

From Anne Whiteley

A slightly belated Happy New Year and I hope you have returned to school refreshed after a restful festive break.

It's budget time and I am sure you are aware this is the first year of what is a difficult three-year settlement. The Schools Forum agreed proposals which, if endorsed by the county council, will see a minimum increase in AWPU of 2.4 per cent for both primary and secondary schools. In addition the lump sum will increase by 7.5 per cent for primaries and 6.4 per cent for secondaries.

For special schools we have a refreshed funding model that looks at individual children's needs.

We had a passionate debate in the Forum about the budget and how to tackle this year's estimated overspend of £1.5 million on our services, much of it resulting from an increase in early years take-up and independent school fees. Forum agreed unanimously to tell the county council this should not be repaid from the DSG and to inform Ed Balls, the DCSF, the Minister for the South West Ben Bradshaw and other Devon MPs of its resolution. The feeling was that we either have to make a stand on fair funding or standards will start to suffer and we will not be able to continue raising achievement.

On a happier note, I can tell you that our new Director of Learning and Schools, Judith Johnson, will start in mid-April as she is currently involved with Surrey County Council's JAR. However, she is planning to be in Devon before that and I am intending to arrange meetings with your representatives. We have included a letter to you from Judith with this edition of *Headlines*.

We will also be appointing an Assistant Director of Integrated Youth Services in CYPS and a Director of Social Care to replace our interim director, Kevin Peers, who is with us until September. I believe this will strengthen our capacity considerably across the service.

2008 will be the National Year of Reading and we are preparing to benefit from the spotlight there will be on improving the nation's reading. Roger Kirk, the former chair of DASH, is helping us raise awareness and plan for both the national and county launch in April.

Surveys have shown that the amount of reading overall outside school has fallen while 37 per cent of our ten year olds play computer games for more than three hours a day – a figure that has increased since 2001. I believe this campaign gives us a great opportunity to build on the good work already being done across the county and agencies throughout Devon will be brought together to promote reading, which is the bedrock of effective learning.



Job Evaluation

The report of the independent review of job evaluation in schools has now been published with a series of recommendations on the way forward. The county council's Executive will give a formal response to the report and produce an action plan addressing the recommendations.

The Schools Forum formally received the report earlier this month and representatives from DAPH, DASH and DAG said they felt the relationship between schools and CYPS, which had been threatened by the process, had been strengthened by the review. They felt there was a recognition that CYPS had not been at fault but that some staff in schools now felt undervalued by the local authority and this situation had to be addressed.

The report is available on

http://www.devon.gov.uk/cma_report.htm?cmadoc=report_sf083.html

Combining PSHE and SEAL

Devon Education Services have published a new booklet on combining PSHE with a SEAL programme to address all five outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda. The publication uses the ECM outcomes framework as a starting point to develop curriculum work for PSHE, SEAL and citizenship.

A free copy has been sent to every Devon primary school and special school with pupils of primary age. Further copies cost £29.99 each and training is available to individual schools to support the successful implementation.

Further information from Annette Lyons at annette.lyons@devon.gov.uk

National Digital TV Switchover

The switchover from analogue to digital TV broadcasting will take place in Exeter and the South Hams in spring 2009 and in North Devon in summer 2009. To ensure you can still watch and record television after the switchover, you will need to ensure that any TV used on your site is connected to the aerial via a Freeview box or has a digital tuner included. Analogue video and DVD recorders will not be able to record off air transmissions. To do this a digital DVD recorder or Personal Video Recorder that has a hard disc and a digital tuner are required.

Further information can be found at <http://www.digitaluk.co.uk/en.html> and http://www.digitallogo.co.uk/company_intro.php or contact Nick Pearce at nick.pearce@devon.gov.uk

Devon Discovery achieves Healthy Schools Award

Devon Discovery, our outdoor learning service, has achieved the Devon Healthy Schools Award. All four Outdoor Centres, as well as programmes like Forest School and Wild Nights Out, have met the requirements of the award and been judged outstanding in several key areas.

More information from Phillip Berry on phillipberry@devon.gov.uk