

29th February 2024

Notification from Flintshire Secondary and Primary Headteachers' Federation

Dear Parents and Carers,

Budget Cuts - The Impact on our Schools

The Flintshire Headteachers' Federation is an organisation representing all the headteachers in secondary, primary and special schools in Flintshire. Members are appointed by their local cluster of schools to represent the views of headteachers in discussions with the council.

As you may be aware, public services in Wales are facing significant financial pressures currently. Having consulted with colleagues, we are writing to ensure that all parents and carers are fully informed of the potential significant consequences currently facing schools in relation to our budgets, and the impact this may have on the services we will be able to provide.

In order to set a balanced budget, Flintshire County Council has had to make difficult decisions to cut spending across all of its services. This includes education and specifically the amount of money that is available for schools. In this coming financial year beginning on April 1st, whilst there has been a small uplift to school budgets of 3.5%, this will not cover the cost pressures that schools are facing. This will present significant challenges and place every school, primary, secondary and special in a very difficult budgetary position.

We acknowledge that there has been a slight increase in the Welsh educational budget but inflation, energy costs and increased staffing costs have resulted in a considerable impact on local government spending and a cut in real terms at school level. In addition, over recent years, the birth rate in Flintshire has dropped, which means fewer learners in our schools with the resulting reduction in funding from Welsh Government. Of greatest concern to headteachers and governing bodies is the impact this will have on learners across Flintshire.

These are unprecedented times with regard to school finances and budgets, and despite the best efforts of council officers, elected members, headteachers and governing bodies, we are worried about the likely impact which potentially could include:

- redundancies causing a reduction in staffing
- larger classes
- fewer trips and extra-curricular activities
- reduced support for pupils with additional needs
- less support for pupils needing extra help with literacy and maths interventions
- less support for pupils who need wellbeing interventions
- less support for pupils with behavioural difficulties, leading to more
- disruption and exclusions
- less support for pupils with complex needs in mainstream schools
- fewer resources for pupils to use
- reductions in courses, qualifications and the curriculum schools can offer

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- repairs and upkeep of school buildings will suffer
- general health and safety in schools
- negative judgements from Estyn as a result of reduced services

As headteachers, we want to assure our families that we will always do our utmost to maintain the core provision in our schools, protecting teaching and learning by placing our learners and staff at the heart of everything we do. However, we believe headteachers and governors will have to make a choice between providing the current level of service or balancing the books. Therefore, it is inevitable that in many cases, schools will not be able to provide and sustain the same level of support and services due to the significant shortfall in our funding.

If this happens in your school over the next year, we would ask you please to remember that your headteacher and governors are working within a very difficult financial climate locally, but this is also part of a much wider financial issue across Wales and the UK.

As headteachers we are grateful for the ongoing support from Flintshire County Council in helping us to navigate our way through this situation and for making representations on our behalf at a national level. We will continue to work in partnership with the Council to minimise the impact at a school level. However, your support and understanding during these challenging times will be invaluable. We have made representations locally and nationally to councillors and members of the Senedd and we will continue to do this. This letter has been written in consultation with all headteachers in Flintshire. Thank you for your understanding.

Yours faithfully,

Flintshire Headteachers' Federation