

Governor's Bulletin to Parents

Funding Times.....they are a-changin'

Bob Dylan's song 'The Times they are a-changin'' is probably as relevant now as it was when he wrote it back in the 1960s, perhaps even more so. It is certainly true that the way schools may be funded in the future is changing and we are concerned that it is not for the better. Presently as a maintained school, the Governor's like all schools are required to ensure that we keep the school out of the red and keep at the very least a balanced budget. For the last five years we have managed to do exactly that based on the current way schools are funded.

Funding of schools is essentially based on the number of pupils a school has and where it is in the country. In fact funding could be considered as a post code lottery where those based in the cities, and in particular London receive much more per pupil than we do at Cullompton. On average pupils in Devon are funded around £300 per head less than the National average, which can mean a difference of thousands of pounds per pupil compared to some London schools. And this has been happening for a number of years compounding a problem for many schools in Devon who are in significantly worse financial position than Cullompton and that includes Academies. A recent parliamentary question revealed that 53% of stand alone Academies nationally were running deficit budgets in 2014-15. And this was also a similar figure for Multi Academy Trusts

It was no surprise that Devon including Cullompton has been campaigning with other Local Authorities for the Government to come up with a fairer funding formulae which does not reflect this post code bias. And the Government has responded with a new formulae with the claim that rural schools will indeed see an increase in funding. In Devon the current consultation on the formulae reveals that 129 schools will have significantly less money to run their budgets than they do at present. For Cullompton it means nearly a 3% reduction in budget adding the effects of inflation by 2020 in real terms our budget will be significantly wanting.

Press reports from around the country suggest that Governors of other schools have suggested reduction in staffing, larger class sizes and reduced curriculum. Some have suggested reducing the length of the school day and even going to a 4 day school week. The Governors at Cullompton have not reached any of those far reaching conclusions yet but we are conscious that unless the Government revises their funding formulae we will have to make unpalatable decisions that will affect the education and learning of our children negatively.

At the moment along with the Headteachers and Governors of Devon we are campaigning to get Government to realise the enormity of this proposed funding formulae by encouraging our Members of Parliament to pressure the Minister for Education Justin Greening and the Schools Minister Nick Gibb to reassess the formulae. Some success has resulted in a recent Parliamentary Debate on the funding of Schools in Devon and to keep this momentum up we as Governors would encourage parents to express their concerns to your local MP, and in Cullompton's case this will be Neil Parrish MP.

Please help us keep up the pressure so that we can continue to provide the education your children so richly deserve.

Gerry Ingram. Vice Chair of Governors