



St. Mary's Primary School

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School Budget Cuts - What You Can Do to Help

26 September 2017

Dear Parent

You may be aware from recent media coverage that funding to schools was considerably reduced this year. All schools across Northern Ireland, primary and post primary, have been dealing with reductions to budgets for a number of years.

Last year St Mary's lost £33,000 directly from our allocated funding due to employer costs, originally paid by DENI, being imposed on schools. This does not take into account inflationary pressures, for which no additional allowance was made for 2016/17 or 2017/18.

Prior to the summer break schools were warned to plan for expected further cuts of between 2.5% and 7.5%. In August we were informed that primary schools would lose £56 per child and post primary £15 per child this year. In our case this equates to over £29,000. To add insult to injury, the Education Authority are not funding our third P1 class until April 2018. There is no in-year growth funding or contingency funding available. An additional £30,000 the school must find. To say this is a ridiculous situation is stating the obvious. Clearly our school cannot sustain the previous level of educational provision while being forced to make savings of almost £100,000. This simply cannot be done without a drastic impact on staffing and resource levels.

In August the Secretary of State announced additional funding of £30 million for education, but this was misleading, as this funding was previously announced, accounted for and spent. This was not new money. The previous Education Minister stated that for Education to stand still the Education budget needed to be increased by £80 million per year for the next three years. It is in fact decreasing. We have also been made aware that the apparent £50 million, agreed as part of the DUP and Conservative Party power deal, will not go to schools but will be used to cover the deficit at the Education Authority.

These budgetary cuts will see a reduction in non-teaching staff throughout our school, larger class sizes, a reduction in teaching staff over the next few years, reduced additional needs support and a curtailment classroom resources. We will potentially lose six members of non-teaching staff over the next 2 years. It has meant a reduction of the additional support we provide for maths and Literacy. Parents may need to cover the full costs of workbooks, text books, day to day school materials and learning resources for their child/ren.

It is essential that parents realise these cuts are happening and will have a negative impact on every child and every school. Despite objections and campaigns from schools, Boards of Governors, various educational bodies and on-going industrial action by various Teaching Trade Unions the cuts are being imposed. **This is your child's future that is being cut.**

The fantastic work of our very active and successful PTA has helped the school fund many things over the past years, lessening the impact of the budget cuts we face. Recently our PTA paid £8,000 for a revamp of our school Maths Scheme. Last June the PTA donated another £8,000 to help cover the costs associated with updating our reading material at Key Stage 1 and at Key Stage 2. Our PTA also provides financial support for our End of Year Awards at P7, the hire of buses and unseen costs the school encounters throughout the year. This is not to mention the large number of grants applied for; to provide training courses, information sessions, financial support for our Gardening Club, ECO School, our various sports clubs, the purchase of playground equipment and the financial support provided to help fund our Barnardo's 'Time for Me' Counsellor.

Please join our PTA, support our PTA, help raise funds for our school, and help reduce the impact of these financial cuts on our school and on your child's education.

In previous years we have asked parents to make a voluntary donation to our school fund to help pay for classroom resources, playground equipment and school improvements. However, we are conscious of the financial pressures parents and families are under. Consequently, we are reducing this request of a voluntary donation to £10 per child or £15 per family; with the request that parents support our PTA and school fundraising activities.

Last year the school raised over £15,000 for charitable causes. This year we will only be promoting Trocaire. All other fundraising activities will be for our school; to purchase class resources for your child. Otherwise we may be in the unfortunate position of asking parents to purchase pencils, pens, books, glue, paper, paints etc., each term for their child/ren. This is already happening in many schools throughout Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely

Des O'Hagan
Principal

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Please return to your child's class teacher or directly to the school office.

Child(ren)'s name(s): Class/es:

I enclose **£10.00/£15.00** contribution the St Mary's Primary School Fund.

Date: Parent/Carer's Signature: