



St. John's Catholic Primary School, Burscough

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Dear Parents

School budget

You may have read in the Press or heard news about the increasing pressure on school budgets. This is not scaremongering. In school we have recently had some difficult options to consider and this is weighing heavily on us all. In my seventeen years of headship at this school, I have never known the situation be so worrying. There has been a real-terms constant erosion of school budgets for the last eight years.

Therefore, I thought it prudent to advise you of the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

In previous years our carry forward figure has been in the region of £30,000 - £50,000, but has been decreasing steadily. At the end of this financial year our carry forward figure is expected to be just £2,600 meaning we have no reserves to deal with unexpected demands.

Many schools, both locally and nationally, are already unable to set a balanced budget and having to make drastic cuts.

This will be our position next financial year, as the forecast **deficit** in 2025 is £91,000 rising to £207,000 in 2026, unless there is a significant uplift in funding.

As you are aware, there has been a huge increase in the gas and electric costs, amongst other things. However staffing costs have risen with increases to the foundation living wage, a pay award and lump sum for support staff and the teachers' pay rise. Staffing costs amount to about 80% of any school's budget. These increases are not being funded by the government, there is no additional income; it is expected that they can be met from the existing school budgets.

In addition we currently have 25% of our pupils on the SEN (special educational needs) register. This is much higher than the national average. Our school is often selected by parents of children with additional needs because of its size and nurturing ethos. However as a small school with a relatively high staff:pupil ratio our per-capita funding amounts to much less than in larger school.

Some pupils have an EHCP (Education Healthcare Plan), which whilst providing some top-up funding, covers only two thirds of the costs of supporting the child.

As a Catholic School we recognize the uniqueness of every child and our mission is to give every child the best education we can. However when available resources are directed towards a few pupils it erodes our ability to provide appropriate provision for other children who need interventions and on our ability to provide adequate resources for all pupils.

There are no easier answers to these problems. However, in line with other schools, we will be unable to request external assessments, which cost about £500 at parental request. Parents may have their children

independently assessed but we cannot guarantee that any recommendations that follow can be provided in the absence of funding.

I met with the staffing and finance committee of the governing body last week to discuss options the school may consider in order to mitigate the forecast deficit.

Miss Fitzpatrick has resigned in order to take on a full time role. She has been an excellent teacher and SENDCo and we will miss her greatly. Mrs. Williams has also requested a reduction in her hours.

We have two qualified teachers currently working in a support capacity who will take on some part time teaching. This helps reduce our expenditure but also reduces additional support.

From September, therefore, arrangements will be as follows:

Class 1: Mrs. Porter (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday), Miss Hesketh (Thursday Friday).

Class 2: Mrs. Taylor

Class 3 Miss Kenyon (Monday), Mrs. Williams (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday Friday)

Class 4: Mrs. Smith (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday) Miss Kenyon (Friday)

We are also considering bringing the extended services (breakfast club, after school club and nursery) into governor led provision as opposed to its current voluntary management committee arrangement. This means we would be able to access the revenue it brings. However prices have been maintained for a number of years and will increase in September, with After School Club rising to £9 per session, Breakfast club £5 and hourly nursery rates to £5

We considered fundraising but we are conscious of the pressures on families of the cost of living and don't want to create further problems, though we would welcome any ideas you may wish to suggest.

I would like to mention our volunteers, Mrs. McLeod and Mrs. Kaye, who are highly valued and make a huge difference.

Some of our provision at St John's is exceptional. I will particularly mention forest school and the priceless experiences such as bird-ringing that I am sure will stay with children throughout their lives. We are proud of our school and delighted that Ofsted recognized how happy the children are, how safe they feel and how polite and welcoming they are. There is much to celebrate

Please be assured that the governors and I are taking all actions we can to ensure the future financial health of the school.

Thank you for your support.

Best wishes

Mrs. Devey