

Education Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee

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Cabinet Written Statement

Title: RAISE (Raising Attainment & Individual Standards in Education in Wales)

Date: 5 April 2006

By: Jane Davidson, Minister for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills

The Welsh Assembly Government today announces a major new programme aimed at raising attainment and individual standards of education in schools in Wales. The programme, to be known as RAISE, will target disadvantaged pupils and seek to raise their levels of performance. In its first year (2006/07) RAISE will be funded to the tune of £16m: £13m is new money coming to Wales as the result of the recent UK Budget statement and the remainder is funding available in the approved Assembly budget for 2006-07.

Since 1999, pupils in Wales have, overall, continued to improve their levels of:

- attainment – as expressed in levels of performance in end of key stage assessments at the age of 7, 11, 14 and in GCSE results at the age of 16;
- achievement – as reported each year by Estyn on the basis of school inspections.

A number of recent reports have, however, pointed to the continuing links between social deprivation and low attainment by pupils. These reports include the:

- ‘Narrowing the Gap’ project carried out by the Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association on secondary (2002) and primary (2005) schools in Wales;
- Estyn report (2005) on ‘Low Performing Secondary Schools’;
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation Trust report (2005) on ‘Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales’;
- Fabian Society report (2006) ‘Narrowing the Gap’.

RAISE will target the links between disadvantage and educational attainment amongst pupils in Wales. Its ambition will be to ensure that all our young people, whatever their situation and circumstances, are afforded the best opportunities and support that our education and training system can provide.

In 2006/07 the £16m available for the RAISE programme will be used to provide funding:

- for disadvantaged pupils in schools where 20% or more of those pupils are eligible for free school meals (excluding schools with fewer than 50 pupils);
- for learning support for looked after children.

The allocations for schools will amount to £14.4m and will be distributed by reference to numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. In total around one third of primary schools will receive shares in the range £11,000 to £30,000. 30 special schools will benefit with shares in the range £16,000 to £22,000. Around 31% of secondary schools will benefit with shares in the range £47,000 to £220,000. A provisional summary by local authority is attached and a provisional list of secondary and special schools and amounts for each. A provisional list of primary schools will be issued by the end of the week.

Schools will be required to target the funding on supporting pupils who are disadvantaged and most at risk of leaving school with no qualifications, including groups of pupils seen as under attaining. It will need to be focused on giving them the help they need to get the best out of their education. The funding will therefore be available to provide additional support in the classroom; to withdraw pupils from the classroom for activities focused on literacy, numeracy or other aspects of learning; to provide out of hours activities; to develop home –school links; to draw in community support; to develop collaboration with FE institutions or other partners; to address behaviour or discipline issues. Guidance will be issued as part of the grant conditions.

Schools receiving the funding will need to demonstrate to their local education authority that the funding – which will continue in 2007-08 – is being used to drive significant change for disadvantaged pupils; and will need to agree the pupil outcomes they are seeking.

Local authorities will need to ensure that use of the funding draws on established good practice in school improvement, is consistent with individual school improvement plans and, in the case of secondary schools, fits with the plans of the local 14-19 partnership. For primary schools authorities will be asked to bring individual schools together into groups wherever possible so that use of shares of funding can be maximised for the benefit of the targeted groups of pupils in those schools.

An element of the overall £16m funding will be used to resource a small number of school improvement professionals to work with local authorities and support schools in receipt of the new funding; and to run the programme and evaluate it.

Each local authority will receive a share of £1m to support the learning of looked after pupils - probably allocated by reference to the number of pupils in its care. The funding is intended to enable authorities to support these children and young people – particularly those in years 10 and 11 – so as to enable them to move on to further and higher education or to work-based learning.

The arrangements for allocation and use of the funding are subject to consultation with the Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Education in Wales. The intention is to notify local authorities of final allocations for individual schools in time for the start of the

summer term. The grant will be paid under section 14 of the Education Act 2002. Schools will need to have their grant funded initiatives agreed with their local authority and in place for September, if not before.

RAISE will also draw together aspects of the following existing Welsh Assembly Government initiatives:

- Flying Start;
- Foundation Phase;
- Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships;
- pupil transition from primary to secondary school;
- development of Community Focused Schools;
- 14-19 Learning Pathways;
- Extending Entitlement;
- school/LEA partnership agreements.

Taken together RAISE and these associated initiatives will comprise a major element of 'The Learning Country' programme. With other major strategies such as Flying Start, the Foundation Phase and 14-19 Learning Pathways, it will seek to make a major contribution to further transforming the nature of educational provision and attainment in Wales, particularly for those pupils who are disaffected from education and in danger of achieving few or no qualifications.