



STAPLEHURST SCHOOL

Headteacher
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10 July 2015

Dear Parent/Carers,

I am writing with reference to the Spring 2015 edition of the Governors' Newsletter in which we highlighted the increasing financial constraints within which the Governing Body has to operate, including a reduction in capital funding, which is affecting all schools nationally.

Having just completed this year's budget approval process we are now in a position to provide you with greater clarity as to how the current financial environment is going to impact the School in the next academic year. We trust that by sharing this information with the whole school community it will help understand how and why we have made certain decisions.

The School's budget is made up of two elements:

1. **Revenue budget** which represents the bulk of the School's income and which is mainly used for paying our staff and providing books and learning resources;
2. **Capital budget** which represents a much smaller fraction of the School's overall budget and is for long term improvements to our buildings and grounds.

1. Revenue Budget

The revenue budget is calculated by the Local Authority using a formula based on the number of pupils on roll. Over the past two years the number of pupils on roll at Staplehurst School has been falling and currently our pupil numbers are **10% less than in 2013**. This reduction in pupil numbers has caused a significant drop in the School's revenue budget which means we have had to make some difficult decisions for the next academic year.

As you know, over the last two years our focus has been on delivering a **rapid improvement** in pupil progress and attainment. We have achieved our objective by having **smaller than usual class sizes** and a low pupil-to-teacher ratio, alongside significant one-off investments in **learning resources, staff training and ICT**. We have always known that the low pupil-to-teacher ratio was not sustainable in the long term and we had planned to implement a phased reduction in the number of classes over a three year period. However, the significant decrease in revenue resulting from the unprecedented drop in pupil numbers means we will need to take action in some year groups earlier than we originally planned.

During the budget deliberations held with the Governing Body and the Senior Leadership Team, we reviewed a number of different options. Having taken into account the educational and pastoral needs across each of the year groups, we have concluded that adopting two larger classes in each year is preferable, rather than the alternative option which was to have a combined class with children from two different year groups.

Some of the year groups already comprise two classes and will thus be unaffected by this change. Also the new Y1 group will continue with three classes, as we cannot legally exceed 30 children per class in Y1 and Y2. However, both the new Y3 and Y6 (our current Y2 and Y5) will revert from three classes to two. Y6 is slightly larger and we have been able to agree that the teachers will be supported by Senior Staff in the teaching of core subjects. We fully recognise the impact class group changes can have on some children, and this is being looked at by each of the teachers to ensure this is managed sensitively and in the best interests of all our children. Mrs Farthing will be able to confirm this next week along with more details about additional teaching support planned for September.

We are confident that now we have gained a "Good" Ofsted Status our pupil numbers will rise and we are already receiving a higher number of enquiries; and the trend is starting to reverse. The Governing Body will continue to monitor this carefully over the next year.

2. Capital Budget

As highlighted in last term's Governors' Newsletter we, along with all Kent schools, have seen a significant reduction in our capital budget over the last three years and this year is no exception. We will continue to look for alternative funding for capital investment projects, as we have been able to do with



the KCC Matched Funding that has paid for the safeguarding works at the school entrance, and will continue to prioritise spend on the welfare and safety of our pupils and staff.

Village Expansion

On another note, you may also have seen in local press that Staplehurst village, along with its near neighbours Marden and Headcorn, is set to expand over the next few years with a number of housing developments already gaining outline approval. We have been advised by the Local Authority that Staplehurst School is not currently designated as a priority for expansion; partly because we are already more than twice the size of the neighbouring schools and partly because we currently have in excess of 100 vacancies, whilst other schools – and notably Headcorn – are oversubscribed. However, we have discussed with the Area Education Officer from Kent County Council about possible future funding opportunities and will of course keep you informed.

I trust this provides a helpful context to the difficult decisions we have to make as a Governing Body. I understand that Mrs Farthing will be liaising with you on the new class arrangements over the coming week. We would of course also welcome you to a Parents' Meeting which will be scheduled for the autumn term.

Yours sincerely



Paul Turpin
Chair of Finance & Resources Committee