



<http://oga4schoolgovernors.org.uk>

12th July 2018

Dear Colleagues,

Since I wrote to you in February and May we will all have looked in more detail at the financial pressures on our school in our three year budget plans following the introduction of the National Funding Formula. Whilst we will be submitting balanced budgets, as we are legally obliged to do, many of us will be questioning how schools can go on being expected to do more and more on behalf of our pupils with the pay cap for our staff being eased but without a corresponding increase in our budget allocations. So long as the DfE continues in the delusion that savings in one or two contracts in the approximately 20% of our budgets that is not spent on staffing can somehow offset the rising costs of pay and pensions that we are all facing, I will continue to have doubts about the future for our country that will increasingly rely on a well-educated population of young people.

Do you know how much your budget is relying on minimum funding guarantee or, particularly noticeable for some of our secondary schools, the minimum per pupil funding guarantee? It is imperative that the National Funding Formula is improved so that the continuing disparity in funds received by schools with similar pupil profiles is removed. Similarly the ludicrous disparity between our High Needs Budget (which supports SEND pupils across all types of schools including Special Schools) and that of some other authorities urgently needs to be addressed. As long as so many Local Authorities including Oxfordshire are overspending on this element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), including those much better funded than Oxfordshire, clearly something is drastically wrong. The Early Years Funding Formula for our nursery schools and classes is also widely acknowledged to be inadequate, yet the evidence of the importance of early intervention is well documented.

To be fair to the Secretary of State at the recent National Governance Association conference in Manchester, attended by myself and a colleague on behalf of OGA, he acknowledged that *'it is true that there are more teachers in schools than ever before – but also pupil numbers are rising'* and also *'while it is true there is more money going in to schools than ever before, society asks more of its schools than ever before. And budgets are tight'*. It is a pity that the rest of the DfE doesn't seem to have got this message! Clearly there is a need for us to keep our local MPs fully informed when we are forced to make decisions that we genuinely believe will impact negatively on the children and young people in our schools. Similarly, I believe we should be lobbying ahead of the Autumn Budget Statement for the soon to be announced teacher's pay settlement to be fully funded, including the on-cost element of pensions and National Insurance.

In this regard I would urge Governors to support their Headteachers, if they are able to attend the lobby in Downing Street on Friday 28th September the *Worth Less? Campaign* is seeking to get 1000 Headteachers to make the point that NFF is simply not good enough and remains unfair. This

would be the biggest collective show of strength and support ever undertaken by Headteachers. The target for Oxfordshire is 100 Headteachers – please support their presence.

I have heard a rumour that one or two Governors have suggested that their Headteacher's pay should be docked if they attend this lobby. I sincerely hope this is a false rumour as such a decision by a Governing Body would be so manifestly unfair and crass. If our Headteachers are prepared try to get across the message of the impending reduction in the quality of support our schools can provide to our children, unless the funding issue is properly addressed, then I am strongly of the belief we should be doing all we can to support this message. No amount of requests for parental support can be expected to offset the rising costs of staffing our schools, and not all schools are located in areas where parents have the money to provide support, however much they might wish to do so.

Our next Free Open Meeting will be a mini conference ending with our usual high quality buffet lunch! It will be held on Saturday, September 29th from 10.00 am – 12.30 pm at Wheatley Park School, Holton, Oxford OX33 1QH. The main topic will be:

Who Governs Our Schools? Trends, Tensions and Opportunities

The speaker will be **Tony Breslin FRSA**, the author of a report of the same name published in September 2017. We are looking forward to a very interesting discussion. So please note the date and also do advertise the meeting to other colleagues in your schools. The morning will also include an update on the Strategic Schools Partnership Board which works through representatives of key educational organisations in Oxfordshire to ensure coherence and strategic oversight for school improvement; the OGA AGM will also form a short part of the meeting. Please do remember that although our meetings are free *we do require you to book your place by email* to Judith Bennett judith.bennetts@outlook.com stating whether or not you wish to stay for lunch.

I am looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the 29th September, but meanwhile do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



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