

we are growing at

Daubeney Road | Hackney
E5 0EG | London | UK

call us

Telephone | 020 8985 4380
Fax | 020 8985 9075

or visit us

www.daubeney.hackney.sch.uk
admin@daubeney.hackney.sch.uk

20th April 2022

Dear Daubeney Parents and Carers,

I hope you had a restful and enjoyable Easter holiday. Many of our families will also have been observing Ramadan as well as Easter, so plenty of opportunity for family time. I arrived at school this morning after a run through Victoria Park and could see the Blossom trees in full bloom. What an optimistic sight in readiness for a busy term.

This letter is to provide an individual update on Daubeney now that we have set the budget for the new financial year. All of the content has been an ongoing discussion with our Governing Body for quite some time. Similar updates for Sebright and Lauriston are available on their school websites if you are interested in seeing their contexts.

This year, the Blossom Federation has established a shared budget which gives us greater flexibility and freedom to make more efficient financial decisions, and better address some of the challenges we are facing. Many of the big pressures this year for us all is the increase in costs generally, but also the national insurance contributions for both employees and employers. This is alongside a predicted 100% increase in energy costs for businesses! All of the above provides difficulties before even setting the budgets.

You will also know there is a London wide issue (and indeed nationwide issue) around falling school rolls. Simply, there are more school spaces than there are children. This is for a number of reasons: Brexit, Covid, families moving out of London or abroad, school popularity, housing availability to name but a few. A school cannot run effectively with less than 80% pupil occupancy and with numbers providing our greatest challenge,

school leaders are having to make some difficult decisions. In my headship career, I have never known such a challenging financial picture. For Daubeney, the school is currently just over 75% capacity which means available funds beyond staffing is minimal in operating as a three-form entry school.

Schools are funded primarily on the numbers of children on roll during the October census. It does not matter if numbers further increase or decrease after this, as the funding is set. Lower numbers across the school, particularly in Reception, had a negative impact on the budget for 2022-2023, resulting in £257k less income than last year. We have made a number of strategic decisions which will remove some significant expenditure for Daubeney as we undertake a reduction strategy to move from a three-form entry school to a two form one. We have been able to balance the budget for this coming year. but the school can no longer operate in the same way based on its size.

Based on our current Reception numbers, Mr Logan and I made the decision to only open two Reception classes last September. Those two classes will move up into Y1 as two classes. It is likely we only open two classes again for the September Reception intake. You will also know there has been a public consultation to officially reduce the admission number from 90 to 60 from 2023. In addition to this, in a number of year groups, numbers are close to 60 and we are considering whether to reform the three classes into two. If that decision is made over the coming months, we will of course communicate how this will be done, and we will need yours and the children's input, so we can establish the right class formation.

It is important to note that none of this is happening because we want it to. It is simply a case of having to make some careful decisions in order to make the school run as efficiently as possible without compromising on quality.

I have been doing some work behind the scenes, trying to raise this issue wider. This has involved lobbying the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Secretary of State for Education. Hackney Education also has a strategy to remove school places in certain schools which should help other areas which have pressures. I have also joined Hackney's School Forum now, which discusses and makes decisions about school funding.

Please be assured, we are doing all that we can to bring families to Daubeney and our numbers have increased since the October census. We have already made some changes in the last year, including not replacing staff as they have left, despite wanting to. Movement of staff has simply created an opportunity to make the required savings. There will likely be some future changes over the next year or so, but we will minimise these so they do not have a negative impact on the high quality teaching and learning provision here at the school.

Alongside all this, we are talking to Hackney Education about the possibility of having additional resourced spaces for children with special educational needs. This will utilise unused space and bring additional revenue,



refurbishment and benefits for our children. We also have plans to expand our Nurture provision - The Nest - in a very exciting way, for the new year.

It means it is even more important and beneficial for our schools to be part of a Federation, so we can work collectively to better educate our children. I view Daubeney, Sebright, Lauriston and the Children Centres as one big Hackney School, and therefore that equality of provision is paramount. Daubeney is in a really good place right now, having worked incredibly hard over the past few years on their improvement journey. We want our local families to enjoy and see what we have to offer for the future.

Lots of things to think about, but I wanted to be really transparent about the current picture.

We have a busy term ahead as always and I look forward to seeing you on the gates over the next few days.

Regards

Yours sincerely,



Robin Warren

Executive Head Teacher

The Blossom Federation of Daubeney, Sebright & Lauriston Schools

