

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **School Update**

You may have seen a number of stories in the press around school funding. There have been worrying headlines over the last few months and we felt it important that we let you know, as far as we are able at this stage, how this is affecting our school.

School budgets across the country have been under pressure for some time. The senior leadership team at Rothbury First School has been grappling with the funding challenges, leading to a number of tough decisions being made. This academic year we have had to make reductions to teaching hours, teaching support hours and office hours as well as reductions to our resources budget in an attempt to balance our overall school budget.

As a result of these reductions, we combined classes in some afternoons for our younger year groups, however from January we will be returning these to the single year group classes and, instead, we will be combining our Reception and Nursery classes into an Early Years Unit. The children in the proposed Unit are familiar with both of our Early Years teachers, Ms Gladston and Mrs Walton, and the children are also used to learning with each other. We will still be providing the same high standard of care and expectations for all children, and the Unit will be supported by our two Early Years Teaching Assistants, Mrs Hawkins and Mrs Danagher. As many parents may be aware, a combined Early Years Unit is a common approach to provide a quality education in small schools such as ours. The change to the Unit will be managed sensitively by Ms Gladston and Mrs Walton, and we are happy to answer any questions that you may have about this as we go through our transition period to the new structure.

Our school is not alone in dealing with funding pressures. The proposed new funding formula for schools has been designed to create a fairer allocation, however, with increasing costs placed onto all schools the new formula will not bring the benefits that we had hoped to see. Rising costs, an effectively frozen budget and a reducing school roll are likely to mean that tough decisions will continue to have to be taken in the future. Please be assured that we will take the greatest care with budgets to ensure all the money we have is spent effectively on your children. Our decision making in terms of resources is always driven by what is best for the children within the funds that we have available.

If you would like to discuss further any of the issues raised by this letter, please feel free to call into school or speak to any of our Governors and we will do our best to answer your queries.

Yours sincerely,

Nicki Mathewson (Headteacher) & Robert Famelton (Chair of Governors)

On behalf of the Governing Body of Rothbury First School