



Dear Parents,

Allendale Primary School Governors and I have been exploring ways of getting a strong message across to Northumberland County Council and the Government about the issues affecting small rural schools in Tynedale. To this end, we invited MP Joe Morris into school on Thursday 20th February. Our Governors are also meeting with Northumberland's Director of Education here after half term.

Yesterday, we talked extensively with Mr Morris about the challenges facing schools in the Tynedale region and asked for his support in campaigning for a better education system for all of the children in Allendale and the surrounding areas.

We spoke to Mr Morris about the huge financial strain that children leaving Allendale Primary School early creates. Every primary child is funded at approximately £5000 per year and so it is easy to see the effect on the budgets of a child leaving at the end of Year 4. The school will lose £10,000 for every child that chooses to go. School budgets are already stretched to the maximum following previous unfunded pay rises and increases to National Insurance and pension contributions. Any further cuts to funding will result in an unavoidable reduction in services here at Allendale Primary. Support Staff hours could be under threat, along with enrichment activities, as the school would have to focus purely on its core objectives of providing classroom education.

We also talked about the difficulty created by having a mixture of 2-tier and 3-tier education systems in the area. Now that families have a free choice about where to send their children for the next phase of their education, it creates a dilemma for them if they would like to move their children into the 'Hexham system'. Should they leave at Year 4, so that children can start at the beginning of middle school, or should they leave after Year 6? If they choose to leave at Year 4, it is unsettling for the other children and has a devastating impact on school budgets. Either way, there's still no guaranteed place at QEHS for them.

Almost 15% of primary schools in the UK are already in a budget deficit position, 20% higher than the previous year. We told Mr Morris that we would like to see a fairer funding formula for rural schools such as ours. After all, rural primary schools have an absolutely vital role in preparing children for the rest of their education and naturally, this is quite a staff intensive process that needs to be properly funded. Without an increase in funding or a reduction in services, Allendale too is facing a potential budget deficit in the near future. If this happened it would impact the school's ability to continue to provide everything that we do, especially curriculum enrichment activities.

Allendale Primary is an amazing school, supported by a tremendous community of staff, governors, parents and other volunteers. We are very proud of the fantastic things that our children achieve and of all the opportunities that we manage to give them during their time with us. We know that they cherish the memories made here once they leave, and we hope that with your continued support, we will be able to nurture and inspire many more children like yours for years to come.

We wish you a well-deserved and relaxing half term break.

Thank you,

Mr Vincent