

NEWS RELEASE

Schools ask for ‘Funds, Glorious Funds’

Warrington school children are setting their own challenge to the Government over fairer funding with a unique take on ‘Food, Glorious Food’.

Youngsters from 11 schools have united to put a new ‘twist’ on the classic ‘Oliver!’ theme, changing the focus from ‘food’ to ‘funds’.

With lyrics such as *‘Funds, glorious funds, New paper and pencils!’* and *‘Rich schools have it, boys - long term protection!’* the song aims to highlight the uncertainty Warrington schools are feeling over the government’s new National Funding Formula, and the harmful impact they fear it may have on education.

The video, produced by Sir Thomas Boteler High School, has been uploaded to You Tube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yufe4vA5fdc> and a website has been set up at www.fundsgloriousfunds.com, to spread the message.

Children and staff are hoping the video will grab people’s attention – from the public, to schools, to the Government - to help raise awareness of the issue and convince politicians to think again.

The initiative has been spearheaded by head teacher at Woolston Community Primary School, Craig Burgess, who has been campaigning for several years to achieve more funds for Warrington schools.

He said: “This is such an important issue, so we wanted to come up with a creative way of really getting the message out there. I spoke to some of my colleagues who said schools are currently in a position where we have to beg, just like Oliver Twist. That was the inspiration I needed to write a new version of Food Glorious Food, targeted at the Government.

“Ten more schools quickly came on board and recorded their own performance of the song. All of the versions, featuring hundreds of school children, have been combined to make a powerful, multi-school video, which we hope expresses our fears in a way that resonates across the country.

“Schools across Warrington hoped the National Funding Formula would be the answer to our prayers – but it has, in fact, been the opposite. We are already the tenth worst funded education authority in the country, how can we lose more? It just doesn’t make sense. I’m hopeful that, through this initiative, we can send out the message that these plans are not meeting the needs of children. Hopefully, we can play our part in securing a fairer deal for our schools.”

Councillor Jean Carter, Warrington Borough Council’s executive board member for children’s services, added: “I applaud Woolston Primary School for starting up this initiative and for all those schools who have come on

board. It's a fantastic, imaginative way of telling the Government, in no uncertain terms, what they think about the funding plans.

"The current formula is extremely unfair for authorities like ours and we would implore the Government – 'please sir, we want some more'. It's great that children are taking action themselves and uniting to help get this message to the Chancellor."

Notes to editors

- In 2015 the government recognised the 'postcode lottery' that exists across the country and promised to introduce a fairer and less complex funding system for schools. The Department for Education announced in March 2016 a single, national funding formula intended to ensure that 'areas with the highest need will attract the most funding'.
- The new funding formula, set to be introduced from April 2018, will see Warrington's schools lose almost a quarter of a million pounds a year and the borough become one of the worst-funded in the country. Sixty-three of Warrington's 83 schools are set to lose money under the plans.
- If the proposals go ahead, only nine of England's 150 authorities will receive less than Warrington. Based on current pupil numbers, schools in the best-funded areas would receive an average of £6,775 per pupil, while those in Warrington would receive £4,306 – a difference of £2,469 per pupil. Even compared to the national average, Warrington schools stand to receive £439 less.