

JAMES CLEVERLY MP

Member of Parliament for Braintree



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Mervyn Stevens
Complaints Officer
UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1V 2QQ

Tuesday 8th January 2019

Dear Mr Stevens,

I am writing again to you to ask you to look into the use of statistics and the provision of context around another message from the "School Cuts" campaign in relation to school funding. For ease, the website is www.schoolcuts.org.uk.

The "School Cuts" website seeks to provide data on schools funding. This is often misleading. For example, it claims that Lyons Hall School, in my constituency, will lose £5,241 between 2015 and 2020. The context suggests that the school will have this amount less money. It will not. The number the website presents as the 'loss between 2015 and 2020 is inaccurate because it ignores the impact of pupil number changes. Even by the website's own figures in the 'more stats on the school' section, this school is due to see a £100,000 real terms increase in its total annual budget in between 2015 and 2020. The site multiplies any change in real per pupil amounts by the current pupil count, then presents this as the 'estimated reduction in the school's annual budget by 2020 in real terms'. But for any school with growing pupil numbers over the period, this: (1) ignores the fact that additional pupils bring additional funding; and (2) creates a false impression about changes by multiplying changes in funding per pupil by the current pupil count rather than the lower counts in 2015-16. As there is overall pupil growth across the school system, this leads to a high level of distortion across the site.

The general approach taken, suggesting that a decrease in real terms funding per pupil is a 'cut' is misleading. In a school, not all costs go up and down in line with pupil numbers. If in one year pupil numbers go up 3% and funds go up 2% calling that a 'cut' is no more correct than claiming that in a different year when pupil numbers go down by 3% and funds go down by 2% that that is an increase in funding. In reality both total and per-pupil amounts are relevant.

I hope you ensure that this misuse of statistics is investigated and corrected. I have also emailed a copy of this letter to 'authority.enquiries@statistics.gsi.gov.uk'.

Yours sincerely,


James Cleverly

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