

Thursday 7th November 2019

Dear Families

You may be aware that the financial position schools are finding themselves in currently, is less than favourable, and at Grandpont we are certainly not exempt from these issues.



As a Maintained Nursery School we take approximately 30% of our income from a supplementary grant (MNS) given to us by the government. This supports us in working as a school and tops up the income that comes directly through child numbers (which is significantly lower than the income allocated per child in a primary or secondary school). It also allows us to employ a higher qualified workforce than a private, voluntary or independent early years setting can offer.

Until last week, we were in the position that we did not know if this funding was going to be continued after July 2020. However, the government has now promised that we will continue to receive this funding until July 2021. After that date the situation is unknown, and I am sure will remain unknown until there is a new government. There is a national campaign to save maintained nursery schools.

It is also important for you to be aware that the MNS has decreased significantly over the past few years, so our income has been reduced. Therefore, we rely on child numbers to ensure a healthy budget. Last year we were in a very positive situation and admitted high numbers of children in the nursery school and were full in the childcare. This year, for many different reasons we remain full in the childcare, but numbers in the nursery school are low, causing us to have a significantly reduced income. We are a 'not for profit' organisation and every penny that we receive is spent on providing the very best possible care for your children.

We have explored the reasons for the low numbers, and it appears there are over 800 less children in the nursery cohort this year in Oxfordshire, than last year. More schools have opened nursery classes so families can access nursery provision closer to home, and statistics tell us that there are fewer younger children in the local area than there have been for many years.

With all of this in mind we are starting to look creatively at how we can increase our income and reduce our costs. This information has also been shared with all staff, who are all keen to support us in working out a sustainable plan for the future and we have come up with some initial strategies to support us with some marginal gains. These surprisingly make a significant difference in the long term.

At a recent staff meeting we discussed some options and initially we would like to draw your attention to the following;

Fruit for Snack- We currently spend around £75 on fruit each week. To make some savings in the Nursery School we will now be asking parents for a donation of fruit each week to use at snack time. Please can you provide 2 or 3 pieces of fruit each week for us to use. This could include

apples, pears, bananas, oranges etc or perhaps some vegetables too. We will start this on **Monday 18th November** and trial it until the end of term. This does not include children attending Blossom Room, as food is included in the cost of the session. However, Blossom Room staff will also willingly receive fruit or veg donations if you would like to provide them from time to time.

- **Wishing Well-** We spend money regularly on consumables for the nursery, such as flour for playdough and other cooking ingredients, as well as other items that help us to deliver learning opportunities. Recently we asked for bulbs for the garden. Both the nursery school and the Blossom room will have a wishing well in each entrance hall with items we would like donating. If you see an item on the Well that you think you can help with, then please take the label with you and return the item to a member of staff. This will be incredibly helpful.

These two suggestions will help us a little along the way but we are also looking at other ideas for securing further income which could include;

- **Childcare prices in Blossom Room-** These are currently lower than the other Nursery Schools in Oxford and in the near future we will be reviewing these costs. More information will be shared with you when we have a better idea of what this looks like.
- **Fundraising-** this is always a great way to make some money quickly and we do this regularly to support specific projects in school. We are currently raising money to purchase new books for the nursery, and our Book sale has helped towards this. Fundraising events can bring about much planning and organising, often with small financial reward, so effort made in this area needs to be supported and effective. Annual events such as the Christmas Market are great ways to raise some money, as long as there is support to enable this to work. The culture of the 'traditional' PTA has significantly changed over the years and I would like to send out a survey to families to try and help us to understand what capacity we actually have at Grandpont for fundraising and what types of fundraising events would be most successful..

The financial situation of the Nursery School is managed and monitored closely by the Governing Body. The governors are spending time looking at the long term plans for Grandpont. This is difficult when we are still unclear how our funding will look in the next year or 2, but we will be keeping the staff and families informed along the way.

If you have any questions about this letter, or would like to discuss the situation further with either myself or the governors then please do get in touch via the office email, which will be forwarded to the relevant person.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Lisa Fern and Sarah Dorling

Headteacher and Chair of Governors