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Dear Parents/Carers

School funding update February 2017

As you may be aware there has been considerable press coverage of the financial situation regarding schools across the country and particularly those in Cheshire. We are writing to you to clarify the financial situation at Helsby High School. We hope that this will be helpful in explaining what is a complex issue.

Cheshire schools, in common with many others across the UK, face a challenging financial scenario. However, we wish to assure you that we have a record of strong financial planning and that the proposed cuts will not impact on Helsby any greater than on other local schools. It seems likely that all schools will face some difficult decisions in the months ahead and our main priority will be to protect the quality of teaching and learning at Helsby and to further improve the standards and performance of our students.

For the education of students up to the age of 16 local authorities receive a grant from the government which is then allocated to individual schools. However, different local authorities receive different funding per student and Cheshire West and Chester has been historically underfunded when compared to the national average.

Added to this, funding for 11-16 year olds has remained "flat" since 2010, while costs that the school has to pay (such as national insurance, pensions, paying for services previously provided by the local authority, the new apprenticeship levy and general inflation) are rising. This has resulted in a significantly reduced "real terms" budget for the school and the National Audit Office estimates a further real terms reduction in school budgets of about 8% by 2020. Funding for Post 16 education has not been protected since 2010 and since then we have seen an approximate 12.5% reduction in funding.

In summary, the actual reduction in post 16 funding and the real terms reduction in pre 16 funding has meant that we have had to manage our budget very carefully over recent years. We have tried to do so without compromising the standards of education that our young people experience. We have reduced non-staff costs year on year and we have reduced the number of staff in the teaching, teaching assistant, site, administration, technician and senior leadership teams.

We have carefully monitored the impact of these savings on standards and we are proud of the continuing successes of our students and the strong reputation of the school. While we are still running a good school, there are some things we would like to do to make the school even better that we simply cannot afford.

We have been pleased that the government has taken steps to deliver on its commitment to make the National Funding Formula (NFF) fairer for young people living in different local authorities. While acknowledging that schools in certain areas of need may require higher levels of funding, we had expected that our young people would receive an increased and much fairer funding allocation.

However, the draft NFF proposals published shortly before Christmas indicate that, like most schools in Cheshire West and Chester, our funding will be reduced by almost 3% by 2019. If implemented it would result in funding being removed from Cheshire schools and redistributed to schools elsewhere in the country.

While there may be a case for some additional funding regarding factors such as deprivation, area costs and low prior attainment, it appears that the funding formula weights these too highly whilst under allocating the basic per pupil funding entitlement that each young person deserves. We have discussed the situation with our partner schools in Cheshire West and we all share the concern that the proposed NFF, together with the financial pressures indicated above, could make it difficult for us to continue to provide the quality of education that our students enjoy at present.

A joint letter has been written to Cheshire West and Chester MPs by secondary headteachers. We will also be making representations to our local representative, Graham Evans MP, and responding to the NFF consultation.

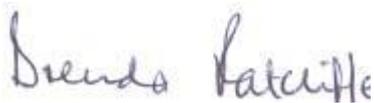
As we have stated, the National Funding Formula is still in draft form and we would appreciate the support of families by asking as many of you as possible to:

- Contact one of your locally elected representatives to discuss any concerns
- Respond to the government consultation before the deadline of **22 March 2017** via the following link - [online here](#).

To help you respond to the consultation we will be providing further details of the proposed funding formula and how it will effect Helsby High School on the school website during next week. If you would like to discuss the formula and its potential impact in more detail please contact the school's Business Manager, Mr Vickers at mvickers@helsbyhigh.org.uk

In the meantime, we would like to reassure you that we will continue to provide the best quality education for our young people and we would also like to thank you for your continued help and support for the school.

Yours sincerely



Mrs B Ratcliffe (Chair of Governors)



Mr T O'Neill (Chair of the Governor Finance Committee)



Mr J Dowler (Head Teacher)