



BRINKWORTH EARL DANBY'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Serving the communities of Brinkworth and Dauntsey

Headteacher: Mrs L Hilliard

22nd May 2019

LETTER FROM GOVERNORS AND HEADTEACHER

Dear Parent(s) & Carer(s),

As you will have seen in the media recently, all schools have been facing and are continuing to face financial challenges. Brinkworth Earl Danby's CE Primary School is no different.

As with other schools, we are currently finalising our budget and continuing to plan for the next three years and we felt it was important to give you information regarding our financial status and the impact this will have on our school.

On 4th May this year, John Harris, Guardian columnist, asked in The Guardian:

“Our schools are beyond breaking point – where is the outrage?”

He goes on to highlight some appalling statistics. Since 2010, total school funding per pupil has fallen by 8% in real terms. The Institute for Fiscal Studies and the National Education Union have recently stated that the share of GDP spent on education is as low in 2019 as it was in 1960 (when most pupils left school at 15). This national problem has seen schools in Birmingham closing on Friday afternoons because of funding issues e.g. paying staff and running schools; and schools in West Yorkshire introducing a once-a-week 'dark day' when all the lights are switched off to save money. Wiltshire Local Authority is part of the F40 group (the lowest funded per pupil local authorities) which is campaigning at the highest levels for increased funding per pupil in Wiltshire.

The negative effect of all these issues has been further compounded by schools being made responsible for paying for additional items – pensions etc. – so a smaller pot of money has to stretch even further.

Brinkworth Earl Danby's is no different and the reduction in budget, increasing daily running costs for grounds and utilities, along with less children in school make balancing our budget to ensure the best education for your children a real challenge.

It is worth giving you some context with the conundrum we are managing. There are two ways of increasing the money we have to spend in school, firstly is for the government to increase the amount per pupil and secondly to have more pupils joining the school.

Towns such as Malmesbury and Wootton Bassett are significantly growing and the primary schools are being extended. However, where children cannot attend their local school, we are too far away to make it viable for the Local Authority to use us as 'overspill'. We are reliant on people knowing about our school and being prepared to drive their children to us.

Although we have reduced our costs in recent years by moving to six classes, losing one assistant head, reducing TA hours and cutting costs where possible whilst maintaining our high standards, this is still not enough.

In order to maintain the best provision possible, we are pleased to be able to let you know that we are able to stay at six classes for the academic year 2019/2020 (Mrs Hilliard will be teaching for part of the week in order to save Teachers' costs).

However, unless the numbers on roll increase or there is a substantial increase in income, we will find ourselves in the challenging position of having to reduce to five classes in September 2020. Challenging, because our split site situation adds complexity and we will have less 'spare' pupil places in each class should more people wish to join. We would like to avoid this scenario if at all possible.

- PTO -

What have we done so far?

The reduction in funding has been something that the Governors have been working with for many years. The last few years has seen a relatively steady number of pupils joining in reception, however with the large Year 6 cohort leaving this year and an 'average' number joining in September there is a sizeable financial impact.

- Governors have met with the Local Authority to challenge the status quo and debate where further savings could be made. These have been implemented, and incorporated into the new budget;
- Governors have lobbied our local MP for better representation for Wiltshire schools;
- Governors have looked at opportunities to make money – e.g. staff supporting other schools through moderation & mentoring – without this directly impacting on the children;
- Forensic scrutiny of school spending throughout the year;
- Governors have started a large marketing campaign around the area to encourage more pupils to our school. You may have seen banners and advertising boards appearing locally!

What can you do to help our school?

- Speak positively about Brinkworth Earl Danby's to other members of the public – word of mouth is really important;
- Promote our school at every opportunity;
- Support our Governors in any activities they launch;
- Give us constructive feedback either directly or through the Governors to help us continuously improve our school;
- Send other marketing ideas to the Governors for them to consider;
- Ask for an advertising board, banner or some leaflets to display locally;
- Join BEDSA or put your name forward to the Governing body;
- Join the local schools parent-led campaign;
- Lobby your local MP.

What are we hoping to achieve?

- We hope that the initiatives described above will result in an increase in funding, which will allow our school to fully support all our children in their education, enabling them to fulfil their potential.
- We also hope that we can attract more pupils to our school so we may be able to reverse the decision to move to five classes in September 2020, and to remain with six classes in the longer term.

We recognise that this is an ongoing challenge but we thank you for your ongoing support. If you have any concerns or questions about any aspect of this letter please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the Governors.

We will be writing to you again after Half Term to give you more detailed information about the class structure and staffing for September 2019, and to let you know which class(es) your child(ren) will be taught in.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Hilliard

Laura Hilliard
Headteacher

Rob Platt

Rob Platt
Chair of the Governors
(on behalf of the whole Governing Body)

Ella Morgan

Ella Morgan
Vice-chair of the Governors

Upper School, School Hill, Brinkworth, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 5AX Tel: 01666 510406 Fax: 01666 510958

Lower School, Dauntsey Green, Chippenham Wiltshire SN15 4HU Tel: 01666 510311

Web: www.brinkwortheardanbys.wilts.sch.uk

E-mail: admin@brinkwortheardanbys.wilts.sch.uk

