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Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to update you on the ongoing financial difficulties being faced by Cotham and all schools nationally due to ongoing reductions in funding. I first wrote to you during the last academic year to highlight the challenges that the school is facing with regard to its funding position. I explained in brief about the changes that are happening locally and nationally to the streams of funding which are allocated by the Government for delivering core education provision.

Despite political messages i.e. that education is receiving more funding year on year than before, this picture *is* a little distorted. Whilst more money is being channelled nationally into the education system, the landscape has changed; there are more schools than ever before, with Free Schools now joining the network of schools which were set up by Local Authorities. Alongside this is a marked increase in student population size, which has now outgrown the number of places we have available in schools across all phases. This means that more provision needs to be found and funded.

Locally, the financial picture is even more challenging. The Local Authority (LA) has been running its education budgets at a deficit for a number of years, and this is getting worse. The introduction of the National Funding Formula (NFF) will mean changes to the way the funding is calculated and allocated are intended to iron out the differences in patterns of funding that are currently seen across regions. The problem that Cotham and all other State Schools face is that whilst the rollout of these changes is still in a transitional phase, the decision about local funding amounts still sits with each representative LA.

NFF provisional figures for the next two years have now been released by the Department for Education, and this was publicised recently in an article in Bristol Post. The NFF means an overall increase to the level of funding (£4.6m) being allocated to the LA. However, the Council's plans are to redirect these increases to offset some of the deficits seen in High Needs Funding and against a large hole in their PFI budgets. **This will mean that the budgets being allocated to the area's schools and academies is likely to decrease even further and the money being invested by the LA into SEND will be further restricted.**

In the last three years alone the level of funding decreased by more than £500 per student per year. With an 11-16 school population of just over 1,000 students, we have seen a £534,000 difference between the level of funding received in 2014 and the level of funding received in 2017. However, the projections over the next three years are set to widen that gap even further, with approximately £250,000 per year of funding deficits to identify efficiencies and savings against.

Cotham has keenly managed its resources over time so that we have been able to absorb a lot of these funding decreases using our reserves. However, the Governors and I are now having to put additional plans to manage our reduction in income. These will make changes to how we spend our funding whilst protecting the quality of education we deliver to our students. Therefore, the School is likely to see a number of different working practices being introduced to make our work more efficient and effective. There will also be reductions in non-essential expenditure to help



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bridge the gap. We are also investigating other ways of supplementing our income so that we can reinvest any surplus into continuing to provide the best education for our student body.

Thank you to you all for your lasting support for our work here at Cotham.

Kind regards

Mrs Jo Butler
Headteacher



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