



## St Mary's Church of England School

### Infants:

Amyand Park Road  
Twickenham  
TW1 3HE

T: 0208 892 5840

### Middle:

Strafford Road  
Twickenham  
TW1 3AD

T: 0208 249 6836

F: 0208 891 1904

### Juniors:

Richmond Road  
Twickenham  
TW1 3BA

T: 0208 892 7849

F: 0208 607 0420

E: [info@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk](mailto:info@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk)

[www.st-marys.richmond.sch.uk](http://www.st-marys.richmond.sch.uk)

### Statement of Concern

As a group of Headteachers we write reluctantly but urgently to call on policy makers, including the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education, to act now to support schools before the funding and recruitment crises send education into a further downward spiral. It is our collective concern that this continued trajectory will have a negative impact on generations of young people to come and on the local society to which they belong.

No school, no teacher and no school leader wants to let their children fail. However, the situation faced by local schools means that we will soon be at the point where leaders are forced to make drastic decisions that will significantly impact on young people's lives and education.

At Headteachers' meetings and conferences up and down the country the feeling is the same. We are all passionate about children and their future but we are all utterly despondent and dismayed about finance and teacher recruitment.

Headteachers and schools are in the middle of "a perfect storm". To put it simply, schools have, amongst many others, faced the following challenges:

1. Unfunded rising salary costs which we have little control over including:
  - a. years of unfunded inflationary pay awards, (approximately 1% year on year);
  - b. the abolition of the contracted out rate of National Insurance from April 2015 adding further increases of approximately 2% to salary costs; this would amount to approximately £93k per annum for an average sized secondary school (1000 pupils);
  - c. incremental drift; and
  - d. the increase in the employers' contribution rate for the Teachers' Pension scheme of 2.38% (14.1% to 16.38%) since September 2014; this would amount to approximately £82k per annum for an average sized secondary school.
2. Cuts to funding grants other than per pupil funding;
3. A reduction in the effectiveness of external multi-agency support previously provided by local authorities with schools being increasingly forced to provide it instead with limited and reducing funding;
4. Teacher training reorganisation leaving a confusing mess of different pathways;
5. Teacher recruitment and retention putting additional pressures on budgets as agencies demand increased prices for shortage subjects and excessive signing on fees for full time staff placed on contracts; and
6. Post 16 funding seeing year on year reductions to bring school funding in line with Further Education Colleges.



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In addition, these difficulties are made worse by local factors: Kingston and Richmond are already two of the lowest funded local authorities in London; teachers' pay in outer London is low in relation to other careers and therefore potentially unattractive; and the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing in our area are making teacher recruitment and retention exceptionally difficult. We also have a school age population growing above the national rate which means that because of the time lag in funding, our Dedicated Schools' Grant is put under additional pressure by expanding Growth Funds which reduces the funding available to other schools.

The combined effect of the reduced income and increased costs has resulted in a real time reduction in overall funding of around 8-9% since 2013/14. With further increases in employer pension contributions (for both Teacher and Local Government schemes) and the Apprenticeship Levy, this funding gap is set to increase to 12-13% within the next 2 years. The situation is not sustainable and is beyond the control of schools or school leaders.

Education is at a tipping point; we are reluctantly voicing our concerns before it is too late.

Specifically, we call on government to provide an in-year boost to school funding and to work with school leaders to focus on resolving the teacher recruitment crisis as opposed to tampering with structures and systems.

Furthermore, we suggest that additional funding is found centrally to help Kingston and Richmond overcome their specific budget difficulties and request an accelerated introduction of the national funding formulae in order to eradicate local idiosyncrasies in the system.

**This statement is endorsed by Headteachers of schools in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.**

**December 2016**