

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing St  
London  
SW1A 2AA

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you on behalf of a cross-sector coalition of over 200 businesses, educationalists, charities and young people who are dedicated to improving educational outcomes for the disadvantaged children in this country.

The government has already declared in its education recovery package in February 2021<sup>1</sup> that education and levelling up is central to its recovery agenda. We have welcomed government initiatives through the pandemic to date on this agenda including provision of laptops to address the digital divide and Free School Meals extensions. Whilst the £1.5 billion investment in education announced on 2<sup>nd</sup> June and pledges of further funding to come is also welcome, the current level of investment is not enough to support your stated intention of levelling up and ambition for recovery for children and young people.

This is an issue for children, young people and families and their right to a strong education but critically also presents a serious longer-term issue for business and our economy. Education is a significant force for driving the country's success and prosperity for all.

We support Sir Kevan Collins' comments in his resignation letter about the scale of the challenge that the pandemic has created in education; 'It will not be possible to deliver a successful recovery without significantly greater support than the government has to date indicated it intends to provide'. We strongly urge that the government takes note of the Education Policy Institute's recommendation of £13.5 billion as the required investment.<sup>2</sup> As far as possible, this funding should be given directly to schools.

For disadvantaged children in particular, the crisis in education is not limited to the damage the pandemic caused. The pandemic has merely exacerbated existing critical issues. The 2019 Report Card<sup>3</sup> on educational inequality, published jointly with the Education Policy Institute, revealed that even before the pandemic, persistently disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for Free School Meals more than 80% of their school life) were on average 22 months behind their more affluent peers, and that this has not improved over the last decade. Investment beyond the Pupil Premium was already needed then to close the gap – it is needed now even more. This moment presents an opportunity for our government to make long needed investments.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-education-recovery-package-for-children-and-young-people>

<sup>2</sup> <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/education-recovery-and-resilience-in-england/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.faireducation.org.uk/report-card-2019>

**The Fair Education Alliance and signatories of this letter are calling for recovery plans to commit the £13.5bn recommended by the Education Policy Institute and to include:**

- **Support and development for the education workforce with a focus on those supporting disadvantaged students:** for disadvantaged young people, teachers can make a decisive difference to their futures. Disadvantaged children, on average gain 1.5 years' worth of learning with very effective teachers, compared to 0.5 years with those teachers who perform poorly.<sup>4</sup> Yet areas of the country with the highest levels of disadvantage often find it difficult to attract and retain high performing teachers, despite this being where they are needed most.<sup>5</sup> Investment in our education workforce with regard to training, support, and development is needed to support school improvement and to make teaching in more challenging areas attractive. In addition to the school workforce, this should include investment in early-years and post-16 further education and have a particular focus on staff supporting disadvantaged young people.
- **Increased investment in provision of enrichment activities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds:** during the pandemic, children and young people have missed out on a range of formal and informal extra-curricular activities. These play a vital role in enriching children's lives and supporting their personal development and mental well-being.<sup>6</sup> Outcomes in wellbeing and skills are important in and of themselves, as well as being enablers of academic attainment. We need much more investment in the provision of sport, arts, culture, outdoor learning experiences, work experience and social action for disadvantaged pupils both in and outside of school. Critically this is not about simply adding time to the school day but is about increasing access to these opportunities, particularly for poorer families.
- **Investment in increasing parental, carer, and community engagement in learning (beyond the early years):** IFS data (2010) showed that although schools account for 14% of the disadvantage gap at age 11, 49% can be attributed to factors involving parents and carers. We will only see inequalities fully addressed if we consider parents and carers as part of the solution. Emphasis in recent years has been disproportionately focussed on the role of schools. Schools are being asked to do too much on their own. As we emerge from the pandemic, we have an opportunity to create an education system that works for all because it addresses the needs of disadvantaged pupils holistically. Crucially, we are at a moment of opportunity for this change - the last year has created a re-balancing of involvement of parents and carers in the education system and home learning and we can build on this.
- **Continued allocation of funds for 1:1 and small group tuition/coaching with a focus on disadvantage:** 1:1 and small group tuition for children from disadvantaged backgrounds is a well-evidenced intervention for tackling educational inequality. We support the continued funding for schools so they can provide this intervention for their students.
- **Investment in careers education targeted for disadvantaged young people:** the pandemic has created a crisis of youth unemployment. Without quality careers guidance pupils who

---

<sup>4</sup> (2011), Improving the impact of teachers on pupil achievement in the UK – interim findings, The Sutton Trust, 2011

<sup>5</sup> (2019). Britain at a crossroads: what will it take to provide the teachers our children need? [online] Teach First. Available at: [https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-08/britain\\_at\\_a\\_crossroads\\_2.pdf](https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-08/britain_at_a_crossroads_2.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.naht.org.uk/news-and-opinion/news/leadership-news/education-recovery-a-blueprint-for-a-stronger-and-fairer-system-for-all/>

already disadvantaged will be more likely to struggle. Recovery plans must include funding for this support.

- **A renewed focus on how the accountability system promotes fairness:** we need to ensure that our accountability system is aligned with supporting disadvantaged children and tackling inequality. We recommend revisiting the recommendations of the Accountability Commission led by the National Association of Head Teachers.<sup>7</sup>
- **Tackling the digital divide through investment in technology:** bridging the digital divide was critical during lockdown to ensure access to remote learning for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and this remains crucial to ensure a fair education for all young people. We ask that recovery plans continue the provision of technology and connectivity for poorer families, and that digital initiatives are designed and implemented to address the specific needs of disadvantaged young people.

We believe that increased investment in these areas as delineated in our letter, together with a policy focus on closing the gap for disadvantaged children and young people, will support the long-term change needed to achieve this government's agenda for levelling up. We believe that children and young people deserve this investment in their future and that the country as a whole will benefit significantly – in the short term and the long term, socially and economically – from your attention to the matters we have set out here.

Amongst our membership we have a wealth of evidence and research to demonstrate why this package of initiatives and associated investment will demonstrate value for the money and enable you to deliver your levelling up strategy. We would be pleased to discuss this further with you, your Ministers, and your officials and support you in this work.

Yours respectfully,



Signed:

Fair Education Alliance

- Sam Butters and Gina Cicerone, Co-CEOs Fair Education Alliance
- Dr Vanessa Ogden, Chair Fair Education Alliance (CEO of Mulberry Schools Trust)
- Dame Julia Cleverdon, Vice Chair, Fair Education Alliance
- Brett Wigdortz, Trustee, Fair Education Alliance (CEO, Tiney)
- Lamide Odanye, Trustee Fair Education Alliance (#iwill youth ambassador)
- Russel Hobby, Trustee Fair Education Alliance (CEO, Teach First)
- Zulum Elumogo, Trustee Fair Education Alliance (Former General Secretary and Chairman of the LSE Students' Union)

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.naht.org.uk/news-and-opinion/news/structures-inspection-and-accountability-news/improving-school-accountability/>

## Education Unions

- ASCL, General Secretary Geoff Barton
- Association of Colleges, Chief Executive, David Hughes
- Association for Citizenship Teaching, Chief Executive, Liz Moore
- National Governance Association, Chief Executive, Emma Knights
- NAHT, General Secretary Paul Whiteman
- NAHT Accountability Commission, Nick Brook
- Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), Chief Executive, Liz Bayram

## School and College Leaders

- Ali Durban, Co-founder, Gesher Special School
- Anna Hannel-James, Chief Executive Officer Orwell Multi Academy Trust
- David Boyle, CEO, Dunraven Educational Trust
- Dawn Ferdinand, Headteacher, The Willow Primary School and Broadwaters' Children's Centre
- Ed Wydenbach, Chair of the Trust Board, Minerva Learning Trust
- Jason Ashley, Headteacher, Redbridge Community School
- Peter Knight, Principal Oasis Academy Brislington
- Rae Tooth, Chief Executive, Villiers Park Educational Trust
- Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, Headteacher, Anderton Park Primary School

## Young people

- Career Matters Ambassadors, Youth Advisory Board, Hannah Kirkbride
- First Give Youth Advisory Group/ Groundwork, Callum Pethick
- Rescue Our Schools, Brandon Farley, Youth Organiser
- YL Project Hope CIC, Naomi Lea, Director

## Education and Youth Charities and Business groups

- AccessEd, Managing Director, Katie Booth
- Algom, Founder, Hans Trivedi
- ATS+Partners, CEO, Aquila Leon-Soon
- Big Education, Co-directors, Peter Hyman and Liz Robinson
- Brightside, CEO, Laura Gray
- Boromi, CEO, Evie Keough
- Business in the Community, Chief Executive, Amanda Mackenzie
- Campaign for Learning, National Director, Juliette Anne Collier
- Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, Chief Executive, Louise Johns-Shepherd
- Challenge Partners, CEO, Dr Kate Chatwal
- Children's University, CEO, Helen O'Donnell
- Coram Beanstalk, Managing Director, Ginny Lunn
- Cornelia Lucey Positive Leadership, Founder, Cornelia Lucey
- CoachBright Charitable Trust, CEO and Founder, Robin Chu
- Creative Academies Network, Chief Executive Officer, Mr Jerrel D Jackson

- Driver Youth Trust, Chief Executive, Christopher Rossiter
- Edpol.net, Founder, Patrick Wall
- Expert Impact, CEO, Karen Lynch
- First Give, Director, Louisa Searle
- First Star Scholars UK, Executive Director, Lorna Goodwin
- First Story, CEO, Antonia Byatt
- Football Beyond Borders, Co-Founder and Director, Jasper Kain
- Future Frontiers, CEO, Dominic Baker
- Gregson Family Foundation, David Gregson
- Greenhouse Sports, Chief Operating Officer, Chris Allbut
- Governors for Schools, CEO, Hannah Stolton
- I CAN, Chief Executive, Jane Harris
- Impetus, Director of Public Affairs, Steven Haines
- IntoUniversity, CEO, Rachel Carr
- Innovations for Learning (TutorMate), Executive Director, Emma Bell
- Khulisa, Head of Evidence and Impact, Annie Barber
- Learning Labs (Flash Academy), CEO, Veejay Lingiah
- Learning with Parents, CEO, Tom Harbour
- Literacy Pirates, Chief Executive, Jude Williams and Chair of Trustees, Nick Canning
- London First, Chair, Paul Dreschler CBE
- Mindful Equity UK, Co-Director, Youlande Harrowell
- Native Scientist Ltd, Director, Joana Alves Moscoso
- National Children's Bureau, Chief Executive, Anna Feuchtwang
- National Literacy Trust, Chief Executive, Jonathan Douglas CBE
- Now Teach, Co-founder and Director, Katie Waldegrave, Co-founder, Lucy Kellaway and Executive Director, Clare Geldard
- Partnership for Children, Chief Executive, Wendy Tabuteau
- Peppy Pals, CEO and Co-Founder, Paulina Olsson
- Power2, CEO, Julie Randles
- Prospela, CEO & Co-Founder, Emma Sullivan
- Right to Succeed, Chief Executive, Graeme Duncan
- SAPERE, CEO, Amelia Foster
- Saturday Club Trust, Chief Executive, Lucy Kennedy
- School Home Support, CEO, Jaine Stannard
- Social Finance, Director, Sara Parsonage
- Speakers Trust, Chief Executive, Russell Findlay
- St John's Foundation, CEO, David Hobdey
- Smart School Councils, Founder, Greg Sanderson
- Tales Toolkit Ltd, CEO, Kate Shelley
- Talk the Talk, Executive Chair, Karen Frost
- Teach First, CEO, Russell Hobby
- The Brilliant Club, CEO, Anne-Marie Canning
- The Children's Literacy Trust, Director, Isabel Greenwood
- The Country Trust, CEO, Jill Attenborough
- The Economist Educational Foundation, Chief Executive, Emily Evans
- The Girls Network, CEO and Co-founder, Charly Young
- The Prologue Publications Limited, Director, Luke Swann
- The Parents' Guide to, Co-founders, Darius Bluck and Vanessa Green
- The Seeds of Change, Director, Rachael Frossell

- The Story Project, Founder/ CEO, Olivia Richards
- The Tutor Trust, Co-Founders, Nick Bent and Abigail Shapiro
- The Visionaries Education CEC, Director, Max Girardeau
- Thinking Reading Ltd, Director, James Murphy
- Treebeard Trust, Director, Jessamy Gould
- Tutors United, Chief Executive, Joel Davies
- UK Youth, Director of Collective Action, Kayleigh Wainwright
- Unifrog, CEO, Daniel Keller
- Unicorn Theatre, Artistic Director and CEO, Justin Audibert
- Universify Education, Charity Manager, Alex Whitton
- Up Learn, Chief Executive Officer, Guy Riese
- Voice21, CEO, Rebecca Earnshaw
- We Are in Beta, Founder, Niall Alcock
- Yes Futures, Director of Impact, Sophie Bartlett
- Young Citizens, Chief Executive Officer, Ashley Hodges
- You Be You, CEO and Co-Founder, Bilkis Miah
- Zero Gravity, CEO, Joe Seddon
- Zing, CEO, Chris White