



**OUR LADY'S**  
CATHOLIC  
HIGH SCHOOL



'Shaping Tomorrow,  
Inspired by Faith'

@OLCHSHackney   

March 2019

Dear Students, Parents, Carers, Staff, Governors and all in the Our Lady's High School Community,

### **Worth Less? School Funding Update**

As you know, Our Lady's has been actively campaigning as part of the Worth Less? Campaign for better funding for schools. Here is an update: despite intense lobbying of the Government and Department for Education, matters remain extremely challenging. In short, schools are still not being provided with adequate funding and resources to deliver the level of provision and support that is expected, and that our families and children deserve.

#### **Current National Concerns:**

- Since 2010 school budgets have been reduced in real terms by 8% and by 20% at Post-16.
- Class sizes are rising and the curriculum offer is being restricted.
- Increasingly, schools are being asked to support with children's emotional health and wellbeing. Frequently, we do not have adequate resources to meet a growing need.
- Often, the most vulnerable students, those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), are bearing the brunt of cuts and schools are struggling to provide the levels of support due to these students. This short clip gives you more information:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/video/2019/feb/28/why-are-englands-schools-at-breaking-point-video>

These issues are not only affecting a few schools, they are common features across our education system up and down the country. The concern is so widespread amongst Headteachers that we are all working together in the Worth Less? Campaign.

The Worth Less? Campaign have written to the Secretary of State for Education on three separate occasions since September 2018. We are dismayed that he has chosen to ignore their communications and repeated requests to meet. On 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018, they were informed by a junior civil servant that ***"I am afraid that, on this occasion, the Secretary of State and the Minister of State must decline your offer to meet. I hope you will understand that their time is heavily pressurised and their diaries need to be prioritised according to ministerial, Parliamentary and constituency business."***

Given the seriousness of the current school funding crisis and the impact upon schools, children and families,



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Headteacher colleagues and I think this approach is entirely ill-judged. On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019, they wrote again to the Secretary of State for Education asking that he reconsider meeting with representative Headteachers. Six weeks later, this request was declined once more: ***"As I'm sure you will appreciate, both their diaries are very full and they are unable to accept your kind offer at this time."***

In September 2018, over 2000 Headteachers campaigned at Westminster in order to underline the seriousness of the current situation. I was one of them! This action was unprecedented.

The Worth Less? Campaign group now comprises 64 local authorities and boroughs, covering thousands of schools and millions of families. This gives a clear indication of the levels of concern felt by reasonable and moderate Headteachers in England. We recognise that there is not a bottomless pit of money and also acknowledge that many local MPs across the political spectrum are taking a supportive approach. We must make clear, however, that the current response from the Department for Education is inadequate.

#### **Why we need to meet with the DfE:**

- We want to contribute constructively to overcome current funding issues.
- We want to convey the serious concerns expressed by families regarding inadequate levels of resource and provision, especially for our most vulnerable students.
- We want to ensure that schools receive a much better deal when future Government spending plans (the Comprehensive Spending Review) are drawn up over the next few months.
- We want to indicate serious and rising concerns relating to the wider pastoral and social care that schools are expected, by default, to provide against a background of severe cuts to local authority provision.

Headteacher colleagues and I, really appreciate how we have been so strongly supported by our communities as we campaign for a much improved level of funding for our schools and pupils. We urge you to continue to make representations to your local MP, to the Department for Education and wider Government to ensure that matters improve.

Yours sincerely,



Justine McDonald  
**Headteacher**

