

## Our response to the national funding crisis

You may have seen the current media coverage about the national funding crisis in education. This has included news of schools that have gone down to a four and a half day week, or where staff have served school meals or cleaned toilets to save money. Yesterday representatives from Sheffield schools lobbied Parliament about this important issue; other schools are also sending similar newsletters to their parents and carers.

I wanted to let you know what we, as a school, have been doing in response to the national crisis - to reassure you that we are working hard to mitigate against this challenge and ensure your children get the outstanding education they deserve.

Overleaf you will also find information about how you can make your views known to those who make the decisions about school funding, and how you could support us during these challenging financial times.

While our situation may not be as extreme as some of the examples cited in the media, we have had to make difficult decisions. None of us came into education to spend so much time focusing on balancing budgets. I know I speak for all of our staff when I say that our priority is to continue to provide an outstanding education for our students. I am extremely proud of Silverdale and all we achieve within our school community. We will do everything we can to ensure this continues.

### Why the current national funding crisis?

School funding has not increased to keep up with rising costs, such as increased employer pension and National Insurance contributions, as well as inflation and other costs.

Add to this the fact that Sheffield is one of the worst funded local authorities in England. The new National Funding Formula has been applied in a way that means Sheffield unfairly loses out, compared to other cities.

Locally, the budget from the local authority for Special Educational Needs (SEN) and inclusion has decreased due to reductions in their funding from national government.

You may also have seen coverage about the costs of running a PFI (Private Finance Initiative) building. Whilst we have a fantastic, modern building, the fees we pay to the company that owns it are a significant proportion of our budget. We are also limited in how we can use the building for income generation purposes because we do not own it.

### Our school's context

Last month you may have seen media coverage about

Silverdale achieving the best GCSE results in South Yorkshire. This is known as the Progress 8 figure and shows that our students do exceptionally well in terms of both achievement and progress. This means that, no matter where they start from, students at our school can make outstanding progress. Our A-level results also continue to be amongst the highest in the city.

We believe we are right to be proud of these results, as they reflect the efforts of whole school community – the students, the staff, and the families who support us all. Thank you for your part in this.

We are also proud of how we have strived to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for our students, with an array of enrichment opportunities. We believe that a rounded education is vital in preparing our students for their next steps in the world. Our staff work extremely hard, volunteering in their own time to offering lunch-time and after-school clubs, trips and visits, as well as additional revision and support opportunities.

We have an inclusive ethos, which means welcoming a diverse range of students and their families into our school community. Our staff work exceptionally hard with limited resources to try and support our students. Life at Silverdale is not just about exam results; it is about ensuring our students feel safe, cared for, and prepared for the wider world.

### Our response to the national funding crisis

For the past few years we have been working hard to make savings and ensure that the school runs as efficiently as possible. This has included a leadership and staff restructure; changes to teaching responsibilities; all budgets reduced; voluntary severance offered; and tighter timetabling.

We have also tried to generate income. Chorus Education Trust and our Teaching School (STSA) have generated significant funds through grants and by providing services to other schools and educational bodies.

We have also attempted to expand the school, to bring in more funding. However, we do not currently have approval to do this permanently for the main school, although we have welcomed additional students into Sixth Form. We have, however, been able to temporarily increase our numbers for next year's Year 7. Welcoming in these additional 60 students helps us maintain a broad curriculum and keep class sizes down. Some of the additional income is being used to improve dining

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facilities and enhance social space, which all students will benefit from.

We have also invited external organisations in to 'health check' our finances, and to benchmark us against other schools. This has confirmed that we are doing all we can to balance our budget.

Due to very prudent and competent financial management over the last few years, we have been able to protect our curriculum. However, like all other schools we now have to look at this. Next academic year certain minority subjects, which may have been viable in previous years, are not going to run. Whilst there are often courses that do not run each year, due to low numbers, this year has seen more of an impact. As ever, we are trying to counter this and find solutions. For example, this year we have worked with King Ecgbert's school to re-establish elements of our sixth form partnership. This means that some of our students

can 'guest' there for certain subjects, and vice versa for their students coming to our sixth form. This helps ensure minority subjects can still run and is something we hope we can develop further.

### What can you do to support us?

We appreciate that not everyone can offer financial support, but you may be able to provide help in other ways. Below are details of this, but also how to make your voice heard on the issue of school funding.

Again, I want to stress that providing your child with an outstanding education is our main priority. I would prefer not to be writing this kind of letter to parents, but I, along with my leadership team, school governors, and the team and trustees of Chorus, believe that we should share the situation with you.

**Sarah Sims, Head of Silverdale School**

## How you can support us

If you have concerns about school funding it's important that you communicate this to those who make the decisions nationally.

### Sign the Sheffield petition

This petition was set up by Sheffield schools and the Sheffield Star:

[www.change.org/p/fair-fund-for-sheffield-schools](http://www.change.org/p/fair-fund-for-sheffield-schools)

### Write to your MP and the Secretary of State

You can find out who your MP is at:

[www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

The Secretary of State for Education is **The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP**, Department for Education, c/o Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

### Could your employer help us?

Some companies have schemes where they will match fund any donations to a charity made by their staff. Others provide donations of second-hand equipment - this could be very useful for our new science lab (see below). We welcome other ideas too - please get in touch. Email: [enquiries@silverdale-chorustrust.org](mailto:enquiries@silverdale-chorustrust.org)

### Crowdfunding for new laptops



While we have dedicated computer suites in school, we no longer have reliable laptops for mobile use.

There is a constant demand for these laptops in classes that span across the whole curriculum.

Our IT team has worked hard to refurbish the current laptops, making them last for nearly ten years! But the time has come to replace them.

We are asking for donations, however small, to contribute towards the purchasing new laptops.

You can visit our crowdfunding page at:  
<https://rocket.fund/p/laptopsforsilverdaleschool/>

### Crowdfunding for new science lab



We want to increase students' access to practical learning in science, by converting an existing classroom into a fully equipped science lab.

We have already won a £50,000 grant from the Wolfson Foundation but need to provide the rest of the funding. Science is increasingly popular with our students, who regularly achieve outstanding results.

We are asking for donations, however small, to contribute towards the creation of the new lab.

You can visit our crowdfunding page at:  
<https://rocket.fund/p/NewScienceLabForSilverdale>