



Headteacher - Ingrid Sidmouth

November 2015

A fair deal for Wiltshire's Special Schools?

FAO: School Funding Working Group

I have heard 'through the grapevine' that Wiltshire Council is, once again, highly likely to be awarded a further £5.7m in additional funding for the financial year 2016-2017.

As you know, School Forum made the decision to exclude the special schools in the distribution of additional funds received in the current financial year – a decision which was unfair because special schools are faced with identical challenges as the mainstream schools (i.e. rises in National Insurance and pension contributions) – arguably even more so because the levels of staffing in specialist settings is high by comparison.

I am therefore writing to **urge this group to lobby School's Forum** to carefully consider a **fairer mechanism** for distributing the additional funds anticipated in 2016-2017. A simple analysis of staffing costs across the county's schools would seem an appropriate method – indeed, if this approach had been adopted in the current financial year, the 6 special schools would have benefitted from approximately £250,000 in additional funding. If one takes into account that there are roughly 60,000 pupils in Wiltshire, this would equate to a **reduction of just £4.00 per pupil** in each of the mainstream schools.

Indeed, as the special schools were 'forgotten' in 15-16, (so, arguably, should be entitled to £500,000 across the two financial years) **a reduction of £8 per pupil in the mainstreams schools for 2016-17 seems not an unreasonable proposal to put forward.**

The current position in the High Needs Block is untenable – a fact which is indisputable and which, although I cannot speak for the other special schools, I can categorically state is already having a negative impact on the level and standard of provision we are able to offer at Rowdeford.

Whilst there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon (the 2017/18 School Funding Reforms will lead to a formulaic approach to funding), special schools cannot be expected to continue into another financial year simply relying on the base funding and variable top-up income as calculated under the current arrangements and must, at the very least, be treated equally in the county where additional funding distribution is concerned. Failure to do so will mean nearly all the specialist provision will be in a deficit position by April 2017.

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I look forward to your response,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ingrid Sidmouth'.

Ingrid Sidmouth
Headteacher

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