



Open Letter re School Funding in Powys

It is unprecedented for us as headteachers to write in this manner. However, we are taking the step to highlight and raise serious concerns about the universally poor position schools across Powys are finding themselves in currently. It must be stressed that this is NOT due to mismanagement by Headteachers or Governing Bodies but by decisions taken at Powys County Council level due to the funding pressures, which we of course acknowledge.

Whilst we recognise the issues and pressures of budgeting are not exclusive to Powys, as headteachers we feel compelled to raise our concerns.

Too many schools made staff redundant last year in order to comply with the finance regulations and submit balanced budgets. This management of change is extremely difficult to lead causing high levels of staff anxiety and low morale. To find ourselves in the same positions this year, despite the scrupulous and constant budget management undertaken by schools, is simply intolerable. Writing as a collective is an extraordinary step, not undertaken lightly, but is done in order to illuminate for all the reality of the decisions made.

The outcome of the reduced budgets will be-

- Reduction in the curriculum offer and experiences for children as there will be fewer staff
- Increase in class sizes in some schools
- Significant decrease in emotional, cognitive and behavioural support as staffing reductions are made
- Risk of increased school exclusions due to reduction in staffing
- Issues around safeguarding of pupils and staff
- Headteachers and Governing Bodies will be having to make the immoral choice between which child receives or does not receive support
- ALN requirements will not be met due to reduced funding
- Experiences for children will be greatly diminished as the budget will not be able to off-set costs for families which will disproportionately affect our most most vulnerable families
- Absence rates of staff, including headteachers will increase, again negatively affecting our pupils and families
- Well-being of staff will deteriorate as they are expected to do even more, over and above their contracts leading to further lowering of morale
- Recruitment and retention of staff at all levels, including headteachers, will deteriorate further
- Impossible to strategically plan for the future with the huge variances schools are having year on year, even finance surgery to finance surgery.

As headteachers, we have multi-faceted roles, but the focus is always the child when decision making. Due to the budget, this fundamental element of our professional role has been eroded. We want to support the authority in representations to Welsh Government, or beyond, to emphasise that the public service of education is failing our children now and will continue to do so with these levels of underfunding.

BRECON CLUSTER PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS