

March 2017

Dear Parent/Carer,

Funding Challenges for Devon Schools

You may have recently read or heard about issues over the future finances of schools and I wish to share with you some of my serious concerns around the funding pressures facing schools within our Trust as well as all other schools in Devon.

Children in Devon schools get funding that is well below the national average. In 2016-17 this resulted in a shortfall of £290 per pupil. This significant funding shortfall has been, and will continue to be, detrimental to the quality and range of the educational provision for children at all Devon schools.

Devon has been campaigning for a number of years for fairer funding to bring us closer to the national average. As a result of the campaigning by Devon and other low funded authorities, the government committed to creating a national fairer funding formula in this parliament.

The problem for schools is increased by rising costs due to national policy decisions beyond our control, and cuts to a number of substantial educational grants. See the website www.schoolcuts.org.uk that illustrates what the real terms impact (i.e. including inflation) of these funding costs will be for all schools.

To make matters worse, as Devon is not able to afford the support required by children with special needs and disabilities, a decision was recently taken by the County Council to take another £33 per pupil from the budget of every school in the county to pay back the shortfall in this funding.

We are proud of the work we do with our young people, and are striving hard to improve still further. We are extremely anxious to maintain these high standards and to do so without losing teachers and support staff, reducing the opportunities for children, cutting enrichment and extra-curricular activities. The cuts will not only jeopardise our school improvement work, they also threaten the current levels of work that we do with our children.

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As a school community, we are seeking your support in raising awareness of this urgent situation. This could include writing on our behalf to the Secretary of State, Justine Greening and our MP, to consider an urgent solution to this crisis. The website www.writetothem.com gives advice on how to contact your local councillors and your MP.

We would welcome all the letter writing, awareness raising and campaigning you could muster. The Department for Education consultation on the proposed changes closes on 22nd March 2017

Thank you, as always, for your support.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G. Chown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary Chown

Chief Executive Officer of Ventrus Multi Academy Trust