

*Good evening My name is Angie Sowton*

I stand in front of you today as a mother of two girls at BANES primary schools and also as a child counsellor who has worked in several BANES schools over the last four years. I have seen for myself the drastic effects which school cuts have had on our children.

But this is not just anecdotal evidence. 54 out of 70 schools in BANES are still facing cuts despite some additional funding being made available in the recent budget. These cuts are hitting the most vulnerable children, and their families, the hardest. This leading to the loss of one-to-one support, of teaching assistants and pastoral support staff losing their jobs, and already overburdened teachers and headteachers being asked to do more with less.

Just today I was speaking to a Bath headteacher who has to supply teach in his own school in order to cut costs, thereby taking him away from the job he should be doing. Yesterday I spoke to teachers and parents who are paying out of their own pockets not just for educational supplies, but for food and sanitary towels for children in their classes.

If we continue to make staff do the impossible with the invisible, schools will be forced into denying admission to the children in most need, as they will not have the money to support them.

This short-term approach to school funding is setting our children up for more exclusions, more mental health problems and an education system unable to cope, all of which will be much more expensive for the taxpayer in the long-run.

It is clear that a two-tier system of education is forming in BANES state schools because of these cuts. Schools that already have the highest level of needs are facing the most severe cuts; schools in more affluent areas are better able to absorb these cuts through contributions by parents. This is unequal, unjust and not becoming of a city with such wealth.

Right now, there is a consultation taking place regarding funding for Financial Year 2019/20. BANES are asking some schools to consider giving a further 0.5% of their main funding to move over to the Local Authority's High Needs Block, which is not sufficient to meet current needs. We believe the Local Authority should be asking, no, demanding more funding for SEN/High Needs from Central Government, rather than taking that money from our already stretched schools' budgets.

In this council chamber you have the power to give opportunity and hope to the most vulnerable in our society. We are asking that you put the children of BANES, the future of BANES, at the forefront of your minds when making the extraordinarily difficult decisions you face. We all understand that everyone is doing more with less in these times of austerity but to hit the most vulnerable children and families in our communities so hard, with worse to come, is short-sighted and reprehensible.

I have emailed you all with the letter and petition from St Andrews parents but I am certain the same could be replicated across at least the 80% of BANES schools which are facing stringent cuts.

Thank you for your time.