

CYPE(4)–26–15 Papur i'w nodi | Paper to note 3

Further response to the Select Committee

Central South Consortium

12th October 2015

ACTION: a note on staff redundancy costs and a breakdown of the 1.6 million schools challenge building capacity funds.

Staff Redundancy Costs

The consortium inherited a number of staff from five authorities' previous school improvement bodies. We have been through a rigorous programme of reductions which has resulted in spend of £1.4m on redundancy costs to staff of the previous Links (formerly ESIS) and school improvement service. We have sought to deliver school support by funding schools to develop capacity to support other schools rather than retain staff in the organisation to deliver these services. We would anticipate further redundancy pressures as the local government funding pressures continue and we work across the region in the search for efficiencies and better value for money. This pressure has been met through: a, a reserves budget which was created for this purpose at the inception of the Consortium as a result of savings made by the bringing together of services, as well as b, an annual pressure on the Consortium budget going forward.

Schools Challenge Cymru Capacity Building funding

Our SCC capacity building bid was about building capacity in the region to develop a self improving school system as part of our overall strategy. Of the £1.6m schools challenge Cymru capacity building funding:

- *£980k has supported the development of teaching or school improvement hub schools. These have involved 35 schools meeting a stringent criteria of good or excellent teaching and leadership, developing core capacity to lead professional learning programmes for school staff at all levels across the region, including most recently a NQT programme which has been evaluated and rolled out to all 500*

NQTS in this region. Funding has supported the external accreditation of some hubs as 'Olevi' hubs delivering the internationally recognised 'Outstanding Teacher Programme' and 'Improving Teacher Programme'. This funding has supported 50% of the salary costs of Teach First graduates to work in the SCC schools, Outstanding teacher and improving teacher places for SCC schools and facilitator training for Olevi hubs. Programmes were launched in January and more than 900 teachers had participated in hub provision by July with universally good or excellent feedback. Funding has also supported the commissioning of research and evaluation (NFER, Cardiff University and Arad Research) to support our development of hubs and school to school working into the future.

- £200k has supported fully funded literacy and numeracy interventions into specific Schools Challenge Cymru schools with a view to developing capacity within schools by the end of the intervention.*
- £50k has been used to develop action research projects in schools that are particularly effective at closing the gap with a view to sharing and developing this practice across the region as well as innovative projects designed to impact on groups of free school meals students in SCC schools now. This has been evaluated by Ipsos Mori for publication.*
- £20k has been used to develop governor training programmes to build governors capacity and understanding of their role in developing a self improving school system and to recruit and develop 'consultant governors' supporting governing bodies which need additional support.*
- £120k has been used to develop pathfinder projects reaching more than 95 schools across the region through brokered partnerships funded on a small scale to work together in specific areas. These partnerships are evaluated against impact in both schools and will be built into school improvement planning in the future.*
- £20k was used to develop the peer enquiry programme and pilot it across the region based on similar successful models elsewhere. This has been evaluated and is now being rolled out across the Central South region.*

- *£30k has been used to develop middle leadership capacity in the region leading to the commissioning of this programme more broadly for all schools in the region.*
- *Less than £50k has been used to build capacity in the team to lead on teaching and learning across the region by seconding a very experienced head of Teaching and Learning from a successful South Wales schools.*
- *£80k has been used to fund the pupil offer commitment made nationally.*

UNASKED QUESTIONS:

To expand on your concerns set out in your written evidence there is a ‘risk of distraction by new policies being poorly implemented’.

We need to make sure new policies e.g. Donaldson implementation and Pioneer schools, are clear about how they fit in the wider vision for Wales as set out in Qualified for Life Strategy and that planning and funding is developed sufficiently far ahead to enable schools to participate without losing vital capacity.

To expand on your written evidence about the need for ‘more freedoms and flexibilities for good schools’. What does this mean in practice?

We all need to reduce bureaucracy on schools and a compliance driven culture. There has been some move towards this by removing ring fences in grants but it needs to go further.

Great schools need to use all of their capacity to focus on teaching and learning, recruiting, training and developing the best teachers. Too often a one size fits all universal model of school improvement involves inefficiency and bureaucracy rather than innovation and measured risk taking. It is critical that in a self improving schools model, we shift the accountability for outcomes to schools, which needs to be maintained and upheld by good leadership and governance.

If schools are demonstrating critical self evaluation and sustainable improvement, we should be able to remove requirements to monitor and measure – i.e. to have a pre inspection report and possibly Challenge

Adviser for all schools and we need not gather centralised target setting which would reduce the amount of resource held centrally, increase the proportion delegated.

It would mean the best schools can be freed up to innovate with how they teach, deliver the curriculum and use their budgets effectively, allowing LAs/consortia to focus on those schools which need rapid and robust action. There are opportunities to consider more effective leadership models too within a self improving school system which means developing permanent capacity in these schools to support others.

Your views on written evidence received from the Catholic Education Service that regional consortia should adopt a formal protocol outlining their partnership arrangements with Diocesan Authorities.

We have a partnership arrangement with dioceses which we have reviewed recently following the WAO/Estyn reports. We meet regularly with the Dioceses and they have taken a role on our Advisory Board. We will continue to review this arrangement.

In addition to this information, the committee would be interested to know if you employ outside organisations or consultants to undertake work on your behalf, can you please include this in your actions update.

We work with a wide variety of organisations from all sectors. We primarily support schools to undertake work on our behalf and are in the business of developing schools' capacity to lead the system of school improvement.

Beyond schools we will employ outside organisations to build capacity where it is needed, for example we work with Olevi to develop schools' capacity to deliver outstanding teacher and improving teacher programmes across the region. We work with University College London/Institute of Education who co-wrote our leadership programmes for headship which can be run in the region accredited from next year. All our contracts are subject to proper procurement processes, internal audit and are subject to our value for money reviews.

We do contract with consultants primarily to undertake Challenge Adviser roles where we have failed to recruit permanent staff or seconded head teachers. This has the benefits of being a more flexible model and does bring in experienced heads into the organisation. We currently employ 12 part time challenge advisers as consultants in addition to 6 Schools Challenge Cymru Advisers (all SCCAS nationally are consultants) and our lead for Leadership development is also a consultant recently retired experienced secondary Headteacher.