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## 26 school survey responses\*:

19 primary schools

4 secondary schools

1 sixth form college

1 infant school

1 junior school

\*1 pupil referral unit responded to the survey after the completion of this report, expressing satisfaction with their overall funding as it comes from protected budgets.

## Introduction

I have visited many schools in my constituency and have seen how hard our staff work to create the best possible educational environment for our children to thrive in, but they have made it clear that they are facing many challenges; the role of schools in our city are more than just a place of learning, they are an access point for family support, mental health assistance and extra-curricular enrichment. Stoke-on-Trent is a diverse city with schools that have students that speak 43 different languages and that have pupils entering and leaving during term time, sometimes only staying for weeks at a time.

More recently we have seen a rising number of pupils relying on their time at school for healthy meals and for laundry facilities. It is a complex picture in Stoke-on-Trent that is influenced by a number of different socioeconomic factors and a reduction of various services from external organisations, but the overriding consequence is that our schools are expected to provide more than ever before.

**In October, the Chancellor Philip Hammond announced that schools would be receiving a one-off capital payment ‘to help our schools buy the little extras they need’.**

I wrote to every school in my constituency to ask about their funding situation and for any comments on their financial position and how this is affecting the experiences of the pupils and to hear the impact the Chancellor’s pledge would have on their current and future budgets. Schools were invited to complete the survey and were able to do so anonymously and to not complete questions if they did not feel they were able to. I’d like to thank all those who responded and contributed to this report.

"Our staffing is now down to the bare bones. Any absence (including TA staff) makes life difficult...ultimately the quality of what we do in the classroom is affected"

Primary School Head Teacher

66%

of schools reported that they had to make staffing cuts due to funding pressures

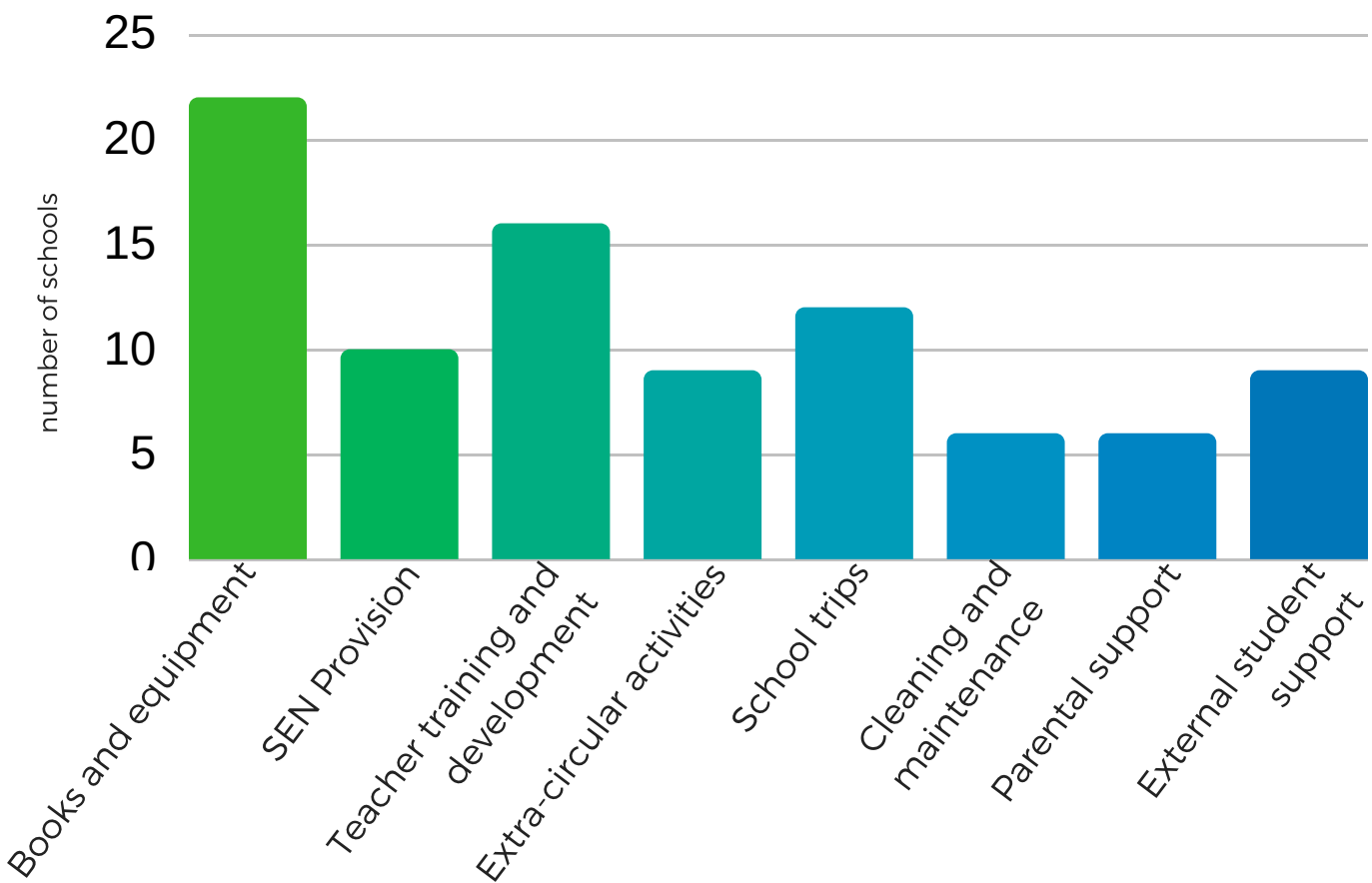
"We have lost a Deputy Head, 1 Assistant Head, 2 and a half teachers, and 5 support staff. We are still in a deficit budget."

Secondary School Head Teacher

Many schools also commented on the reliance on pupil premium and education health care plans to provide classroom support.

**"This Budget gives with one hand, takes away the other!"** Primary School Head Teacher

### Since 2015, schools reported having to make cuts in the following areas:

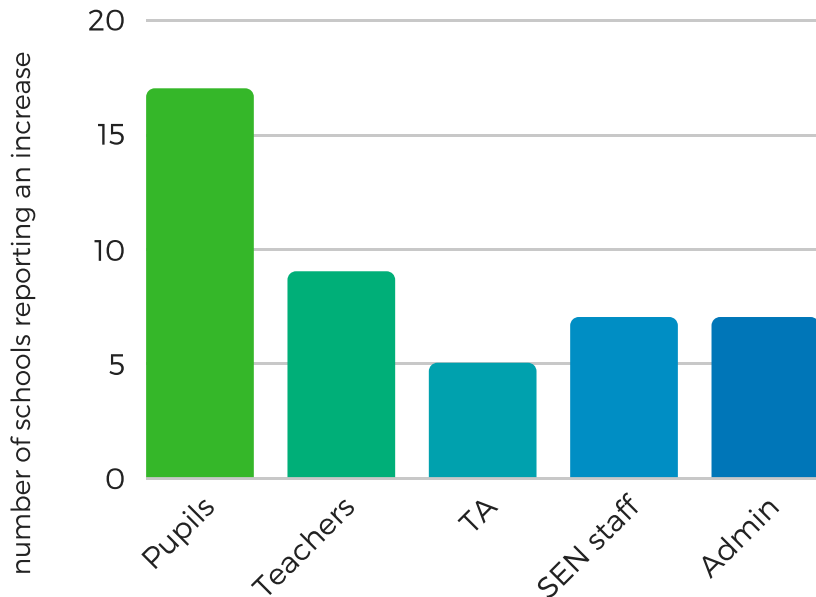


"Funding cuts have meant we have needed to reduce staffing and resources. This makes it increasingly difficult for us to maintain and build upon the high standards we set ourselves. We cannot make any further cuts without seriously compromising our children's education"

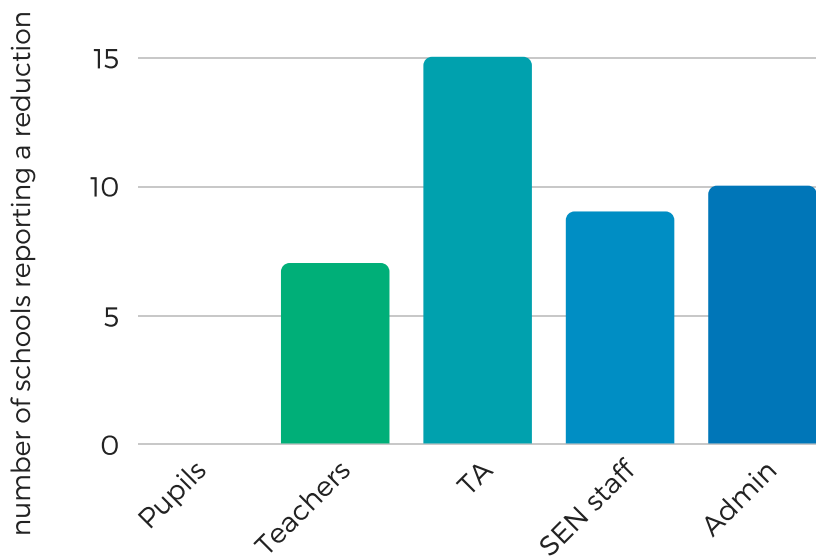
Primary School Head Teacher

## Staff and pupil numbers

I asked schools about their pupil and staff numbers and if they had increased, stayed roughly the same, or decreased since 2015:



65% of schools reported that they had had an increase in pupil numbers but very few had seen this reflected in their staffing numbers, with most seeing a decrease in support staff numbers.



No school stated that they had had a reduction in student numbers since 2015; schools with a more transient population (pupils entering and leaving during the school year, which at some schools is up to 30% of pupils on their role) commented on the challenges that this created:

"Huge pressure on resources caused by the number of pupils arriving mid year who are new to English. Sometimes these pupils only stay for a matter of weeks, but they still have exercise books etc, and a large amount of support to access the curriculum."

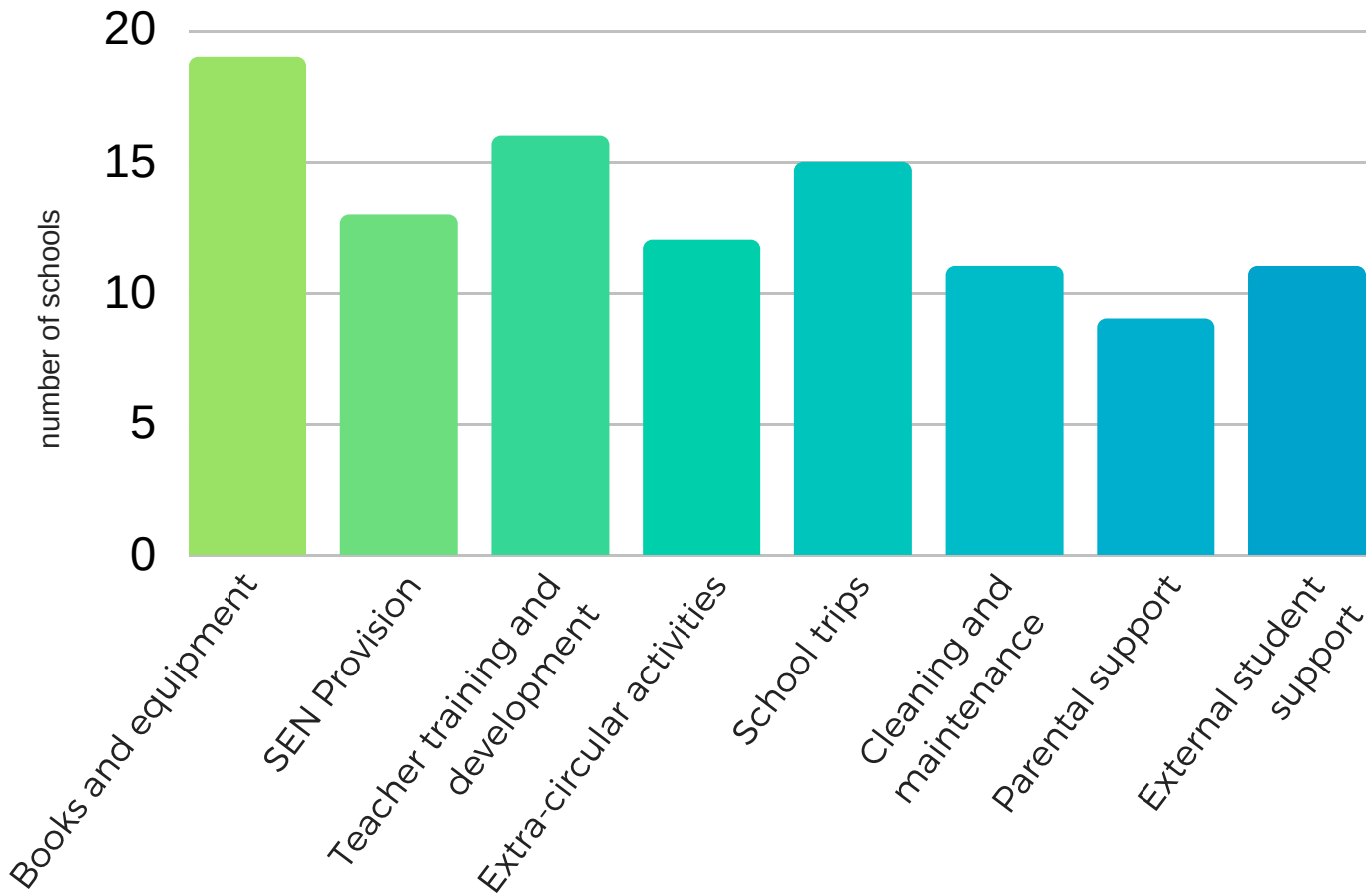
Junior School Head Teacher

Schools also commented on the lack of flexibility in the budget, prohibiting them from being more reactive to these challenges:

"The new to England children are often not recognised as disadvantaged or indeed present when the census is taken. Firstly, there should be additional funding for this group, but also there should be quicker adjustments for school budgets so that schools can access funding for these individuals and the resources needed to cater for the level of support required for all our children."

Primary School Head Teacher

When asked what schools further cuts schools anticipated over the next 2 years:



"Resources such as good quality text books, art, D&T, maths, PE equipment, outdoor facilities and transport costs to enhance the limited life experiences of our children are not 'little extras'. They are core to good quality provision"

Primary School Head Teacher

Of the 26 schools that took part in the survey, none were satisfied with the current level of school funding:

40%

said that they were  
dissatisfied

60%

said that they were  
very dissatisfied

"Having been in education for over 20 years the current poor level of funding with increased results exceptions is not acceptable. it is no wonder we are struggling to recruit and retain staff"

Primary School Head Teacher

# IMPACT

"Schools are being asked to do more than they have ever had to do before but with much less funding"

Primary School Head Teacher

In response to the survey, many schools commented on the impact funding cuts will and has had on the experience of their staff, pupils and communities. Schools have played a vital role in replacing lost family support services and go above and beyond to ensure that pupils are ready and able to learn. Unfortunately schools are simply not able to do everything, and as their budgets are decreased, so must their outreach work with many fearing cuts have also started to impact the educational experience of their pupils.

## Development

"Our vulnerable nursery pupils receive a much smaller allocation of funding than their peers in the years when early intervention could have the most impact"

Primary School Head Teacher

Stoke-on-Trent is part of several educational outreach programmes such as Higher Horizons+ and the Opportunity Area, and also has ongoing projects such as Stoke Speaks Out, all of which are focused on improving opportunity, aspiration, and outcome for children in the city.

These projects range from early language development to exposure to higher education and all of which agree that the earlier a child and their family engage, the more chance they have of good development and progression.

professional development 69% of schools have had to cut teacher training and development, with 72% of schools predicting further cuts to staff development over the next 2 years. As the role of a school staff continues to change, it is incredibly concerning that there is little development opportunity, notwithstanding the lack of incentive this provides for staff to join or stay in the profession.

## Well being and Safeguarding

The schools that responded to the survey also made it clear that the impact of cuts not only hit the resources and opportunities of their staff, pupils and their families, but also the well being of the school community:

"The pressures felt by all mean that the health and well being of staff is being compromised constantly. Inevitably this leads to stress-related illnesses"

Primary School Head Teacher

The needs of pupils in Stoke-on-Trent are particularly complex due to levels of depravity and reduced support services, and it is often left to schools to pick up well being and safeguarding concerns with their children and families:

"... disappointed that no addition funding was allocated to schools in the latest budget announcements. Schools are trying to work miracles with less money and take on more responsibilities, particularly in respect of safeguarding"  
Primary School Head Teacher

"We are being asked to deliver more services e.g. family support services previously provided by the local authorities, within school, e.g. families in crisis, mental health and well being, ect. without meaningful government investment. We are seeing an increase in the number of families in crisis with nowhere to turn, as a result of the reduction in publicly funded support services. we believe that this will lead to a generation of dysfunctionality."  
Primary School Head Teacher

"I am most concerned about the effect that social service cuts are having on our budget, our family team (stress, workload, etc), and our families (lack of support)."  
Primary School Head Teacher

## Enhanced experience

I asked schools what their 'little extras' were and where savings in their budgets had been found: 95% of schools have already had to make cuts to books and resources.

"Resources ...that enhance the limited life experiences of our children are not 'little extras'. They are core to good quality provision, but usually the first to get cut due to the high need of staff required for the high need posed by SEND and EAL."  
Primary School Head Teacher

40% of schools anticipate having to make further cuts to parental support in the next 2 years, and 50% of schools predict further cuts having to be made to external student support.

"Our school caters for approximately 43 different languages and the population is highly mobile. Our resources for the high level of need posed by many children and families are sorely pressed"  
Primary School Head Teacher

## Premises

Stoke-on-Trent schools are predicting more cuts in their cleaning and building maintenance, which is very much reflective of the experiences I see when visiting schools. PFI rent and limiting contracts, lack of reliable support from the local authority, and an urgently needed fences, car parking, gates, and roofs means many of our school premises are at crisis point.

FAMILIES EDUCATION  
SCHOOLS QUALITY  
CHILDREN NEED  
CUTS PAY ROLL NECESSITIES  
PUPIL CHILD  
SUPPORT HIGH EARLY YEAR SEND  
FUNDING  
STAFFS LIMITED  
LITTLE DULLY  
COSTS PEERS  
CRISIS  
CREDUOL  
SCHOOL EQUIPMENT  
RESOURCES PUPIL PROVISION EXCEPTIONS  
RISKING DIFFICULTY  
AUTHORITIES ADJUSTMENTS COMPROMISED