



Thursday 3rd May 2019

Dear parents,

We are writing to update you on our financial position as a school and to ask for your help.

The challenging financial climate

Our governors, ably supported by our fantastic admin team, have worked so hard with increasingly tight budgets in recent years to reduce costs, seek additional revenue and make financial efficiencies. However, various factors have conspired to mean that we now face a budget deficit which is likely to increase significantly over the coming years.

- Reduced central government funding for us as for all schools;
- Increases in staffing costs: pay increases, increased pension costs and significant back payments for support staff pensions;
- A reduction in our funding for deprivation, reflecting the changing demographic of our school in recent years;
- A reduction in funding for pupils with special needs.

Obviously we agree with pay increases for hard-working staff and with the principle of more money going to those schools who face greater challenges. But, as you know, there is a national issue with regard to the overall level of schools funding in particular and for public services more generally.

Our position

The net result is an in-year shortfall of about £30,000 next year and a certainty of increased deficits going forward unless we take swift action. PTA fund-raising cannot and should not fund core staffing (classteachers, admin staff etc). This is the job of central government and it is the responsibility of the governing body to set a budget on a sustainable basis.

Whilst we will have to take steps as a school to reduce our core costs, it is time to consider how we can **'Keep It EP'** for many years to come so that your children can continue to enjoy the rich and broad curriculum that this school offers. Music tuition, sports opportunities, scientists in residence, our extraordinary trip programme that embeds our curriculum in real experiences, dance groups, art projects, evening community events and residential are, after all, what make our school so unique, engaging, inspiring and inclusive. This rich curriculum offer is not statutory and is not on offer in many primary schools.

We are lucky to have such committed staff, many of whom have been with us for many years and as well as leading and supporting all these extra opportunities, are themselves inspired by the richness of the Eleanor Palmer curriculum and community. **'Keep it EP'** also enables us to recruit and retain the very best teachers.

The work of our Teaching School is also part of our income and our ability to recruit and retain teachers. Key staff work exceptionally hard to generate an income that already tops up our budget but again, this is not guaranteed into the future.

How can you help?

We need your help to consider how we are to generate more - and a sustained - income to support our rich curriculum offer whilst protecting our core values and principles. We want to set up a fund called '**Keep It EP**', working in partnership with the PTA, which will exist to sustain our 'extras' so that our shrinking budget can focus on covering core funding.

We have some ideas but would welcome a broader discussion with parents. We have a plan to enable regular donations but we also want to explore corporate schemes, alumni networks, fund-raising ideas and wider campaigns. We need action, we need volunteers, we need practical help.

Most importantly, as we move forward into difficult times, we want to maintain our inclusive community culture. We are - and will be - so grateful to parents who are able to contribute financially, enriching the lives of all our children, but we value equally those families who are not able to contribute, or who support us in a different practical way..

All parents are invited to a meeting on **Wednesday 15th May at 7pm**. It will be informal but there will be a chance to hear more about our financial situation and to share ideas about how we can work together to retain all that we value.

With best wishes



Kate Froud
Headteacher



Jen Allan
Chair of governors



Wednesday 15th May at 7pm