

7 May 2024

Dear parent/carer

School funding

I do hope you had a happy Bank Holiday weekend and enjoyed whatever the weather was where you were. I wanted to make you aware of a letter that the Chair of our Trust, Chris Tulley, and I have sent to local MPs and other senior politicians and executives in the Department for Education. This is the first time we have ever sent an open letter in this way, but I hope by reading the letter you will understand why we think we had to speak out.

School leaders across our Trust will be working hard to find ways to set a budget within even tighter constraints this year. This may mean that aspects of school life have to be adapted or changed completely to make ends meet financially. We are not alone in having to do this; schools in local authorities, trusts and federations across England are all trying to cope with the funding squeeze that is affecting all our public services.

We remain completely independent of any political party as a Trust but feel that it is important that we stand up for our schools and try and ensure that decision makers are aware of the impact of their decisions on our young people.

I do hope that you will support our schools at this difficult time, in particular our headteachers and principals who only want to make things better for children. They are faced with having to make tough decisions about provision and you or your child may be impacted. I know school leaders will do all they can to protect the delivery of the curriculum and support for young people, but compromises may have to be made. I ask you to be understanding during these difficult months, your kindness and generosity of spirit will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely



Richard Sheriff OBE
Chief Executive Officer

Enc

Red Kite Learning Trust Pannal Ash Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 9PH
☎ 01423 574410 ✉ info@rklt.co.uk 📱 @rklt www.rklt.co.uk



Learning Trust Alliance Teacher Training Teaching School Hub

Red Kite Learning Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales.
Company number: 7523507. Registered office: Red Kite office, Pannal Ash Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 9PH

30 April 2024

Dear

We are writing to make you aware of the very worrying situation regarding school funding and the expected impact on our service to children and families. Whilst being fully aware of the financial stress across all elements of the public service, we feel it is important, on behalf of everyone in our Trust, to make it clear just how difficult the situation is.

We are a medium-sized Multi Academy Trust that serves 10,000 children in primary and secondary schools across Leeds and North Yorkshire. Our shared mission is to, “Nurture ambition, deliver excellence and enrich children’s lives”. We serve areas of significant economic disadvantage as well as comparatively more advantaged areas across two local authorities.

We have recently received details of the funding allocations for all our schools. These show that school budgets will rise by less than 1% over the next year. Sadly, we still do not know what the government will decide regarding pay increases for teachers and support staff. This leaves us blind when setting our budgets for the next year. We therefore have to make assumptions based on what we do know and our best guesses. This is very unsettling and a fundamentally inadequate process that has become the ‘new normal’ over the past few years. It makes it very hard for schools and trusts to plan for the efficient and effective use of precious resources.

Teachers and support staff deserve decent pay, but any unfunded pay rise above the 1% increase in our funding will cut into already stretched school budgets. Funding, in full, any increase is just as important as the award itself. School budgets have already been stretched much further through the impact of inflation on many essential areas of spending for schools, from energy to internet contracts and school meals. At the same time the demands on schools have become greater as the education service has become the front line for access to services for many of our increasing numbers of children living in disadvantaged households.

Young people are also presenting at schools with more and more complex needs and schools are trying hard to meet these, but with dwindling resources. The crisis in special needs provision is impacting on local authorities, schools, health authorities, trusts and of course, our children. Provision that once existed within local authorities to support some of these children has been denuded by cuts over a number of years. School budgets are now being required to provide more appropriate, more successful, alternative provision and intervention for some of these young people at great expense. It is not surprising that we are now seeing levels of exclusions from schools rising rapidly as settings struggle to cope with the challenges some of these children present to the educators who we expect so much of.

Red Kite Learning Trust Pannal Ash Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 9PH
☎ 01423 574410 ✉ info@rklt.co.uk 📺 @rklt www.rklt.co.uk



Learning Trust Alliance Teacher Training Teaching School Hub

Red Kite Learning Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales.
Company number: 7523507. Registered office: Red Kite office, Pannal Ash Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 9PH

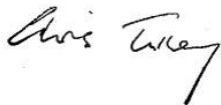
All this when we are still working to overcome the legacy of the pandemic on attendance. The sector has responded to this challenge and has worked with government to turn the tide and start to re-establish the contract between home and school. Across our schools our colleagues have innovated, adapted and worked tirelessly to improve attendance. The cost of this additional effort, which includes employing colleagues to work full-time on attendance, has been borne from within existing school budgets.

If, as last year, government plans to make an announcement of an additional 'pay grant' to close the gap between our funding and the pay agreement can they please do so now? Every day that passes means we let another teacher leave the profession, another talented teaching assistant leave for a supermarket job. A 1% gap in pay funding for our Trust of 14 schools, serving 10,000 children equates to **£3million that has to be removed from our schools' budgets**. These are real cuts, which mean a poorer service for children, a narrower curriculum, lower outcomes and the gaps between those with the most and the least growing ever wider.

Our children will fare even worse if our teacher recruitment crisis continues to envelop our schools. Pay is only part of the picture but a vital component, essential if we are going to attract good graduates to work in our schools. Allowing inflation to devalue teacher pay and not respond with an appropriate, fully funded, increase is at odds with our shared ambition to secure a better future for our children.

At this period in the electoral cycle, it is all too easy to forget, or put off until later, the crisis facing our schools. We ask those with influence, and who have political power to make a difference, to act now and help secure a funding and pay solution that allows us to provide the service our children need and deserve. Failing to act will have a dramatic impact on our service and we will need to prepare our families to expect less in the year ahead.

Yours sincerely



Chris Tulley
Chair
Red Kite Learning Trust



Richard Sheriff OBE
Chief Executive Officer
Red Kite Learning Trust

Red Kite Learning Trust serving the following schools and communities:-

Coppice Valley Primary School, Harrogate Grammar School, Oatlands Junior School, Rossett School, Rossett Acre Primary School and Western Primary School
(North Yorkshire Council)

Austhorpe Primary School, Colton Primary School, Crawshaw Academy, Meadowfield Primary School, Templenewsam Halton Primary School, Temple Learning Academy, Temple Moor High School and Whitkirk Primary School
(Leeds City Council)