

# Wakefield Headteachers

26<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Dear Parent / Carer

You will no doubt be aware from the high profile press coverage that schools across the country are facing significant financial problems. Given the exceptional level of press coverage, headteachers of schools across Wakefield have taken a united approach to write to you to explain the situation in Wakefield schools.

The government says that funding for schools is at its highest ever level. However, in reality schools have been funded on a 'flat cash' basis for a number of years, meaning that their funding per pupil has stood still while costs have increased. These cost increases are due to:

- Schools have to pay an increased contribution on both teachers' pensions and support staff pensions, increases of 2.38% and 3.5% respectively.
- Nationally agreed increases to staff salaries in line with general inflation.
- Main band National Insurance employer contributions increased by 3.4% in April 2016.
- From April 2017 employers with a budget over £3 million have to pay the Apprenticeship Levy, a 0.5% charge on gross basic pay.
- An increase of £1 million in the cost of providing educational support for children with special educational needs and disabilities in Wakefield reduces the flexibility schools and academies have in control of their budgets.
- There has been an impact caused by the reduction of the Education Support Grant (ESG) from £140 to £77 per pupil in 2016/17, and this is now being removed completely at the end of the current academic year.

The reason why the department for education state that funding levels are at their highest ever level is because there are more pupils in the education system, and each one has been funded. The problem is that the level of funding for each pupil has not kept pace with the additional costs shown above.

Inevitably, the reduction in financial resources available means that as school leaders we are faced with making a number of difficult decisions.

Although stories within the press have highlighted some extreme measures being considered by schools across the country, it is true that as school leaders across Wakefield we all have to consider the significant implications arising from the reduction in funding as follows:

- Fewer teachers will be employed to deliver our curriculum, which in turn means an increase in class sizes.
- The curriculum choice for young people at GCSE, A Level and in vocational courses is reduced.
- Fewer specialist teachers can be employed in primary schools (i.e. supporting languages, ICT or science).
- A reduction in support that can be given to students within schools who need it the most such as those with special educational needs and/or those requiring support for mental health problems.
- A decrease in opportunities for young people to engage in enrichment activities or educational visits.
- A reduction in the investment in facilities, ICT and in resources to support the delivery of the curriculum.

Clearly, under normal circumstances none of the above would be priorities for reduction or cutting, given our commitment to provide the very best for young people. However, the funding challenges we face are real and made even worse by the reduction in government funding for local authorities that support young people and families within our communities.

As leaders across Wakefield, we felt it was important to bring this to your attention in order to provide clarity regarding the current financial pressures faced in our schools. In conclusion, whilst we are facing challenging times, please rest assured we will continue to take every step to maximise the resources available to us in order to provide the very best education for young people.

If you would like to discuss any of the content of this letter, please contact the reception of your local school.

Yours sincerely

Wakefield Headteachers