



Dear Parents and Carers,

We have thought long and hard about this letter.

As you know, we have had to make many difficult decisions regarding funding over the past several years. As Head teachers of schools that receive some of the lowest rates of per pupil funding in the city, we have to manage our budgets very carefully. We have weathered these difficult times – but the financial pressures are continuing at an unprecedented level. It is now becoming very clear that the government will be continuing to increase the pressure on school funding. The following statistics are from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) report 'Breaking Point: A report of the school funding crisis in 2016/17':

- *There is an estimated £3bn shortfall in the government's education budget by 2020.*
- *98 per cent of schools are losing funding as a result of the cost pressures.*
- *Analysis of the DfE's own data points to a £339 loss for every primary age pupil and a £477 loss for every child in secondary school.*
- *The number of schools in deficit has more than doubled since 2015.*
- *71% of schools had to make cuts last year to balance their school budget.*
- *The key reasons given for schools experiencing these financial pressures continue to be the 2015 increases in employers' pension and national insurance contributions, given by 89% and 86% of respondents respectively. This increase in costs of over 5.5% every year with no resulting increase in school funding has been disastrous for schools.*
- *This year, the third most quoted source of financial pressure reported by school leaders was the cost of dealing with the additional needs of pupils, reported by 83% of respondents.*
- *Members also expressed serious concerns about the extra pressure they are facing to support the growing number of children with mental health issues. Almost four fifths (79%) of respondents provide support for children with mental health issues directly, stepping in where cuts in health and social care funding have failed to meet the growing demand for support, without which children cannot engage with learning effectively.*

The Government is currently consulting on a new formula for funding schools. Quite rightly, the formula allows for schools where children are facing social difficulties to have access to increased funding but rather than increasing overall funding, the Government proposes to simply reallocate the existing funding in a different way. This would mean schools like ours will lose out if the proposals become reality. For Wharnccliffe Side Primary, the new National Funding Formula would result in a loss of £16 000 per year.

Education is an investment in our future. The lack of specific investment in our schools and the impact of rising costs are the main reason we feel our school system is facing its biggest crisis since we became teachers. We cannot state more strongly that this is our biggest concern in education right now.

We believe that parents and carers are the most powerful voice in this current situation. We believe many politicians also believe that investment in our schools must be a priority. We must invest in our state school education system because that is where the vast majority of children will experience their education. It will be invaluable for our children as they grow up in these uncertain times that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to make their way in our world – at a time when many countries are investing in their education system, we are cutting investment in ours.

There are many things we believe you can do that will help your school:

- You may feel that you would like to express your thoughts directly to the Government through their official consultation. This is available online at <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula2/> and the consultation closes on 22nd March 2017.
- We believe that Angela Smith, our local MP, is a woman who will listen to her constituents. You could write to her at officeofangelasmithmp@parliament.uk
- There is a website called Schools Cuts available at <http://www.schoolcuts.org.uk/> - you could visit it and sign the petition. There is also plenty of additional information about the extent and nature of cuts coming to our schools.

We are aware that we have quoted from unions such as the National Association of Head Teachers and the National Union of Teachers but we believe that we have always found positive and proactive ways of addressing the challenges in education. We believe that by increasing our understanding of the problems and the issues that impact our schools we can address this issue head on. Thank you for reading this and we will be happy to talk about it at the school gates. We will do everything we can to ensure that our schools continue to have the best provision we can provide. We will continue to champion and celebrate our fantastic children.

Yours sincerely

Ann Leach
Headteacher
Wharnccliffe Side Primary School

Helen Adams
Headteacher
Bradfield Dungworth Primary School

Jim Dugmore
Headteacher
Oughtibridge Primary School

Sarah Binns
Headteacher
Stannington Infant School

Steve Arbon Davies
Headteacher
Nook Lane Junior School

James Connolly
Headteacher
Loxley Primary School

Beverley Cordle
Headteacher
Deepcar St John's Primary School

Louise Jones
Headteacher
Royd Nursery Infant School

Samantha Gaymond
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