



Headteacher's Monthly Update

Budget

You may have seen a number of stories in the press and on the news recently regarding school funding. There have been a number of worrying headlines and we feel it is important to let you know, as far as we are able at this stage, on the potential impact this may have on our school.

School budgets across the country have been under pressure for some time. The Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body have been analysing the funding challenges and this indicates that although our budget will be considerably worse off in 2017/18, cautious financial management and good pupil numbers mean we will still be able to maintain existing staffing ratios and increase the teaching staff at Key Stage 2 from September. It is looking likely that we don't have to contribute as much to the new building extension as initially estimated, thus protecting us somewhat from the effects of the cuts, however, I will need to use PTA fundraising to help convert the Year 5/6 classroom, in order to help balance the budget. Our priority is to ensure that we continue to offer the highest quality teaching and learning environment for our children.

The particular challenge for next year is that our budget from the local authority is allocated on the number of pupils we had in January, so we get no funding in September for our Year 6 pupils - not until January 2018. Going ahead, our budget then is benefitted by having this additional year group, and also by attracting additional pupils to other cohorts.

Our school is not alone. The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) has shown that more than half of school leaders felt that their budget would be untenable by 2018/19. The National Audit Office estimate a £3 billion real terms cut across all phases and in all schools, so this does not just affect us.

We will work hard to ensure that any future cuts which may have to be considered will have the least possible impact on teaching. However, rising costs and a frozen budget mean that difficult decisions may need to be made. We appreciate all of your support with PTA fundraising and contributions to regular activities, such as swimming, as this helps us maintain the 'extras' that enable us to offer a varied, rich curriculum for our pupils without needing to ask for contributions towards every school trip, as most schools do.

The Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body always carefully review and monitor our school budget and operating costs to ensure we are achieving best value, taking appropriate action where necessary. This is overseen by the Resources Committee of the Governing Body.

We appreciate you may have questions relating to this and we will of course keep you up to date with developments as and when we receive further information.

Buildings/Health and Safety

We are delighted to see the building work now underway. I am very happy with the support and consideration 'Compass Developments' have shown to us, along with their clear understanding of child protection and health and safety issues related to school sites.

There is no longer access through the area of their compound. We have widened the gap between the car park hedge and fence, so we can access the public footpath without going out on to the road.

Thank you for not using the metal gate at the end of the school day, so that once the bus children have gone it can be secured, avoiding accidental access out by young children waiting with their parents or carers.

Attendance

Although attendance dropped below the nationally expected level this term, due to illness and holiday absences, overall this year we are just above the expected level. This is important for us, as Ofsted judges attendance very stringently and it was quoted as a reason we could not have 'Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare' judged as outstanding.

Please do not book holidays in **May** - they are cheaper- because, nationally, all schools need this month to carry out pupil assessments and tests in **all** year groups. It is more stressful for your children to do this without the revision or rehearsal that happens at this time, as well as having to sit an assessment on their own. Please plan ahead and note that if a Year 6 pupil misses a SATs test, the zero score is carried forward for them and us as a school.

Just a reminder, morning registration is at 8.55 am daily and lessons start at 9 am prompt. The school day ends at 3 pm.

Monitoring

We have recently welcomed our Local Authority School Improvement Partner, Sandra Ford, as well as Jo Warner, Deputy Director of Education for the Diocese, to carry out further monitoring of teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils. They are both impressed by our Early Years provision, teaching across school, the quality of pupil workbooks and the attainment and progress being made from varied pupil starting points. Pupil assessment data from May, will be used to make judgements against our school improvement plan and self-evaluation judgements for Ofsted.

Homework

In order to help you best support your child's learning at home, we are just finishing producing a homework policy with updated guidance for each class base. This will be discussed at the Governors' Strategic Policy and Development Committee next week, with the final document being sent to all families as soon as possible.

Diane Lakey March 2017