

Primary Principals Group

27 April 2017

Dear Parents

On 15 March 2017, Mr Gary Fair, Department of Education, wrote to schools to provide an update on the financial planning assumptions for the next financial year. While an actual budget for 2017-18 has yet to be agreed, we were provided with indicative budgets. It would appear that the Age Weighted Pupil Units for primary schools, upon which the indicative budgets are based, has been significantly reduced. This means that even where a school's profile remains unchanged since last year, significant budget cuts are anticipated. Furthermore, on 24 April 2017 the Secretary of State announced a further reduction of 2.5% to the education budget. These are reductions on a budget that was imposed last year; a budget which was already grossly inadequate. Last year it was impossible for many schools to make further staffing cuts without seriously compromising children's education. Consequently, school budgets were not signed off on last year, due to the large number of schools planning for deficits. Despite this the DE's response is to cut budgets further. This is untenable. Schools cannot deliver on these expectations.

To be clear, we are not asking merely for the 2.5% cut announced by the Secretary of State to be reversed; this in itself will still result in inadequate budgets that, if implemented will have a direct and extremely negative impact on all our pupils.

As a group of Principals we have agreed that:

- **we will continue to place the needs of our pupils at the centre of decision making;**
- we will continue to exercise budgetary discretion and firm financial management within our schools;
- we will not, however, facilitate any further cuts to our school budgets that will have lasting impacts on our pupils' education and well-being; and
- consequently, we will be planning for deficit budget positions within the next three year plan, with most schools expecting deficits within year one.

As parents of children currently attending primary school, we would ask for your support. This is an unprecedented move on our part. Never before have we seen such a dire budget. If substantial increases in funding are not realised, all our children will be very negatively and significantly affected. Please write, expressing your concern, to your MLA, the Secretary of State, and/or Mr Gary Fair, Finance Director, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7PR. A sample letter is attached.

Jackie Wallace	(Stranmillis PS)
Robert Irvine	(Rosetta PS)
Alastair MacKay	(Finaghy PS)
Paul Bell	(Botanic PS)
Janet Douds	(Taughmonagh PS)
Neville Watson	(Forge Integrated PS)
Hilary Cunningham	(Fane Street PS)
Michael Keenan	(St Anne's PS, Belfast)
Michelle Johnston	(Donegall Road PS)
Philip Monks	(Lisnasharragh PS)
Martin Short	(Holy Child PS, Belfast)
Sean McNamee	(St Paul's PS & NS, Belfast)
Jill Black	(Black Mountain PS)
Mairead Weir	(St Joseph's PS, Slate St.)
Karen Morgan	(Gaelscoil na Mona)
Pamela McKenna	(Knockbreda PS)
David Heggarty	(Cregagh PS)
Roy Greer	(Moneyrea PS)
Joanne Currie	(Cairnshill PS)
Chris Darcy	(Ballynahinch PS)
Diane Dawson	(Braniel PS)
Niall Stevenson	(Downpatrick PS)
Jon Beattie	(All Children's IPS)
Sinead Beare	(Christ the Redeemer P.S., Lagmore)
Cathal O'Doherty	(Our Lady Queen of Peace P.S., Dunmurry)

Paddy McCabe	(Oliver Plunkett P.S., Belfast)
Brian McAlea	(St Kieran's PS, Poleglass)
Damian O'Neill	(Good Shepherd P.S., Poleglass)
Terry Rodgers	(St. Teresa's P.S., Belfast)
Ciaran Conway	(St. Mary's on the Hill P.S., Glengormley)
Nigel Arnold	(Glengormley IPS)
Stephen Moore	(Academy PS, Saintfield)
Raymond Hunter	(John Paul II PS, Belfast)
Liam McGukin	(Greenisland PS)
Pilib Mistéil	(Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh)
Colette Whyte	(St Clare's PS, Belfast)
Graham Gault	(Maghaberry PS)
Stephen Baine	(St Colman's PS, Lambeg)
Ian Stewart	(Lisburn Central PS)
George McCluskey	(Oakfield PS&NS, Carrickfergus)
Bill Fletcher	(Hollybank PS)
Fiona Boyd	(Holy Trinity PS, Belfast)
Stephen Cumper	(Harding Memorial PS)

