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2008/0090776POSM-F

**Sarah McCarthy-Fry**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners

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Mr Alan McCarthy  
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12 November 2008

*Dear Alan McCarthy*

Thank you for your letter of 22 October, addressed to Ed Balls, about the recent Council motion entitled "impact of school costs on families". I am replying as the Minister responsible for the the cost of schooling.

Eradicating child poverty is one of the most challenging ambitions set by any Government. Creating the change needed to reach the target to eradicate child poverty by 2020 requires us to develop and pursue new approaches, drawing on the best current policy, new initiatives and strengths of all our partners. Despite the scale of the challenge our commitment to tackling child poverty is stronger than ever.

The School Admissions Code places a statutory duty on all governing bodies to ensure that their policies and practices do not disadvantage any children. On school clothing, local authorities already have discretionary powers to provide grants, and schools can provide further financial assistance to parents. All maintained schools must comply with the law on charging for school activities - sections 449-462 of the Education Act 1996 - and with the relevant statutory guidance in the Code.

The Department has commissioned a survey into the cost of schooling, the results of which will be published at the end of this month.

*Kind Regards*  
*Sarah McCarthy-Fry*

SARAH MCCARTHY-FRY



department for  
children, schools and families

