



Kelvin Grove Primary School

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Dear Parents and Carers,

UPDATE ON SCHOOL FUNDING

We wanted to keep you updated on the impact of school funding cuts on Kelvin Grove and our plans for seeking to protect the learning and support we offer to children during this difficult process. School funding may seem quite distant from the day to day learning of your children, but has a direct impact on how we can work and we therefore want to ensure you are kept informed of developments and our responses as a school.

As you may be aware, all schools are facing significant funding pressures. Earlier in the autumn, many head teachers protested outside Downing Street. For every £100 of government funding that was available per school pupil in 2011, this had fallen to £92 by 2018 once inflation is taken into account. Many costs for schools are also rising.

There are no easy responses to this challenge for any school. However, and as we noted earlier in the year, we have been seeking to develop an approach which continues to provide a broad range of learning. The summary on the next pages provides an update which we hope you will find useful. Our strategy includes: protecting core classroom learning and also the wider opportunities for children to develop; successfully making the case for additional funding for pupils with additional needs; sharing some teaching assistants between classes in upper school years; and moving from a model of three deputy heads to two. The difficult decisions we took last year mean that we are now in a better position to weather the continued budget pressures in the next three years, although there is always some uncertainty around future funding (as we set out overleaf).

Please be assured that although none of us support a reduction in school funding - cuts inevitably have consequences - we as determined as ever to continue to develop the learning and support which all Kelvin Grove children receive. In the last year the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has commended the learning achieved at Kelvin Grove (as has Ofsted) and the SATS results for those leaving in Year 6 are now far above those leaving a typical primary school locally and nationally. We are grateful for the fantastic staff team and all those parents and carers who support the school in helping achieve such a high quality primary education.

As ever, please do let us know if you have questions or thoughts. We have enclosed a list of governors to help such engagement and plan to have a drop in session on Wednesday 5th December 2018 from 3.15pm to 5.45pm to enable parents and carers to ask us any questions about the budget or other elements of how we are managing and developing the school. It would be great to see you there.

Yours faithfully

Ben Jupp
Chair of Governors

Ian Hyde
Headteacher



Headteacher: Ian Hyde
Deputy Headteachers: Louise Bryan, Tara Magee and Kris Clark

Kelvin Grove Budget Update

Why are schools facing budget pressures?

School funding pressures have been in the news over the last two years for good reason. After some protection for schools funding during the Coalition Government, and big rises in funding before 2010, since 2015 the amount of funding per pupil in England has been gradually falling.

Although the Government's overall education budget is broadly stable, because there are more pupils across the country the amount per pupil is falling. The detailed picture is relatively complex but looking at the broadest measure of school funding, for every £100 spent per pupil in 2011 the government is now only spending around £92 (an 8% fall per pupil).¹ The steepest reductions have been in the specialist resources for schools given via local authorities, but even direct funding for primary schools has fallen by around £4 in every £100 (4%) in the last three years. The cuts are not nearly as big as those experienced by some public services such as the police and councils, but are still very difficult. The recent Budget announcement is expected to make very little difference – potentially around 50p extra per £100.

In addition, schools are facing two extra pressures:

- some costs are rising faster than inflation, such as the amount which schools need to contribute to staff pensions (the Institute for Fiscal Studies now calculates that the combined cost of expected pension, national insurance and pay rises will be 3% higher than inflation between 2016 and 2020);
- across Southwark and Lewisham (and other south London boroughs) the number of primary school aged pupils now appears to be falling, which means that schools are not able to fill classes. The funding which schools receive is largely tied to the number of pupils.

How is this impacting on Kelvin Grove?

Kelvin Grove receives around £4.6 million a year from the Department of Education via Lewisham Council; an average of about £7,000 per pupil. Most of that funding is linked to the number of pupils in the school, although we receive some extra funding for those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with significant special needs.

Around £80 in every £100 is spent on staff, with £20 in every £100 spent on our buildings, heating, materials, IT, school trips and other non-staff items.

Like most schools, Kelvin Grove has traditionally sought to balance the amount of money we spend and the amount of money we receive. But as school funding starting to be squeezed in the last three years, that has become more difficult. By last year we were spending around £103 for every £100 we received in funding and this gap was forecast to widen further in the coming years. Lewisham Council agreed that we could run a small deficit last year – we essentially had to 'borrow' around £35,000 from Lewisham Council last year to fund that deficit (which is very small compared to our £4.6 million budget) - and they have agreed another small deficit this year on condition that we reverse and repay this shortfall in the next three years.

This is not as serious a financial challenge as many schools face. We are lucky that we are a large school and therefore have more flexibility than many.² But this has meant that last year we had to develop a strategy for ensuring that our income and expenditure balanced again. Whilst we are strongly opposed to the central government cuts, not taking any action ourselves would have led to our deficit rising and ultimately others imposing even more difficult changes on us.

How have we responded?

¹ Institute for Fiscal Studies *2018 Annual Report on Education Spending in England*. Note that all figures are in 'real terms' (they take into account general inflation).

² Schools in inner London have also historically been somewhat better funded than in some county areas in reflection of greater needs in areas such as ours. This also means that we have some greater flexibility, although there have been pressures by Government to make greater cuts in London which would hit schools such as Kelvin Grove harder and not recognise significant continuing pupil needs.

As we have approached this funding challenge, we have sought to do so in ways that are in line with our priorities to provide children with a wide range of learning and support, including helping children catch up if they fall behind, be stretched when they can excel and develop both socially and academically.

It is wrong for any school to claim that there will be no impact of the government cuts on the range of activities which they can provide; but we have sought to think very carefully about how we can do things differently and protect and, where possible, enhance those elements of Kelvin Grove's approach which are most important to children's learning.

As a Governing Body we therefore decided that it was a priority to protect core classroom learning and also continue to give significant support for wider opportunities for learning such as through music, sports, arts, IT and school trips. These are critical in help children thrive and develop educationally and socially.

We also considered that we were not being fully compensated by Lewisham Council for the support we provide for some pupils with particular education and health needs, and have successfully argued for additional funding for more of those pupils.

Looking at the experience of other schools and listening to the view of staff, we concluded that it would be better to have a more defined structure across our teaching assistant and support staff. We wrote to you about this review in February. The outcomes included developing a model which has more specialist and senior teaching assistants whilst sharing two teaching assistants across three classes in some 'upper' year groups. This has involved offering some existing teaching assistants more senior roles, but also offering voluntary redundancy for all those who wanted to leave. Although we only needed three fewer full time permanent teaching assistants at the time to reflect the new structure, [6] of the [40] support staff applied for voluntary redundancy and we felt that it was right to let anyone who wanted to retire or use the opportunity to move job to a new job. We also decided that it was better in the new structure for teaching assistants to cover playground duties rather than have separate lunchtime supervisors; and we reduced the role of a number part time contract staff providing specialist support. We are enormously grateful for the contributions made to the school by the lunchtime supervisors, contractors and those teaching assistants who decided to take voluntary redundancy. We know that together with some unexpected staff illness last summer, the changes led to a disrupted summer term for some classes and are grateful for everyone's understanding. Hopefully the new structure has now settled down, but we would appreciate your feedback.

As we wrote to you about in September, we also took the difficult decision that we should move from a structure of three deputy heads to two. Almost all other primary schools of our size have two. We have been lucky that having three deputies has allowed us to further develop our approach to many aspects of teaching and the curriculum over the last few years and provide extra support to families. Mrs Bryan decided to apply for voluntary redundancy and we are very sad to see her go - she leaves a fantastic legacy in the ethos of Kelvin Grove and the progress of the last few years.

In response Mrs Bryan's departure we are further developing the role of Mrs Magee and Mr Clark and, importantly, that of teachers who take responsibility for particular subjects and year groups.

We have also sought to ensure that we are using all our resources to best affect, including combining four classes into three in Year 4 (which was possible because the number of pupils had reduced in this year) and thinking carefully about how teachers support each other.

What has been the impact on our budget? What will happen in the future?

These measures mean that the revenue and expenditure of the school are now expected to be balanced from next year onwards.

There are inevitably some uncertainties about the funding that will be available in future years given that there may be further changes in central and local government funding decisions and the number of pupils at Kelvin Grove may fluctuate (which has a big impact given that most funding is linked to pupil numbers). We have sought to be realistic about these forthcoming cost pressures and income.

Given this projection, we do not anticipate any more changes to our staffing structure although we will inevitably have to keep the budget under review. We are also extremely keen to continue to develop our resources such as IT and to provide specialist support when children need extra support or extra stretch, and so will continue to look at how we prioritise expenditure. In parallel, we are our seeking additional funding for improving the external appearance of the school, which currently doesn't live up to the quality of the teaching inside the classroom.

Opportunities for questions and discussion

Given the changes that we made last year are now in place, we would very welcome your feedback, thoughts and questions. Please do email us on chair@kelvingrove.lewisham.sch.uk or attend a drop in session that we will be holding on Wednesday 5th December 2018 from 3.15pm to 5.45pm. This will be an opportunity to raise any questions you have on our strategy as a school as well as how we are responding to funding pressures.

You might also be interested in the Lewisham Fair Funding for Schools <https://www.facebook.com/LewishamFFFS/> which has details on how you can campaign for better schools funding from central government.

List of Governors

Claire	Ackford	Parent Governor
Natalie	Benitez-Castellano	Co-opted Governor
Alex	Bourdelon	Associate Governor
Eleanor	Fairford	Parent Governor
Janine	Green	Parent Governor
Niko	Falzarano	Parent Governor
Kris	Hibbert	Co-opted Governor
Ian	Hyde	Headteacher Governor
Ben	Jupp	Local Authority Governor (CHAIR)
Paula	McDonald	Co-opted Governor
Rachael	Oldfield	Parent Governor
Hilary	Oppong	Staff Governor