

Dear Parent/Carer

School Funding Update

As we come close to the end of the current financial year Headteachers from schools and academies across West Sussex have come together once again to inform you of the dreadful financial situation that we are in.



School funding is a highly complex issue and over an extended period of time we have provided detailed analysis of how our school budgets are being affected. Our analysis and data have never been challenged or questioned by the Department for Education or other senior members of the government.

Against this background, we believe it is vital to provide blunt facts that inform you about the ongoing crisis that our pupils / schools are facing. To be clear, this is what the new National Funding Formula (NFF) does for children in West Sussex:

- Our schools will be funded between 50-75% lower than equivalent size schools in most London boroughs. These massive differences occur even before additional money for deprivation (the Pupil Premium) is accounted for.
- Over the next two years 112,000 children in West Sussex will receive an extra £28 million (£250 per child). **At the same time, schools are having other grants reduced and face huge rising costs which effectively 'wipe out' this additional money.**
- As such, although everyone acknowledged that West Sussex schools have been severely underfunded for years and years, we remain at a "standstill" position.
- Class sizes will continue to rise and your child will not receive the same resources and opportunities as many other children in better funded areas.
- In 2018/19, for example, pupils in West Sussex will receive **£30 million less** than the same number of pupils in the average funded authority, **£145 million less** than the same number of pupils in Greenwich and **£263 million less** than those in Hackney.
- West Sussex' overall education budget is so low, that our schools and related services remain on the edge of financial viability.
- Further, services to children with special education needs and those who require specialist school provision are in a critical financial position.
- Special school Headteachers are reporting that they are unlikely to be viable in the next 12-18 months, especially if further proposed cuts take place. These cuts seem inevitable under the current financial arrangements.
- Small rural primary schools are also under significant threat. Currently, there are 53 schools with rolls of less than 150 pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils in West Sussex do much worse than students from similar backgrounds in other areas of the country. London has 18 boroughs in the top 20 for best 'upward' social mobility (out of 324), whilst West Sussex has some of the lowest.

Local Authority	Position (out of 324 areas)
Adur	205
Arun	267
Chichester	287
Crawley	304
Horsham	139
Mid Sussex	75
Worthing	159

The Social Mobility Commission ranks the social mobility of 324 areas in England. 1 is the best, 324 is the lowest.

We have been joined by thousands of other Headteachers in other low funded counties who are all saying the same thing. We are not exaggerating the problems but making clear how bad things are.

At a local level, West Sussex County Council have unequivocally stated that the new national funding formula is “not fit for purpose”.

We are, however, immensely disappointed that letters to the chancellor, Philip Hammond and to the Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds, have been ignored.

Headteachers have also met with our local MPs on several occasions. They have listened to our views carefully and over a sustained period of time have lobbied government on our behalf.

At our most recent meeting we explained to MPs, in detail, how children in their constituencies and schools are being treated. Again, the response was sympathetic, but in our collective view it is not strong enough.

Twice, we asked our MPs to commit to a joint statement along with West Sussex Head teachers and West Sussex County Council. They refused and simply provided a different statement (from MPs only).

In particular, we wanted public acknowledgement that the new funding formula does not provide anywhere near enough **basic level funding for our children** before ‘other’ factors (such as deprivation or English as a second language) are taken into account.

The statement from our local MPs (attached) is helpful but does not go far enough. Our children and families deserve more robust, direct and outspoken support. Our schools are in a critical position and our MPs need to make this point loud and clear. Headteachers all agree that above all else we urgently need two main things:

- The basic level of funding (Age Weighted Pupil Unit) to increase significantly for all schools so that they can function adequately.
- Additional resource and money to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

In light of this we are urging all parents to contact their local MP to request greater levels of support. We must underline that there is no political agenda to our work. All we want is a fairer and better deal for the children and families that we serve.

We are determined to maintain a relentlessly reasonable campaign in order to achieve this goal.

Head Teacher

On behalf of Worth Less? All schools and academies in West Sussex