



Billingshurst Primary School
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Dear Parents and Carers

School Funding Crisis

As you know, through the many Worthless campaign letters I have sent to you over recent months, West Sussex schools are facing a funding crisis and so is Billingshurst Primary School. I am writing to you to give you the facts about what this means for your school and for your children.

As a very large primary school, in an area of low disadvantage, we are one of the lowest funded per pupil schools in West Sussex, one of the lowest funded local authorities in the country. Billingshurst Primary has already faced 2 years of financial difficulty. In 2015 we reduced significantly the number of teaching assistant hours to cut costs and balance the budget. In 2016 we reduced the leadership team and the number of teachers to reduce expenditure further against rising employment costs. Resources for the curriculum have been cut to nearly nothing and we are running a deficit budget; this means we have had the agreement of the local authority to set a budget above our income for this financial year but with plans in place to repay this by 2017/18. We have made further savings this year to reduce the deficit from £32,000 to approximately £13,000. From an annual budget of approximately £2 million this is a small amount but still a deficit.

Our revenue has stayed the same for the last 2 years but employment costs have risen (pensions, national insurance contributions, pay increases) meaning that each year we have been approximately 5% worse off. I have already made clear, in other letters, the difference increased funding would make, even an increase to match those of 'average' funding. Unfortunately the recent review of the Schools Funding Formula will leave us no better off and, after further employment cost increases, will leave us worse off for years to come. The truth is very few schools will benefit anywhere as the revised funding formula takes £3 billion out of the education budget – we all lose.

The impact this is having for your children is significant. We have far fewer teaching assistants, fewer teachers, fewer interventions to support children's learning, fewer leaders to support staff, children and families, fewer books, IT resources and vastly reduced capacity to ensure that all children's needs are met, especially those with a Special Educational Need. It is only because of the utter dedication and commitment of the staff here, who give up their own precious and limited time, that children have not suffered and that they continue to make great strides in their learning.

But this is all set within increased expectations from parents and from services about what schools can deliver. Cuts to health, social care and children's mental health services has meant that schools have been pressured to take on these roles and to offer access to services to support families and children in crisis



when we are only funded to fulfil our duties of education. This is, of course completely unsustainable and so I write this letter for two reasons.

Firstly I ask that you lobby your MP, Jeremy Quin, to express your concerns, maybe even anger, that West Sussex schools have been so poorly funded and that the new proposals will ensure underfunding continues into the future. Jeremy Quin has visited the school and is one of the MPs in the south who has been proactive in pushing the government for fairer funding. The government don't seem to be listening to professionals in education but they will listen to parents.

Secondly I write so that you may understand that, without improvements to funding, when you ask for additional time, resources, support, interventions for your child you may be disappointed; we no longer have the resources to deliver many of these. The welfare of the children is our central concern but we do not have the capacity to deliver on this beyond that linked to their education and even then we have such vastly reduced resources that parents may have to get used to this looking different in the future. What I do know is that every individual staff member at this school will remain utterly dedicated to your children, to ensuring they are happy and they succeed but I am doing them a disservice if I do not let you know the reality we are facing.

So please, write to your MP, write to the government, respond to the national consultation on schools funding, write to the Secretary of State for Education Justine Greening, write to the Minister for Schools Nick Gibb, write to the Prime Minister, the local press and share your thoughts on Twitter and Facebook. The government put £500 million aside for the now dropped academisation programme and £500 million appeared to support new grammar schools – they have the power to fund education fairly and reasonably and that is all we ask. At the foot of this letter I have put email addresses and links to help you but please realise doing nothing and changing nothing will mean a vastly reduced education system for all children and I for one am not prepared to let this happen on my watch without causing a serious fuss. Please join me in expressing that very loud and clear to those who have the power to give us the resources to ensure a world-class education system that has every child equally at its heart.

Yours sincerely



Helen Williamson
Headteacher

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Jeremy Quinn MP Jeremy.quin.mp@parliament.uk

Schools Funding Consultation <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula/>

West Sussex County Times ct.news@jpress.co.uk

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