

Nick Francis (Parent Governor)

20 June 2018

Dear parents and carers,

Dobcroft Schools' Funding Cuts

Dobcroft Junior and Infant Schools are currently facing untenable budget cuts.

School funding was reorganised under the revised national schools funding formula, Sheffield has subsequently seen a significant reduction in education funding. Within Sheffield, poor performing and disadvantaged schools are rightly prioritised for financial support, however, this means that Dobcroft Infant and Junior Schools now receive a reduced slice of an already diminished pie.

Dobcroft Schools are facing a real-time funding cut of 17% by 2019-20. Staff wages make up over 80% of the schools' budgets, therefore reduced funding inevitably leads to fewer teaching assistants and teachers. These cuts also mean fewer welfare staff, fewer books, failing facilities, outdated IT and vastly reduced capacity to ensure that all children's needs are met, especially those with special educational needs.

In order to mitigate the worst impacts of these cuts on the pupils we are now in the desperate situation of having no option but to ask parents, carers, family and friends, to help financially.

In moves similar to those that many other schools have already taken across the country we are introducing a voluntary contribution scheme. Traditional ad-hoc fundraising, and schemes such as the Dottery, have been fantastic for supporting the schools. However, the financial landscape has changed so significantly that we now need significant, and regular, donations to maintain the performance of the schools. We are therefore asking parents, carers, family or friends to set up a monthly standing order with the Friends of Dobcroft Schools (FODS), to fund vital assets for both schools.

Funds raised can be used for items such as play equipment, text books, stationary, and new IT equipment, right through to paying towards staffing costs. Applications for funds are submitted to FODS by the head teachers, but funding can only be spent to directly benefit the children. This is not about balancing the books, but purely about protecting our children from the impacts of an underfunded education.

To maintain the current provision we need to raise the equivalent of at least £1 per child per day. This cost is less than a school lunch or a single weekly after-school club, but will have a dramatic impact on the children's wellbeing, and ensure that both schools are able to continue delivering the outstanding education we all want. All donations are eligible for gift-aid, so the children will benefit from more money than families and friends give.

All donations are confidential, and there is no requirement for parents or carers to contribute. Once a standing order is set up the donor retains the ability to cancel it at any time.

The standing order and gift aid leaflets are now available at both school receptions, and can be returned to the FODS post box at each school office.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N.A.' followed by a stylized flourish.

Nick Francis

Relevant recent press links:

Interview with Dobcroft Infant School Head Teacher (starts at 1hr 10 mins):
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p067jblz>

National Association of Head Teachers Summit Meeting in Sheffield:
<https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/education/call-for-action-over-schools-funding-crisis-in-yorkshire-1-9207739>

MP's warning regarding Sheffield School cuts:
<https://www.thestar.co.uk/news/education-chief-warns-of-classroom-crisis-in-sheffield-schools-1-9210976>