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## Oxford Labour South West Central Branch: the state of schools in the branch

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There are four state funded (primary) schools in our branch:

- New Hinksey Primary: <http://new-hinksey.oxon.sch.uk/>
- St Barnabas Primary: <http://st-barnabas.oxon.sch.uk/>
- St Ebbes Primary: <http://st-ebbes.oxon.sch.uk/>
- West Oxford Primary: <http://westoxfordschool.co.uk/>

(There are also a number of state funded nursery schools – not looked at here)

Apart from one school, I have not been able to get adequate information about the state of finances in the schools: requests for information from contacted Labour Party members in each school had little success. Instead I've tried to find out from the internet about the finances of these schools, but without doing an exhaustive study the information is scant and may not be accurate. However, it does give an indication.

### Getting better ...?

According to the Schools Cuts website (<https://schoolcuts.org.uk/#/>, accessed most recently on 18.6.18) the good news is that, if one ignores inflation, for two of the schools in our branch (St Barnabas and St Ebbes) things are not getting (significantly) worse in the coming years, and for one it might even get better.

According to the Schools Cuts site the income per pupil in each school is as follows:

| <i><b>Name of school</b></i> | <b>2017-18 income per pupil</b> | <b>2019-20 forecast income per pupil</b> |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>New Hinksey</i>           | £4185                           | £4107                                    |
| <i>St Barnabas</i>           | £3988                           | £4007                                    |
| <i>St Ebbes</i>              | £3760                           | £3730                                    |
| <i>West Oxford</i>           | £3774                           | £3705                                    |
| <b>Average</b>               | <b>£3932</b>                    | <b>£3887</b>                             |

**Caution:** The site is not very clear on what these figures cover – but presumably they cover the funding that is delegated by the Local Authority (i.e. what the LA gets from central government for the general running of the school). These figures exclude any additional earmarked funds e.g. for special educational needs provision, pupil premium (free school meals), sports premium, etc.

If the sums stated on the site do indeed refer to LA delegated funding then they are, for at least one of the schools, an underestimate by about 5% for 2017-18 (site information versus actual school budget) and by about 4% for the 2019-20 forecast (site information versus the school's own budget forecast). Adding the additional funding (for earmarked purposes) to the LA delegated funds than the average income per pupil goes up by a further 9% for the school for which I do have more detailed figures.

**Assuming** that the percentages mentioned above are the same for all four schools in the branch (unlikely though that is) than the average income per pupil looks as follows:

| <i><b>Name of school</b></i> | <b>2017-18 total income per pupil (est. average)</b> | <b>2019-20 forecast total income per pupil (est. average)</b> |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| <i>New Hinksey</i>           | £4789  | £4655   |
| <i>St Barnabas</i>           | £4564  | £4542   |
| <i>St Ebbes</i>              | £4303  | £4228   |
| <i>West Oxford</i>           | £4319  | £4200   |
| <b>Average</b>               | <b>£4494</b>   | <b>£4406</b>  |

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## Comparison with the private education sector

In private education school fees tend to pay for all education provision offered to pupils (although additional contributions may be asked for instance for field trips and some government funds may be available for certain aspects of pupil support). The Independent Schools Council website (<https://www.isc.co.uk/>) gives an indication of the costs of private primary education in Oxford.

Ignoring the two most expensive private primary schools than the average fee seems to work out at approx. **£9398 per pupil per year** (in primary education)<sup>1</sup>, i.e. funding per pupil that is more than twice as much as in the state sector. An example of (and a contribution to) our unequal society.

## State school underfunding: some consequences

Because I didn't get feedback from contacts I can only give examples of what the underfunding in state education means in the one school with which I am particularly familiar:

Over the past year(s):

- the post of School Caretaker has been abolished: ongoing maintenance and repairs, ensuring site security, supervising external contractors, and similar tasks previously carried out by the Caretaker are now done by the Headteacher, the School Business Manager and teaching staff;
- the Deputy Headteacher's role, when it became vacant earlier this year, has not been filled: leading to less support for the Headteacher, and teachers and other staff taking on aspects of the Deputy's role e.g. in development of teaching and learning programmes, in-service training, and whole-school responsibilities delegated by the Head;
- reductions in budget lines to do with, for instance, in-service training, out of school visits, supply cover, general school resources;
- reductions in school reserves from £450 per pupil in 2017-18 to £125 per pupil for 2019-20 (forecast) and £79 per pupil for 2020-21 (forecast): leading to many crossed fingers that no major unforeseen building repairs, electricity rewiring, cover during illnesses, etc. will be required;
- the introduction of requests to parents for contributions of consumables: paper, Pritt sticks, etc. (but (not yet) toilet rolls, as I heard one primary school has done);
- the parents' School Association has increased its fundraising efforts for the school: to good effect, but obviously those funds cannot make up for shortfalls in central government funding.

Fortunately, no-one has had to be made redundant and thanks to the dedication of experienced staff the quality of education provided to pupils has remained good. But medium- or long-term the situation is not tenable.

## What is to be done?

Both the short-term and long-term situation of education in state schools is not particularly rosy (to put it mildly). Teachers' unions and parents are aware of this and are campaigning to improve things.<sup>2</sup> However, they seem to be doing this largely in isolation and there seem to be no attempts (as far as I am aware) to develop a broad (national) coalition of teachers and parents to jointly campaign for improvements.

- **Can the branch play a role in helping to create such a parents and teachers coalition in Oxford?**  
or
- **Should we just wait until there's a change in government/government policy?**

Harm-Jan Fricke  
June 2018

*N.B. not an exhaustive study and figures shown need to be treated with caution.*

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<sup>1</sup> This does not take into account various bursary schemes that may be available to particular pupils.

<sup>2</sup> A group of some 70 New Hinksey parents recently contacted Anneliese Dodds MP by letter (and via her Nick Gibb MP, the Minister for School Standards) to raise their concerns about the state of education.