



Ashgate Primary School

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Please support us to support your child!

Wednesday, 21 June 2017

Dear Parents and Carers

You may well be aware that Headteacher's of 2 million children across the UK are writing to parents today expressing concerns over proposed budget plans and the increased costs placed on schools.

I do not engage in politically focussed communications and deliberately avoid the rhetoric that others often share. Nonetheless, parents and carers do need to understand the changes, how this school is managing them and what part they can play.

The current financial instability and pressures

The government are accurately stating that spending on schools has '*never been higher*'; the reality is though that schools are required to fund so much more than before, as external departments increase their charges to cover their own cuts, or now charge for services that schools would normally receive as part of the council packages. This is not a political statement, but a fact. Examples of this include School Improvement Officers, educational psychology, Special Educational Needs services, behaviour support, and of course other costs such as increased National Insurance charges and the living wage. The list is endless. The fact is that the spending proposed by the government is a '*real terms*' cut.

An analogy: My, '*Mars Bars are smaller and cost more*' principle.

I do not wish to be flippant by saying this, but this principle is mirrored in schools as it is in homes. Saying that someone is '*spending more than ever*' on shopping in 2017 with a family of 5, is not the same as saying they can have more (or indeed the same) as they could in the 1990s. In the 1990s, they had less mouths to feed, food was cheaper and they didn't have a mortgage to pay. What was required in the past, does not match the needs of the day. Pay more but get less – Mars Bar (other confectionary products are available... equally reduced sizes!)

How this impacts on Ashgate Primary School

We have managed our budget well and prepared in advance for the financial uncertainty. Myself, Mrs Warburton and Governors scrutinise the budget continuously and decisions around expenditures are always focussed around the children. We provide everything we can and the school remains well resourced and equipped. As a result of our good preparation, we can maintain our staffing levels in order to keep our class sizes small, deliver single year group curriculums, as well as maintain a full time, broad and balanced curriculum. Our spending has been based on a sustainable and child centred plan, and as a result, we are better prepared than many.

However, we have to cut back more and more each year and the purse strings are ever tightening. Much of our delegated budget is 'ring fenced' and I can only be spent it on specific things, including IT equipment and building construction/repairs. I do not always have the freedom to divert money where I would like to use it. This is why sometimes people comment on, as an example, new computers arriving in school, or new

structures around the school, when children are sharing resources or are sat on older chairs. There are restrictions, but we use every penny we can and use our ring fenced grant money well.

What can you do to help?

Simply, we need your support to ensure that we are not spending money where it shouldn't be.

School dinner debt: This is a significant expense for us. The school is billed for every meal issued and missed payments result in money that should be spent on the children's education being spent on invoices. We have parents who repeatedly do not pay or send their child without a packed lunch with the knowledge that I will not let them go hungry – resulting in more unpaid bills. Chasing these payments is costly and we still have a staggering dinner debt deficit. This is money taken away from the priorities of raising standards and is unfair on those who do pay. PLEASE PAY YOUR BILLS!

School trip contributions: We ask for '*voluntary contributions*' for school trips, in line with the Charges and Remissions policy. However, if enough contributions are not received, some trips have to be cancelled, and will be from this point onwards. We cannot subsidise them more than we already do, often as much as 50% of the actual expense.

Lack of contributions resulted in two trips being cancelled this week alone.

We understand that financial pressures burden us all, but we cannot run trips without your support. A 'contribution' request does not mean we can run it free of charge or that it will go ahead regardless.

When I arrived at the school two years ago, I was repeatedly told that the children do not get the opportunity to go on enough trips and you wanted them to have at least one trip per year. We have done this based on your request. We do not want the children to miss out and I am sure you do not either. Please make the contributions where you can and be understanding that if trips are cancelled, it is not through us not trying our best to offer them, but through lack of parental support for them.

Support our fund raising events

We have our school fair on the 15th July – details are on the school website. This is the first Summer Fair the school has had for many years and we are doing all we can (Mrs Warburton and Mrs Forte in particular) to make this an enjoyable and memorable event. Every penny raised goes back to the children directly, to fund fun and exciting activities that we cannot cover through the school delegated budget. The school is a community, and we all have our part to play. Please do what you can and support this event.

A final note

Thank you to all those who already support the school as much as they can. It is an honour and a privilege to work here, the children are fantastic, the staff are hard working and we know you do support Ashgate Primary School. We hope though that you can do a little more to help us keep on track and maintain the high standards we strive for in challenging times ahead.

I thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Mr Seargent

Headteacher.

