

03/03/2017

Dear Parents / Carers

Re: National Funding Formula for Education – Impact on Students of Thomas Keble School

I am writing to you following the government's publication of the National Funding Formula that is being consulted on at present. If it is confirmed, the formula will have a significant impact on the learning experience of students at Thomas Keble School. I wanted to advise you of what changes we might expect if the formula is confirmed, and to ask for your support in our campaign to try and change the way the new formula is calculated.

What will the formula mean for Thomas Keble's funding?

You may be aware from my letter in October 2015, that Gloucestershire has long been one of the lowest funded education authorities in England. We were told that a National Funding Formula would 'iron out' the discrepancies and ensure equal funding levels of every student in England. The proposed formula does not do this. In fact, if it is introduced as published, Thomas Keble will **lose 2.9% of its current funding levels, the highest amount of any secondary school in Gloucestershire**. This equates to **over £135,000 of funding cuts over two years** and is on top of cuts in funding that we have already been advised of. The school has also had to cover increased employer contributions in pensions and national insurance contributions, with no financial support to do so. All of these cuts, both past and future, have meant that we have significantly less to spend on the education of your children.

Why has the formula not solved the problem?

There are 3 key issues with the National Funding Formula that have resulted in Thomas Keble being hit so hard in terms of budget cuts:

1. Under the new formula, no school can lose more than 3% of its funding regardless of how highly it has been funded in the past. In simple terms, this limits the amount of funding that is released from the well-funded schools to increase the money available for historically low-funded schools. Thomas Keble will face cuts of the same amount as schools that have historically received up to 20% more money than us in the past. We feel this is very unfair.
2. The formula reduces the core amount of funding per student, particularly for children entering their GCSE years. Under the proposals, we will receive £200 less for each student in Years 10 and 11. The government have stated this is so that more money can be directed to children in deprived areas of the country. However, to reduce core funding by £200 per Y10 / 11 child will reduce our budget significantly. Even though

the government has pledged to increase funding for students in Y7 to Y9 by £30 per child, the level of overall reduction will mean an average cut per child of £62.00 per year. This adds up to another £40,000 of cuts every year. We would argue that the government must maintain or better still, increase the core funding per child to ensure that we can continue to offer the core curriculum and support that our children, and you as parents, have come to expect.

3. The third issue with the formula is regarding the lump sum that every school receives for core operating costs like utility bills, site maintenance and running costs. Under the current formula, Gloucestershire allocates £175,000 to secondary schools and £76,000 to primary schools. This is to take into account that many of the county's primary schools are much smaller than average and running costs vary according to the size of a site. Under the funding formula, the government intends to allocate every school a lump sum of £110,000. A significant increase for smaller primary schools but a significant decrease for secondary schools.

The government has for a long time, made claims that funding for education has been protected and is at record levels. I am afraid this is not the case in practice. Budgets have seen real terms cuts of nearly 10% since 2010 and with further cuts forecast from 2018, the time has come when decisions need to be made that will directly impact on the educational experience of your children. For several years, we have sought to reduce costs, reduce non-essential spending and balance the books carefully. This is no longer an option and without real cuts to services, our budget will not cover our core provision.

What will the funding formula mean for future provision at Thomas Keble School?

At the present time, we are looking at various options to try and manage on the forecast budget we will receive. The options include:

- Charging parents for the full costs of running trips, both curricular and enrichment. This will include the cost of covering lessons for staff who are leading the trips during school time.
- Charging parents for transport for PE fixtures to cover costs. At present we spend over £2000 a year on PE transport to facilitate travel to fixtures across the county and, on occasion, further afield. The forecast cuts will mean we no longer have sufficient funds to cover this cost, despite the generosity of parents in the past in making contributions.
- Reviewing the support we currently offer to increase accessibility to music tuition in order to keep costs to parents as low as possible.
- Reviewing provision like work experience which carries a cost to the school for health and safety risk assessments as well as covering staff who carry out site visits.
- Reviewing support and intervention programmes that support many students who are experiencing difficulties with their learning due to personal reasons and pressures they may be experiencing outside of school.
- Reviewing provision within our Learning Support department to work within the limits of the funding received.
- Increasing the number of students needed to make a KS4 option group viable. This will inevitably lead to some subjects being removed from the curriculum at Key Stage 4 reducing choice for students.
- Considering the class sizes we currently support in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as to whether these will be viable in the longer term.

- Suspending all site improvement and maintenance beyond emergency repairs. This will inevitably impact on the learning environment for all members of the Thomas Keble Community.

It is not our intention to worry parents unnecessarily. However, we do think it is important that as members of the Thomas Keble community, you are aware of the challenges that we face in the months to come. We would very much welcome your support in campaigning for increased funding for all schools, but in particular for the children at Thomas Keble that, as a staff and governing body, we are so firmly committed to. We understand that the government faces tough choices to balance the books at a time of austerity. However, we firmly believe that the education and support offered to young people through education is worth far more than the sum of its parts and to reduce the funding to the levels proposed will seriously undermine both current educational provision but, also, will create issues that will cost far more to solve in the future.

If you feel able to support us, I would ask that you contact your local MP, Neil Carmichael, to express your concerns. His contact details are:

7 Bridge Street
Nailsworth
Stroud
GL6 0AA

Telephone
01453 751 572

Email

neil.carmichael.mp@parliament.uk

Thank you for your consideration and support at this challenging time.

Yours sincerely



Miss J Maunders
Headteacher

On behalf of the staff and governors of Thomas Keble School