
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove

James Cleverly MP
(via email)

17 January 2019

Dear Mr Cleverly,

Thank you for your letters of 6 December and 8 January expressing concern over the use and context of school funding data on the School Cuts campaign website¹. You question in particular the statement that “91% of schools face funding cuts.”

The data published on the School Cuts website are not official statistics so the authors are under no formal obligation to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Nonetheless, the Authority encourages compliance with the high standards of the Code of Practice wherever data are being used in public debate.

On this basis, we reviewed the approach taken by the School Cuts website. We have had helpful discussions with the analyst who carried out the calculations.

We were able to replicate the high-level figures given by the School Cuts website. It was not however possible to reproduce the exact figures published on the website, as the underlying data are not publicly available and the methodology is not wholly clear.

We have found three main issues with the Schools Cuts approach.

The most significant factor is that the presentation mixes reductions in school budgets that have already taken place and those projected to take place in the future. Some schools can expect future increases in funding to help offset past reductions.

In addition, as you have pointed out, the underlying calculations inflate the 2015/16 baseline funding to what it would have been with each school’s 2015/16 per pupil funding but using 2017/18 pupil numbers. This approach creates a worse picture where pupil numbers are increasing for a particular school.

The third issue is that the calculation of the 91% covers England only, whereas the website suggests that it covers both England and Wales.

We believe the headline statement that “91% of schools face funding cuts” risks giving a misleading impression of future changes in school budgets. The method of calculation may also give a misleading impression of the scale of change for some particular schools.

We have shared our findings with the analyst responsible for the website.

Yours sincerely,



Sir David Norgrove

¹ <https://schoolcuts.org.uk/>