



The Chantry School



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Martley, Worcester, WR6 6QA t: 01886 887100 f: 01886 887102 e: office@chantry.worcs.sch.uk w: www.chantryschool.com

Headteacher: Andrew Dickenson BSc PhD

Company No: 07657852

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Dear Parents/Carers

The Headteachers of Worcestershire's 34 secondary schools have jointly agreed to write a letter to all parents regarding school funding. We are seeking your support in making the case to Worcestershire MPs that schools cannot continue to deliver the same level of provision, opportunity and support unless funding for Worcestershire schools is improved.

Over recent years all of us, in every sector, have had to live with tighter budgets. The schools of Worcestershire have certainly been no exception to this, and we have certainly played our part. However, with increasing costs in every expenditure area, and with no additional funding available, secondary schools have, year on year, had to reduce the range of options, increase class sizes, cut back on non-teaching staff and provide less individual support to the most vulnerable. We have reached a point where we can do no more.

Through prudent long term financial management The Chantry School has accumulated some reserves and we have been able to protect our students to some extent, but we have also had to make some cuts to staffing and course choice at KS4. Many Worcestershire secondary schools in this academic year have been forced to set a deficit budget. Last year, The Chantry School managed to finish the financial year in a balanced position, but sadly, had little left available for further investment in the curriculum. The problem is now so acute that the head teachers of each of the county's secondary schools will today be writing letters such as this to every one of their parents because, unless the situation changes, we simply cannot continue to provide the service for which Worcestershire secondary schools have become known.

Last year the Department for Education brought in a new system for allocating money between different parts of the country. This scheme, the National Funding Formula, is an attempt to spread the spending on schools more fairly. It is, of course, a welcome step in the right direction, but counties such as Worcestershire remain at a disadvantage. It remains true, for example, that a child in the West Midlands conurbation is substantially better funded than one of similar age in Worcestershire. In the current year the basic unit of funding for each secondary pupil in Worcestershire is £887 less than in Birmingham. It is simply not fair that a child in a Worcestershire school receives less funding than their peer in another part of the country, even a few miles up the road, when we have standard national pay scales for staff, the cost of utilities and services are the same, as are text book and material costs.

But the problem goes much deeper than this. Not only is the national educational financial cake still being divided unfairly, in real terms it is getting smaller. Despite headlines announcing an increase in the national allocation for schools, the real value of government funding has been falling. The Institute for Fiscal Studies, which carries out independent objective research, calculates that the value of funding for the nation's schools will be 4% less this year than it was three years ago and 8% less than it was in 2010. Beyond this are the other increases which many organisations have to meet, in pensions, insurance and all that is involved in running our buildings day by day.

No parent needs to be reminded that the secondary school years are a precious opportunity. They do not come again. But we do need your support in making this point emphatically to government. Please consider doing this in any way that you choose. We are attaching the draft of a letter, which you may choose to use, should you decide to join those of us making the case to our MP.

Yours sincerely

Andy Dickenson
Headteacher

Paul Wilcox
Chair of Governors

Model letter to MPs from parents

I am writing to you because I am very concerned about the funding of my child's secondary education.

Despite the introduction of the new National Funding Formula, this county is still at a disadvantage compared with the metropolitan area nearby. I cannot see why there should be less spent on my child's schooling than if we lived in a suburb of Birmingham. Nor can I accept that, ten years after the financial crisis, less is being invested in the education of my child's cohort than was the case just three years ago. I have seen the headlines about increased funding, but I am aware that the amount does not compensate for the increased costs which schools have had to face.

I support the campaign which is being mounted by the headteachers of high schools across this county. It is not a matter of party politics, but one of securing the best possible start in life for my child.

Yours sincerely,