

Dear Parents / Carers

National Schools' Funding Crisis

I am writing to ask for your support. As you may be aware from recent media coverage, schools up and down the country are becoming increasingly concerned about an emerging funding crisis. Many schools, like our own, were hoping that a new national funding formula would address inherent unfairness in the system. The Government has now published its proposals, which are currently out for consultation.

In essence, the proposed formula re-allocates the same amount of money. There are two key problems with this. First, unfairness remains and is compounded. Historically underfunded schools such as QEHS and HMS are due to receive even less income under the proposals. Second, there is fundamentally not enough funding in the national pot to meet schools' needs and the situation is set to become much worse. A recent report by the National Audit Office says that schools face an 8% real-terms reduction in funding by 2019-20.

What The Crisis Means For Our Schools

Benchmarking analysis shows that we already operate in a lean and efficient way compared to similar schools. The reality is that further belt tightening is inevitable. This puts at genuine risk the quality of provision to which we have become accustomed at both our schools. Class sizes would become bigger, our curriculum would narrow, extra-curricular provision would reduce and good staff would potentially leave.

Needless to say, the Trustees and I are extremely worried about this situation and its implications for our children. We have had separate meetings with our local MP, Guy Opperman, and Neil Carmichael MP, Chair of the House of Commons' Education Select Committee, both of whom have been supportive. Along with other Northumberland headteachers, I will be writing to the Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening. As a Trust, we shall be submitting a formal response to the funding formula consultation itself.

What Can You Do To Help?

As parents, there are a number of ways you can get your voices heard:

- I would encourage you to write to your local MP asking that he or she seeks meetings with the relevant Ministers to discuss the impact of the funding crisis.
- You can sign a petition that is being organised by some teaching unions (please see: <http://www.schoolcuts.org.uk/#/contact-us>)
- You can also submit a response to the consultation (<https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula2/>). The deadline for this is 5pm on 22 March. You can find our response via <http://www.qehs.net/files/docs/national-funding-formula-consultation-hlt-response.pdf>

If You Can, Please Make a Financial Contribution

To help relieve the pressure, we are now taking the unprecedented step of asking parents for a voluntary contribution towards our schools' costs. We do not undertake this lightly. However, faced with the prospect of making cuts that will affect our students, we believe it would be irresponsible not to ask for your help. We are not alone in doing this. Parent-teacher group PTA-UK found that a third of schools nationally are doing so and others will surely follow.

If you are able to make a contribution, however small, we would be very grateful and would keep you informed as to how it was being invested in your child's education. Please see below for details of how you can do this.

We appreciate that some families are hard pressed and will not be able to make a financial contribution. However, please be assured that we remain completely committed to doing the best that we can for every one of our children.

With sincere thanks in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Atkins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Graeme Atkins
Executive Headteacher