



Dear Parents/Carers,

School Funding

I, along with my Headteacher colleagues across Poole, am writing to you to raise awareness of the funding crisis affecting schools, both locally and nationally. You may well have heard on the news today that Headteachers across England and Wales are deeply concerned about the level of school funding, which is causing rising class sizes, forcing curriculum changes, and placing a strain on schools' ability to help students pastorally, especially given rising mental health concerns in young people in our country, that cannot be sustained.

Although the Government cites record levels of funding, the impact is offset by cost pressures being faced by schools. Cost pressures in school have included, but are not limited to:

- Increased pension contributions for staff
- A 2% unfunded pay increase
- New courses at GCSE and A Level – all of which require new materials, staff training course fees etc.
- Costs for support services/ additional staff as local services diminish

A new funding method for schools is being put in place, but this has brought significant concerns. For example, schools with sixth forms have not seen an increase in funding for **six years**, whilst costs have continued to escalate. In addition, funding for students with SEND is inadequate. Other 'high needs' students are supported by a sum allocated to the local authority. This high needs funding covers areas such as places in special schools or independent providers. The costs for this area exceeds the funds allocated and schools therefore need to contribute to these to support the shortfall.

You may have read an article in the Bournemouth Echo on 10 January 2019, which reported that there is a projected shortfall of £4.6m in the budget for high needs students, and that a transfer of 1.1% from schools is being proposed to help cover this shortfall. **Schools are very concerned about this, as it will make it much harder for us to provide the education that our students need, and may lead to us cutting the very services we provide which keep high needs students in mainstream schools.** We are absolutely committed to supporting all young people, including those with high needs who fully deserve high quality provision. However, we feel schools are being put in a position where there is simply not enough resources to meet the expectations of students and parents, and that all are likely to suffer as a result.

In writing this letter to you we are not seeking to criticise the local authority, or indeed other local services – all are having to deal with year on year funding reductions. Many local authorities have a shortfall in their high needs budget – it is a national problem, not a local

one. We strongly urge national government to prioritise a resolution to the funding of high needs provision so that schools can receive sufficient resources to provide a high quality education for all our young people – they deserve nothing less.

In addition to this, as one of the two maintained secondary schools in the local authority, we have been immensely disappointed that the Secretary of State has overturned the unanimous vote by Poole schools which will involve an additional contribution to the local authority 'central retention service' next year to the sum of £23,000 (approximately) for St Edward's School alone. Many of these services as a school we do not use, and others we purchase elsewhere. Thus we are being asked to pay twice.

I would be grateful for any support that you can give to helping our schools to receive the help that they need from Central Government in remedying the current funding situation; and also for your understanding, as St Edward's School plans for the necessary changes in order to reduce costs, whilst doing our very best to remain the successful school that we are.

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