



Friday 14th November 2025

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you to provide some information about school funding, staffing and the support of SEN pupils, as things are significantly challenging for schools across the country at present.

### **High Needs Funding-**

Previously Kent had a system called High Needs Funding that was a pot of money held by KCC that schools could apply for to support children with SEN where they need more support than can be provided within the classroom. Aspire made lots of applications for this funding over the years and have employed Teaching Assistants based on being in receipt of it.

From September 2025, the system changed and High Needs Funding is no longer available, and so the only children that receive funding directly for their support are children that have an Education Health Care Plan - EHCP.

The change to the above has a huge impact on our funding as schools, and staff restructures have had to take place as a result.

### **Staffing at Aspire-**

Schools have three main income streams :

- 1) We receive funding for each pupil on roll at the school
- 2) We receive funding for each pupil who is eligible for benefit related free school meals - pupil premium
- 3) We also receive funding for SEN pupils - now only those with EHCPs

Due to the changes in funding as explained above, when school leaders and Governors went to set the school budgets in April 2025 with KCC finance staff, we were informed that we could not continue with current staffing levels, as these would send our budgets into deficit which is not allowed within education.

As a result Aspire Senior Staff and Governors had to take management action to prevent the budget deficit, by reducing staff via a restructure process. At Kingswood, we also admitted

a lower number into Year R than usual so they have been doubly affected. This was due to the low birth rate.

Across all schools this has resulted in some support staff resignations and some change of hours and a very small number of redundancies. Many teaching assistants' hours were linked to funding directly so where that has changed we are unable to afford the same levels of support.

### **The new system of funding-**

There is a new system of funding, where amounts of money are available for groups of schools to bid from. This funding can be used for staff training or groups of pupils support, but not individual support as was the case before.

We have made two bids - one centred around phonics and the other for forest school - we are hopeful that these will be successful and allow us to offer more support in these areas.

### **Education Health Care Plans-**

The thresholds for EHCPs are very high and very few are being agreed at the moment. Our SENCos need at least two terms of evidence before submitting an application and can advise parents on the likelihood of a successful application.

### **Recruitment of new staff-**

Where we have to recruit new staff - for example in the office at Kingswood, we have to follow a detailed safer recruitment procedure to make sure we get the right person into the post. Once recruited we then have to wait for the DBS (Disclosure and Barring service) check to come through before the staff member can start, and this can take some weeks. In the meantime other staff will cover the position as well as their own role.

### **Working in a school-**

Working in a school is incredibly enjoyable and rewarding but also hard work. It is therefore not suitable for everyone. We really value the staff we have, and thank them for their hard work, particularly in a climate where cut backs and restructures are rife.

The senior staff and I have had the tough job of leading restructures and not being able to renew contracts, whilst trying to make sure all of our pupils are supported.

I hope this letter has gone some way to answer your queries and explain why certain decisions are having to be made in schools at the moment.

I can be contacted at [exechead@aspire-kent.org.uk](mailto:exechead@aspire-kent.org.uk) if you have any further queries

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Emma Hickling.

Executive Headteacher, Aspire Federation.