

Farmor's School
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Farmor's School
AN ACADEMY

1st July 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to ask for your assistance. I would be very grateful if you would take the time to read this letter carefully and hope that you understand my reasons for writing.

School funding has reached a critical point, and I do not expect the situation to improve anytime soon. The way schools are funded is very complex, but I shall attempt to distil the main changes which have affected us in recent years:

- Since the 2011/12 academic year (the year we started to be funded as an Academy for our 11-16 provision) our per-pupil funding has remained fairly static in cash terms, but has not therefore been adjusted to account for inflationary pressures during this period
- Our 16-18 funding during the period of the last parliament fell in cash terms by approximately £1000 per Sixth Form student (meaning we receive more than **£270,000 less per year** given current student numbers than we would have done under the funding arrangements 5 years ago)
- Capital funding has fallen from around £119,000 a year in 2010/11 to £20,000 in 2014/15; nearly **£100,000 a year less** to maintain our buildings and environment
- Costs pressures have been high during the period of these funding reductions. It is estimated that our costs will inflate by around **4.8% in the next 12 months**, largely due to changes in taxation and pension arrangements imposed by government.

During this period, the school also experienced a fall in student numbers due to local demographic changes. Most of our funding is awarded based on pupil numbers therefore this has had a significant impact. Thankfully we have recruited well in the last two years, but current Year 8 to 10 are small and this will affect our funding for years to come.

To top all of the above, Gloucestershire continues to be one of the worst funded local authorities in England. The promise of a 'fairer funding' formula has not been realised.

As a result of these financial circumstances the school has had to make substantial savings. We reduced expenditure, partly through a programme of redundancies, by **£530,000** last year. We have taken action to close a funding gap of a further **£160,000** this year. I am running the school with the smallest leadership team of any secondary school with a Sixth Form that I know of. We have reduced expenditure on bought-in services and rationalised our staffing structure.

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For those parents who have had children at the school for some time, you might be surprised by the above. We have managed to improve so much about the school, not least of all by developing our facilities. We have been successful in securing additional capital investment from central government, but cannot guarantee continuing to do so in the future.

We have also protected the curriculum, continuing to offer A Levels which attract small numbers such as music and foreign languages. Our examination results continue to be strong, for example at A Level where we are in the top 10% of schools nationally for the progress made by students. There is no doubt that we are achieving more, with fewer resources at our disposal.

However, I fear that the cost pressures we are facing are unsustainable and that the quality of education we strive to provide at Farmor's is increasingly difficult to protect. We are not alone in facing these problems. One of the Cheltenham Grammar schools is in a similar position of having to ask for parental support. My secondary headteacher colleagues across Gloucestershire are also very worried about the future.

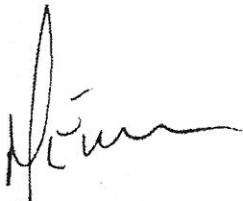
I would therefore like to ask for your support in two ways:

- 1. Please make your voice heard by writing to your local MP to lobby for a fairer funding system for schools.**
- 2. Please consider making a donation to the school to help me protect the quality of education we provide.**

It is usual to ask for donations to the school fund for specific projects on an annual basis, and parents are always very generous in their response. Sadly, this year I must ask for donations to help close the basic funding gap in the school. In a publicly funded system it should not be necessary to ask this of you. If you can help bring pressure to create a fairer funding system then we may be able to return to a more sustainable position.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for any support you feel able to give. If you feel able to make a donation please see the attached form for details.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Evans', with a stylized, flowing script.

Matthew Evans

Headteacher