

Parent Panel - 16th March 2017

Attendees: A Canham, J Rhodes, A Shipley, J Ninnis-Jeal, E Clarke, C Wright, M Massey, S Smith, V Carr.

Subject: Finance

Mrs Carr opened the meeting by asking the group if we were all aware of the extent of the crisis in funding for schools.

The group confirmed only what we have read in the letter issued by the school, or heard on the news.

Mrs Carr gave a more detailed account of what the cuts will mean to our school, some funding has already been cut for schools i.e. funding for GRT families, support for English/Maths and many more, because of these cuts school has to buy these services, the school also has to buy the services of a Business Manager to oversee spending and enable the school to balance their budget, which we have been able to do for the last few years as a result of Mrs Carr's innovation with grants and the way our staff support other schools and we get paid for it, and how we employ staff across schools such as our SENDCo. However, with the latest cuts it's hard to see where further savings can be made, and the Governors reiterated this – having attended a meeting recently for Governors, they were satisfied that all suggestions made for cutting budgets were already in place in Elton.

Mrs Carr also confirmed to the group that to try and bring in funds for the school, herself and a lot of the teachers, HLTA's work alongside other schools advising and assessing teacher, Mrs Carr is assessing other schools for REQM award and also supporting IGNITE in research which offsets the cost of things such as Zoo visits and staff training for school.

The group agreed that the Mrs Carr was doing everything she can and that the school needs to make parents aware of everything the staff are doing. Mrs Carr agreed to reinstate her weekly blog, that she stopped in response to 2 parents saying that it was a waste of time. The group was unanimous in requesting that it be reinstated.

Mrs Carr is worried that the cuts would mean losing staff to balance the books and all our staff are allocated to class/children i.e. No spare staff to shed. The staff are all excellent, the Governors agreed with this and said that the School Improvement Partner (SIP) had also rubber stamped it and Ofsted had too.

One of the solutions mentioned in the letter was to increase class sizes, a parent asked are we not at our limit? It was confirmed that although there is a limit on infant classes of 30 there is no limit on junior classes. Mrs Carr also said that whilst not favourable, this option would be more favourable than a 4 day week.

It was suggested that the parent questionnaire was completed on parents evening as the school received such a low number of replies to the recent survey - the group thought this was a good idea.

The group requested Mrs Carr to continue her blog as it gave an insight into the school and what was happening (behind the scenes). It was also suggested we have guest blogs from teachers/governors.

Mrs Carr suggested changing the format of the parents evening to encourage more parents to attend, the idea is for the children to prepare a presentation on themselves about their achievements and struggles – the group thought this was a good idea, there will always be parents that won't attend but it is worth a try.

Due to the funding cuts the school has had no alternative but to be stricter on payments for trips and school dinners, this is why some trips had to be cancelled i.e. Young Voices as there was not enough

people interested in attended to cover the cost. Only one parent had complained about the school dinner policy but it was unavoidable as the meals had not been paid for.

To close the meeting was brought back to the funding issue and it was confirmed that some schools have decided to close for 1 day therefore, becoming a 4 day school week. It would be the choice of the parent whether to keep their child at the school where they know and their friends are or to move their child to another school, with possibly much higher class sizes. One option would be to become an Academy school, however Mrs Carr confirmed this decision is not taken lightly and it would be essential to find the right partnership for the future. It was also confirmed that over 50% of Academies are in financial difficulty and one has had to close so this was not the answer to all things.

Parents were urged to contact our MP Justin Madders expressing your concern for these funding cuts. PTA agreed to share this information the following day with parents on the yard to keep them informed.

Next Meeting: Thursday 4th May @ 1.30pm