ [Education Policy Institute, Covid-19 and Disadvantaged Gaps in England, 2021.](#)

- *A-Level*: Disadvantaged young people are an average 3.1 grades behind their non-disadvantaged peers.¹⁰
- *University*: The gap in progression rates between disadvantaged pupils and others increased 20.2 percentage points, the highest recorded level. The gap in progression to high-tariff universities is also at its highest recorded level – 9.3 percentage points.¹¹
- *Skills*: Individuals who attended independent or selective state schools were more likely to have above-median skills scores (55% and 52%, respectively) than those who attended non-selective state schools (49%); individuals with at least one parent who attended university were also more likely to have higher-than-median skill scores (54% versus 49%).¹²
- *Employment*: Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are 19 percentage points more likely to not be in education, employment or training (33% versus 14%).¹³

Closing these gaps is central to our work, and to reverse the present trend, we need sustained attention to the root causes. We know from the expertise across our membership what’s needed as a priority, and this is laid out in full in our [Fair Education Manifesto](#). Our Manifesto calls for action on four main priorities:

1. **Stabilise the school and college workforce.**
2. **Rebalance our systems to value skills and wellbeing alongside attainment.**
3. **Deliver quality early years education for every child.**
4. **Better fund and join-up the services around families.**

Advancing these priorities will need substantial and sustained investment. As we work towards the thoughtful reform needed to enable our systems to better serve young people and society, we must keep urgently working to close the attainment gap and mitigating the impacts of wider inequalities that exist. In this budget statement, we ask you to consider the following targeted asks.

- **Bolster school funding so those funding streams meant to mitigate the impacts of poverty can better meet rising need.**
 - o *Extend FSM eligibility to all children whose families are eligible for universal credit.* Analysis by Price Waterhouse Cooper had shown that this investment would deliver core benefits of £8.4 billion and wider benefits of £16.2 billion over a 20-year period.¹⁴ The cost of this policy is approximately £1 billion per annum¹⁵.
 - o *Restore Pupil Premium funding to 2015-2016 rates, at a cost of £264 million per annum¹⁶.*
 - o *Uplift the Early Years Pupil Premium to match the primary rate and extend the Pupil Premium to 16-19 education at the secondary rate, at a cost of £130 million and £290 million per annum, respectively¹⁷.*
- **Introduce 30 hours of funded early years education for all three and four-year-old children, regardless of parental education or employment status.** Children from low-income families

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ [Department for Education, Widening participation in higher education, 2023.](#)

¹² [Skills Builder Partnership, Essential Skills Tracker, 2022.](#)

¹³ [FE News, Disadvantaged young people twice as likely to be out of work or education, 2022.](#)

¹⁴ [Impact on Urban Health, Expanding free school meals: a cost benefit analysis, 2022.](#)

¹⁵ [IFS, The policy menu for school lunches: options and trade-offs in expanding FSM in England, 2023.](#)

¹⁶ [Teach First, Rethinking pupil premium, 2022.](#)

¹⁷ *Id.*

should be prioritised for funded hours, with funding covering the full cost for providers. The cost of this policy would be £1.1 billion per annum.¹⁸

- **Continue to invest in high-quality 1-1 and small-group tuition for the pupils who most need it.** The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) and 16-19 Tuition Fund should be extended through the 2024-25 school year, at a cost of £150 million per annum for the NTP and £95 million per year for 16-19 tutoring. It should also be embedded over the lifetime of the next Parliament, with a Tuition Guarantee that all young people in receipt of Pupil Premium or equivalent, and who are behind in English or maths, be offered high-quality tutoring provision to help close that gap. The Tuition Guarantee would cost an additional £140 million per annum¹⁹.

Building a more equal and more prosperous future isn't a fantasy. We know that demands on the public purse are high as ever, but investing in our children and young people to thrive in tomorrow's world is surely a priority. This work is the reason we exist, and we look forward to working with Government to make this future a reality.

Kind regards,

Fair Education Alliance, Gina Cicerone and Sam Butters, Co-CEOs

#BeeWell, James Robertson, National Director

Action Tutoring, Susannah Hardyman, CEO

Ambition Institute, Hilary Spencer, CEO

Boromi, Evie Keough, Founder and CEO

Campaign for Learning, Juliette Collier and Julia Wright, National Directors

Career Ready, Tokunbo Ajasa-Oluwa, CEO

Chapter One, Emma Bell, CEO

Children's University, Helen O'Donnell, CEO

CoachBright, Geoff Lane, Kelly McAree and Muznah Mahmood, Trustees

CoachBright, Joe McGinn, CEO

Doorstep Library, Katie Bareham, CEO

Delight, Kathryn Mills, CEO

Early Education, Beatrice Merrick, CEO

Envision, Elisabeth Paulson, CEO

Equal Education, Kim Rihal, Co-CEO and Co-founder

Fair Education Alliance, Dr Vanessa Ogden, Chair of Trustees

Fair Education Alliance, Dame Julia Cleverdon, Vice Chair of Trustees

Family Links the Centre for Emotional Health, Peter Leonard, CEO

Football Beyond Borders, Jack Reynolds, CEO

Foundation Years Trust, Anne Parker, CEO

Get Further, Sarah Waite, CEO

¹⁸ [IPPR, Towards a childcare guarantee, 2022.](#)

¹⁹ [Public First, The future of tutoring, 2023.](#)

Impetus, Ben Gadsby, Head of Policy
Institute of Imagination, Martin Allen Morales, CEO
IntoUniversity, Rachel Carr, CEO
Learning with Parents, Tom Harbour, CEO
Magic Breakfast, Dr Lindsey MacDonald, CEO
Minds Ahead, Dean Johnstone, CEO
National Literacy Trust, Jonathan Douglas, CEO
National Numeracy, Sam Sims, CEO
NCFE, Dawn Newman, CACHE Alumni Communities Manager
Partnership for Children, Hannah Baker, Co-CEO
Place2Be, Catherine Roche, CEO
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), Helen Donohoe, CEO
Quest for Learning, Siân Renwick, Executive Director
ReachOut, Ben Hilton, CEO
Spiral Skills, Benjamin Kahn and Emma Allen, Co-Founders
Sutton Trust, Nick Harrison, CEO
Tales Toolkit Ltd, Kate Shelley, Founder and CEO
Teach First, Russell Hobby, CEO
The Access Project, Anna Searle, CEO
The Bridging Project, Phoebe Prail, Director
The Centre for Education and Youth, Joe Hallgarten, CEO
The Brilliant Club, Anne-Marie Canning MBE, CEO
The Reading Agency, Karen Napier MBE, CEO
The Sutton Trust, Nick Harrison, CEO
The Switch Charity, Helen Sanson, CEO
The Tutor Trust, Ed Marsh, CEO
Tutors United, Amy Whitelock Gibbs, CEO
Universify Education, Alex Whitton, CEO
Voice 21, Dr Kate Paradine, CEO
Yes Futures, Sarah Sewell, CEO
Young Citizens, Ashley Hodges, CEO
Young Enterprise, Sharon Davies, CEO