

Winchcombe School

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Dear Parents

School funding

You may be aware of education funding now being highlighted as a cause for concern in both the national and local press and online. You may recall that the Government promised to address the inequality in funding between different local authorities across England in 2015. As Gloucestershire is one of the lowest funded authorities we were expecting the introduction of a 'National Funding Formula (NFF)' across the country to improve the level of funding for most, if not all schools in the county.

The government published their proposals for the NFF just before Christmas and we were very disappointed to see that the proposed formula has very little impact on overall funding in Gloucestershire with an increase of just £2.1 million a year for the whole county, which equates to an increase of just 0.6%. This does very little to close the gap between the highest and lowest funded local authorities and the best funded authorities will continue to receive around 40% more per pupil than Gloucestershire. The main reason for this is that the impact on authorities who will lose funding under the proposals is being capped at a maximum loss of 3% of their funding. Whilst we do not wish to see any school losing funding, unless this cap is removed, the fundamental reason for moving towards a NFF (to ensure equal funding for every student across the country) will never be achieved. After the NFF in its current form is implemented, the best funded secondary school in Gloucestershire will receive £5,511 per pupil. The average funding in the highest funded areas will be £6,582 per pupil, around 20% higher than the highest funded school in this county.

There has been no increase in school funding for a number of years now and Winchcombe school will receive £20 per pupil less in 2017/18 than we did in 2011/12, whilst at the same time costs of pay awards, living wage and national insurance contributions have increased every year and are expected to continue to do so. The government expectation is that schools across England will need to make £8 billion of cost savings between 2014/15 and 2019/20 which equates to an 8% cut. The impact on Winchcombe School of the NFF means a very slight increase in our income of £18,000 per year or 0.8%. Whilst we are in a better position than most schools in Gloucestershire, this in no way makes up for the reductions we have experienced over the last few years or the future cost increases we will face. The National Audit Office has already noted a significant increase in the number of schools who are unable to balance their budgets and this is set to rise as costs continue to increase.

The Governors and Senior Leadership Team at Winchcombe School are committed to providing the very best standard of education and opportunities possible for our pupils, and will continue to absorb these financial pressures without adversely affecting the education of the pupils we have in school today. However, there will come a point where the combination of the reduction in funding and increasing costs (of which we have very little control) will mean we are unable to do so. We have written to our MP Mr Laurence

Robertson raising our concerns about the proposed NFF and have met with him on previous occasions about fairer funding for schools. We would urge parents to express their concerns over the NFF and funding in schools generally to contact Laurence Robertson by email laurence.robertson.mp@parliament.uk or write to him at 22 High Street, Tewkesbury. GL20 5AL.

If you would like to know more about the funding changes affecting schools, then please contact myself or the School Business Manager, Debbie Wardlaw.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Hall', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Neil Hall

Headteacher