

May 2019

Dear Parent/Carers

### **School Funding Pressures**

I am writing on behalf of Discovery Schools Academy Trust to highlight the challenges our schools will be facing over the next few years and to seek your help in supporting us.

You may have read recent news reports about the financial pressures on schools across the country and the measures they are taking to address them. We want to take this opportunity to explain how we anticipate these challenges might affect our schools, and to share with you how we are striving to minimise the impact on our educational provision.

The education sector is facing unprecedented financial challenges. Despite the Department of Education stating they are investing more than ever on schools, independent analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows an 8% per pupil fall in school funding over the past eight years in real terms.

Combined with additional costs from rising national insurance and pension contributions, the national living wage, staff pay rises, and the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, schools are finding it increasingly difficult to balance their budgets.

As a trust, we work with headteachers to carefully plan our budgets and identify ways we can make funding go further through efficient workforce structures, and savings in back-office costs and procurement – ensuring every pound delivers the best value for pupils.

### **How we are responding**

Like all schools across the country, we are thinking carefully about how we continue to provide our children with an excellent education in a financially sustainable way. By working together collectively as a trust, we have greater opportunities to secure financial efficiencies.

We are supporting our schools by:

- Using our collective purchasing power to reduce the cost of supplies and services;
- Investing in our schools to help them develop before and after school care, nurseries, pre-schools and holiday camps to generate additional income;
- Helping schools to compare how they spend their money and identify ways to make savings;
- Coordinating recruitment so that vacancies are advertised internally within the trust to support the most effective deployment of staff;
- Developing structures so that schools can share staff or functions can be delivered centrally where it is financially beneficial;

- Further investing in staff training to ensure that children are being supported by well-trained teachers and support staff, reducing the need for specialist services;
- Working effectively with our wider partners to ensure we make best use of our funding when we plan teacher and leader professional development.

### **How you can help**

Our schools value their strong and supportive relationships with parents and there are ways that you can help us. Some of these include:

- Using our schools' before and after school care provision, pre-schools and holiday camps instead of choosing external providers;
- Volunteering your time or skills to support pupil learning or extra-curricular activities, complementing the work of our staff;
- Forming or joining a Parent Teacher Association (FORS) to fundraise and work with your school to access grants that might be available;
- Check with your employer to see if they have charitable activities that could support schools;
- Sharing the positive news about your school to help ensure it is the school of choice in the area;
- Supporting the payment of any parental voluntary contributions towards trips and resources;
- Paying a small voluntary contribution towards some bespoke curriculum enhancements, such as: cooking ingredients, transport to and from swimming lessons or special visitors to the school (e.g. the falconry expert);
- Contacting your local MP and supporting national campaigns to improve funding for schools.

Our schools will face tough choices and difficult decisions over the next few years. Rest assured that we will continue to use the money that is available as effectively as possible in providing the best educational experience for every child.

If you have any specific questions or concerns about anything covered in this letter, please contact your headteacher, who will be happy to discuss the challenges and how you might be able to help.

We will continue to keep you updated, in the meantime, I wish to reassure you that we remain committed to providing the best quality education for every child in our trust.

Yours faithfully,



**Paul Stone**  
CEO



**David Williams**  
Chair of Trustees