



3 December 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

Worth Less - West Sussex Schools campaign for fairer funding

You may well be aware that schools across West Sussex are facing a looming funding crisis.

Financial settlements for all public sector services are under pressure and education is not alone in having to manage limited finances carefully. Schools in West Sussex are, however, facing much greater challenges than many others. An out-dated funding formula used by central government, continues to create a situation where pupils across the county are being short changed.

The issue for West Sussex Special schools is particularly acute. The latest Department for Education figures show that the *national average* funding for Local Authority Maintained Special Schools is over £22,000 per pupil per year, compared with an average West Sussex figure of just under £17,000. This means that, on average, Special Schools in West Sussex receive £5,000 less per pupil every year than similar schools in other areas. If West Sussex Special Schools were funded at that *national average* level, they would each be entitled to hundreds of thousands of pounds, in some cases over one million pounds, in additional funding to better meet the needs of your children.

The situation for mainstream Primary and Secondary schools is no less serious. If West Sussex children were funded at average national levels, schools across the county would receive an extra £41m per year. If our West Sussex funding was matched against some London authorities, the sum would be a staggering additional £212m per year.

As such, schools in West Sussex are struggling to make ends meet and our children are being significantly disadvantaged. Teacher to pupil ratios are increasing, as are class sizes. We are finding it extremely difficult to be financially competitive and recruit the very best staff - particularly in shortage subjects - and there is simply not enough money to resource basic items such as computers and text books. Youngsters with particular needs and disabilities are suffering from a lack of funding in both our special and mainstream schools.

The time for change is now upon us and we need urgent action. The good news is that the government has recognised that the current situation is grossly unfair and on Wednesday 25 November, announced that a new national funding formula would be introduced.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-34921585>

Sadly, however, schools up and down the county cannot afford to wait for our children to be funded fairly. We are, therefore, campaigning vigorously for two important goals:

- A substantial interim payment to West Sussex to help reduce the funding inequalities that we face.
- The rapid introduction of a new formula that ensures that children in West Sussex are no longer worth less than other students in England.

Along with every Headteacher in the county, I am writing to parents to ask for their support and make you aware of our 'Worth Less?' campaign.

Our initial work, which has been fully supported by a number of local MPs, has already begun to make a real difference. We have also benefited from the issue gaining extensive coverage from radio and TV outlets.

We are delighted to announce that local newspapers from Bognor Regis to East Grinstead, are supporting this crucial piece of work and extensive coverage will appear in the next few days. West Sussex County Council are also fully endorsing the strategy and I hope very much that you will too.

What you can do:

- Contact your local MP and maintain the pressure for reform and interim transitional funding.
- Spread the word and 'like us' on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/WorthLessWestSussex>

- Talk to family and friends in order to galvanise support.
- Keep up to date with our campaign by contributing to and following various media outlets.

<http://www.wscountytimes.co.uk/news/local/headteachers-warn-of-looming-crisis-in-funding-of-west-sussex-schools-1-6671263>

I look forward to working with you and keeping you fully updated as we embark upon this crucial campaign together.

Yours faithfully

Phillip Potter
Headteacher