School Budget 2024-25

Date: Friday 10th May 2024

Dear Parents/Carers and Other Stakeholders,

Recent weeks have seen us working with our Finance team to set an operating budget for 2024-25. It would be fair to say that this has been the most challenging year I have ever experienced with this.

- This year's budget has been a challenging one to set.
- To maintain current leadership, external provision of PE and the levels of general support would have taken into a large deficit budget – spending more than we receive in the course of the year. We are not allowed to do this.
- The cause of this is largely:
    - Government funding that has not risen in line with inflation
    - No additional funding to pay recent nationally negotiated pay rises for teaching, support and admin staff. Some staff took industrial action in support of these rises being fully funded. They were not funded.
    - A significant increase in the number of children needing 1-1 support in school without a corresponding rise in SEN funding.
    - A significant decrease in Pupil Premium numbers
    - Withdrawal by Government of any post Covid catch up funding

We have been forced to consider and adopt some changes to our staffing structure and day-to-day operations.

- The recently departed Senior Leader, Mrs Burge, will not be replaced
    - There will be two new lower grade posts created for leads of Key Stage One and Key Stage Two. This will bring a significant saving whilst maintaining a viable Senior leadership Team.

- A request for reduced working hours for one current senior leader – the Digital Lead – has been accepted and the hours removed from the staffing structure.
- We will not be engaging a third-party specialist PE provider
- Plans to expand and further develop our music offer have been shelved.

The biggest challenge will be in providing additional support to children. In recent years, we have bucked the trend for schools to be having to do without 'general' Teaching Assistants – those who support in class, pick up small groups, deliver interventions, hear children read and so much more.

However, the levels of one-to-one need now mean that **all of our support staff will be deployed to support 21 individual children with the most complex needs**. A number of these children are eligible for 'top up' funding, but some are not as the threshold for this is now so incredibly high. Where bids for funding are successful, it a) does not cover the full cost of 1-1 support and b) the school still has to find the first £6,000 of additional costs itself.

We are an inclusive school and welcome all children. We will always do our best with the resources we have to meet all needs. **This issue is with funding, not with children**. It is interesting to note that Nottinghamshire has eight designated statistical comparator authorities. High Level Needs funding allocated per head for our county is the lowest of all of these, less than 2/3 of say Kent.

It is also apparent from Department for Education benchmarking website **that we (Parkdale) have less income, less available to spend per pupil than every single one of our statistical comparators and geographical neighbours** in that. Our per pupil income is less than 2/3 of some of our immediate neighbours. In real-life, that means up to £3,000 per pupil less per year to spend than some schools only a mile or two away. If we do the Maths, 3,000 per pupil is over a million a year, enough for approximately 40 teaching assistants!

We reap great benefits, such as economies of scale, bulk purchasing, stringent financial accounting and outstanding support… **as members of Transform Trust**. **By all measures, we are run very efficiently**. Our challenge is low income.

What Does This All Mean?

We have set a balanced budget. The school is financially secure. We have been prudent have sufficient capital available to maintain and develop the school and its grounds.

We have no operating capacity to employ more staff. We will not be able to offer the same high, extensive levels of support that we have previously.

Running trips and residential visits, competing in sports events etc will all become more difficult to manage as we will have no staff capacity in school to cover colleagues attending these. We'll try our best though!

After school clubs will be entirely dependent on staff volunteers and the daily offer of multi-sports clubs is likely to cease.

All PE will be delivered by teaching staff – they are fully qualified to do so and we will continue to work hard to develop their skills in this even more. Children will continue to receive at least their full entitlement of PE. We fully expect to maintain or even improve on our existing high standards in this area.

What Can be Done?

Staff are committed to do the best they can with the resources, human and physical, that they have available to them. We will try to maintain all that we can; standards, behaviour, wellbeing and fun.

Teachers will continue to plan lessons such that they are accessible to all in the classroom. This is called differentiation. They will do all they can to help children keep up and manage. What won't be there is the extra support, individual or in smaller groups, that has historically been so beneficial to children.

As it becomes more and more challenging to help children keep up with their learning, **we need them to be in school as much as possible.** The TAs that were once there to help catch up missed learning will no longer be there.

Our extended school day – which incurs no additional cost as staff operate it voluntarily – becomes hugely important as there is some capacity for interventions and 'catch-up' at the start of the day.

Reading at home, practicing maths, spellings etc all take on even more importance. There will not be the staff in school to offer additional support with this.

If you are eligible to register your child for Pupil Premium or Early Years Pupil Premium, please, please do so! Ask any member of staff if you are unsure. It's worth it as it will mean your child remains eligible for free school meals in Key Stage Two. We also subsidise certain activities - trips, residentials etc - for eligible children.

Eligibility is as follows:

Their family receives one of the following:
➢ Income Support
➢ income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
➢ income-related Employment and Support Allowance ➢ support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
➢ the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
➢ Child Tax Credit (provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
➢ Working Tax Credit run-on, which is paid for 4 weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

➢ Universal Credit - your household income must be less than £7,400 a year after tax not including any benefits you get They are currently being looked after by a local authority in England or Wales, or if your child has left care in England or Wales through:

➢ an adoption order

➢ a special guardianship order

➢ a child arrangements order

You can download an application form, or apply directly online or contact Notts County Council on 0300 500 80 80.