

24th May 2024

Dear Families,

It is that time of year that our schools budget planning takes place, and it feels that now is the time to inform families of the education funding difficulties that all schools, across the country are finding themselves in.

Many of you are familiar with the funding challenges in sectors such as the NHS but what is less well known is that there are similar funding challenges that have been gradually impacting schools.

We are now in an election period, and we do not know what will happen at the ballot box and it does not matter. As schools we remain politically impartial, but we have heard from both political parties that there is no more money for schools, no matter who wins the General Election

Since the pandemic, everyone has felt the impact of things such as inflationary rises. We all have larger energy bills and food is more expensive. We have suffered a 70% increase in energy costs and year on year food costs have increased by 14.5%.

In addition to this, teachers and support staff have quite rightly been awarded well deserved and overdue pay increases. However, schools have found that the increases have either not been funded or they are funded on a ratio per pupil rather than linked to the number of staff. This means schools miss out particularly if they are small rural schools. We have been able to manage this, to date, with little impact on the schools because we work as a School Trust.

A further challenge facing schools has been the significant drop in birth rates and migration into the area has reduced because of pandemic related delays to planning permission and housing developments. Local Authorities plan the pupil places, and they have informed schools to expect a reduction of up to 35% in pupils and this legacy could last as long as 2030 or beyond. Because we have been working as a School Trust, we have been able to mitigate this ongoing decline, but this is no longer possible without reducing costs.

Doesn't this just mean our children benefit from smaller class sizes? No, because we are funded per pupil. For each pupil we receive approximately £4200 per year. Therefore fewer pupils means less funding.

Unfortunately, along with other schools and Trusts we are now forced into a position where we will need to reduce the recurring staff costs. Sadly, this week we opened an informal consultation with staff to seek ways in which we can reduce the unfunded cost pressures. We have asked staff to consider reduction in hours, talk to us if they would like to consider voluntary redundancy, retirement, or adaptations to roles. This is in hope of avoiding redundancies.

We continue to work to ensure that the savings we are being forced to make have the least amount of impact on children.



All Saints Marsh C of E Academy

Osborne Street, Newton Abbot
Devon, TQ12 2DJ

T: 01626 365293 **E:** allsaints@lapsw.org

W: allsaintsmarsh-lap.co.uk



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This is a course of action that Leaders have been working hard to avoid over the past few years. We recognise that it brings uncertainty and worry for everyone. We do not yet know the extent of the impact until the consultation is closed later in the summer term. We ask that families understand that we must follow a process and we will not know what the position will be until it is completed. This is the aim of the consultation. Nothing has been decided so your Headteachers will not be able to provide any details.

We will be able to update you in July when the process has been completed.

Thank you for your understanding and support for your child's school, it will mean so much to staff during this difficult period.

Yours sincerely,

Tracey Cleverly

Trust Lead