

PENAIR SCHOOL

<http://www.penair.cornwall.sch.uk/> | 01872 274737 | enquiries@penair.cornwall.sch.uk

Penair School,
St Clement,
Truro
Cornwall
TR1 1TN

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Dear Parents,

At a meeting of Cornwall's secondary Headteachers and Principals last Friday, 27th January, it was agreed that this letter would be sent to all parents explaining to them the very serious financial pressures that schools in the county are facing. We are delighted that our colleagues in primary schools across Cornwall are also writing to parents. The heads and their governing bodies are also writing to their MP; many have already done so.

Over the past three years, the Government has imposed real terms funding cuts on schools by freezing the amount of money that is allocated to schools for each pupil. At the same time schools have seen increased costs that are really biting into school budgets. Inflation, the national Living Wage, the imminent apprenticeship levy are all considerable budgetary pressures, and the contributions that schools have to make towards their employees pensions and National Insurance contributions have risen significantly. This affects maintained schools and academies alike, both primary and secondary. Whilst the amount of money coming into schools from government has remained static at the per pupil level, the amount going out on expenditure due to government imposed changes has risen very considerably and for many schools it looks as if worse times are ahead.

Schools across the country are funded at different levels, and have been for many years. Generally, schools in rural areas are funded at a lower level than those in cities, and within each county there can be quite a wide variation of funding. This government has been brave enough to try and address these differences, and in December, proposals were published for a new 'National Funding Formula'. On paper, the formula will result in additional funds coming into Cornwall which is to be celebrated. However, key to the new proposal is limiting the losses a school anywhere in the country will ever experience to a maximum of 3%. The differences between one area of the country and another are much larger than 3%, and so this will have the effect of perpetuating the current imbalance of Cornish schools being funded at a far lower rate than others in different parts of the country.

As you may well be aware, many schools in Cornwall are already struggling with their finances, and have been for some years. The new proposals are complex, but it is clear that the different funding factors that make up a school's budget will result in many of our schools actually losing even more funding, and the proposals do nothing to help the majority of schools in our county. Nationally, using the government's own formula and statistics, the National Association of Headteachers, the National Union of Teachers and the Association of Teachers & Lecturers, have shown that between now and 2020 there will be an average cut in funding of 8.7% in secondary schools across the country.

The proposals are currently out for consultation, and MPs from across England have been raising their concerns with the Secretary of State and on the floor of the House of Commons. Most notably, the Chair of the Conservative backbench 1922 Committee, Graham Brady has asserted that "it is clear that the draft published by the DfE does not rectify the long-standing unfairness of education funding," and many other senior Conservative MPs have already publicly condemned the funding reforms announced. We are urging our local MPs to add their voice to the growing concerns being expressed nationally!

Some Cornish secondary schools have already made staff redundancies over the last three or four years and class sizes have already increased as headteachers and governors try hard to manage the increasing economic pressures they face. We do not want your children's education to be compromised. We do not want them to miss out on being taught a full curriculum in a school which has sufficient teachers and support staff to give them the attention they need to do well, flourish and make the best of their education. The current Government was elected on a manifesto that promised to protect school funding. Whilst we acknowledge there is more money in the national system, it is clear that this pledge is not being honoured in real financial terms for different schools across the country and specifically in Cornwall.

We are asking our MPs to press the Chancellor to use the Budget to announce increased education spending. We are also asking our MPs to stress the impossible financial situation that Cornwall's schools are facing when meeting with the Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening and her ministers.

What can parents do to help and support their local school and community?

The more people that raise their concerns with their MP, the more likelihood there is that changes may be made. The government is currently consulting on their funding reforms, so now is the time for Cornish parents to make their voice heard. You can do two things:

- Sign a national online petition by clicking on this link: <http://www.schoolcuts.org.uk/#/contact-us> AND
- Email your MP; you can use this link if you wish: <http://www.schoolcuts.org.uk/#/email-your-mp>

Your local MP will be expecting to hear from you – they know that we are sending this letter to you all!



James Davidson
Headteacher



David Matthew
Chair of Governors

