

**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee**

**Grant gwella addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr, a phlant o leiafrifoedd
ethnig | Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and
Minority Ethnic Children**

EIG 11

**Ymateb gan : Tîm Cymorth Cyflawniad Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig – Cyngor Bwrdeistref
Sirol Castell–nedd Port Talbot**

**Response from : Minority Ethnic Achievement Support (MEAS) – Neath Port
Talbot County Borough Council**

1. From 2015–16, the Gypsy Children and Traveller Children Grant and the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant were merged into the new Education Improvement Grant. What impact has this had on the levels of educational support available to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic children, and their educational outcomes?

(If this is a concern to you, how should this be addressed?)

Ethnic Minority and English as an Additional Language (EM/EAL) support has been reduced over the last 2 years due to local authority cuts, having already been reduced prior to 2015–16 grant, despite new arrivals and increased EM/EAL need, the team was reduced by half to now 3.9 FTE. NPT have never given additional core funding for the support of EM/EAL learners. The lack of certainty around further funding has meant that we are unable to plan long term. The welcome arrival of Refugee families in the authority, whilst bringing in additional Home Office funding (with dedicated Arabic speakers employed), has dominated the work of the MEAS team, since November 2015, and has had to take priority over the day to day EM/EAL support we can give to schools. But this additional funding is limited to the first year of arrival of a Refugee pupil. New staff require induction/training/shadowing and support as well as the new pupils and families. Schools are having a “light touch” capacity building support from the remaining core team yet demand for support is constant and is increasing. It places enormous stress on the existing team with further proposed cuts due in the local authority

and without a ring fencing the MEAG grant, find it difficult to be optimistic about future provision. Whether a grant for EM pupils comes from Education or the Home Office, it should be ring fenced which allows for planning over a number of years (at least 3 at a time). In addition to this we should consider the sustainability and suitability of those working with the pupil. The schools as well as the MEAS team, are faced with the constant fear that this support could be further reduced or no longer be available. With one EIG grant and very many other areas of Education competing for a part of it, the future does not look good for the provision EM/EAL pupils, with so much uncertainty.

Along with colleagues in other authorities, we are unsure how the WG now monitor the use of the EIG for EM/EAL learners. I am always very concerned about the lack of consultation with the stakeholders it most affects – the ethnic community groups, pupils and their families.

The lack of direction/guidance from the Welsh Government about teaching EM/EAL learners over the last couple of years, together with the current political background and rise in racist incidents is of great concern.

2. How effective are other Welsh Government policies and strategies for supporting the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children?

(If this is a concern to you, how should this be addressed?)

EM/EAL support for pupils does not seem to be a priority for many schools, when there are already so many demands on them, especially in the light of LA budget reductions and Welsh Government education policy directives and ESTYN etc.

EAL teaching, is a specialism, recognised by several universities. I obtained my Masters degree in Bilingualism in Education from Birmingham University, and my colleague gained his Teaching English as an Additional Language Masters degree from Newport University. I have encouraged several other teachers to specialise in EAL teaching. With continued cuts in Education training and resources it is obvious that schools will be expected to meet the

needs of EM/EAL learners without adequate specialist training or support and crucial bilingual support for pupils and their families (to access school/post 16). As a team, in training school staff, we often use Estyn guidance on what the school should have in place for EAL learners and also from an equality perspective. However this is not part of the remit of Challenge Advisors, so we rely on the moral goodwill of schools to take our training on board as something they should all be doing as a school. However due to the turnover of staff in schools – Headteachers and staff leave – this is an ongoing process not met by occasional training and in collaboration with our various partners from different ethnic groups/organisations. There has been much research into what looks like effective EM/EAL practice in Wales, but sadly none of it has been made into policy and support varies from LA to LA. “ Capacity Building” is the buzz word for EMAS teams in Wales. We have aimed to build capacity in our schools for a number of years, with training, Cultural diversity events and activities, employing teaching staff from ethnic minority communities to work in partnership with schools, developing EM/EAL policy and practice with the Senior Management teams and teachers in schools, working with families and community organisations and other partners. But there is no clear definition across Wales of what Capacity building looks like for EM/EAL pupils – it is not enough to just say schools should be providing the support themselves and reducing specialist provision at the same time. There needs to be a long term programme and commitment from the Welsh Government to do this.

3. What more could be done to support the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic children:

- in schools;
- by Local Authorities;
- by regional consortia; and
- by the Welsh Government.

(Do you know of examples of good practice or successful policies? If so, what are they?)

We should continue with LA specialist support which can provide the training and development of mainstream teachers whilst supporting new arrivals, more advanced learners to gain qualifications, home-school liaison and bilingual needs. Neath Port Talbot MEAS team, work closely with the Senior Management teams (including SENCOs) in Primary, Secondary, Special, Welsh Medium and Post 16 establishments, to ensure that EM/EAL pupils are fully supported. This also ensures the high status of EM/EAL learners in these establishments, as much support is also about advocacy and mentoring for both the learners and sometimes their families. Other types of support that the MEAS team provides include Professional Development, Bilingual support (interpreting and translating), in-class support and limited withdrawal support, signposting ESOL classes, primary to secondary and post 16 transition support, Black History Month activities, facilitating Chinese Language Assistants for schools (through the British Council), and accessing other funding streams to supplement EIG funding, such as 14-19, BHM and European funding. NPT's EM/EAL Policy was devised with school Head teachers and promotes a whole school policy/approach to supporting their EM/EAL pupils. We work collaboratively with other partners both locally and outside the authority to ensure EM achievement. I.e. Within the authority Social Services, English Advisory teachers, Psychologists, SEN team, Flying Start, Language and Play team, as well as local EM groups such as the BME forum and Neath Port Talbot Tigers. Outside the authority, we work with groups such as Ethnic Youth Support Team, BHM Wales, Race Council Cymru, the British Council, Global Learning Partnership, Polish School, the Chinese and the African Associations.

EM/EAL teaching needs to be more than superficial in teacher training colleges. Students could have placements with EM/EAL services to really learn the importance of this specialism but also to use knowledge gained in their classroom practice. We have had two such students in the past who have continued using this specialist knowledge in later roles. More recruitment of EM teachers are required as well as Bilingual teaching Assistants. Our team seems to be the main provider of jobs for members of the Ethnic communities who find it so difficult to get employment elsewhere despite their teaching qualifications and higher degrees and experience.

We try to have a designated teacher in school with responsibility for EM/EAL pupils, but without any funding attached to this, again we are relying on goodwill and the role can have low status in some schools, unlike the SENCO/ALNCO role.

4. If you could recommend to the Welsh Government one thing it could do to improve the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children, what would it be?

To keep funding for EM children ring fenced, especially in these terrible times of backlash of BREXIT and election of Donald Trump, which openly encourage the General Public to protest against immigration and increase incidences of racism whether intentional or otherwise. Members of our own team from Ethnic Minority communities have already experienced increased incidents of racism either personally or in their wider community, which must reflect what is happening in our wider communities. They are very fearful of the consequences of recent political events. Our EM/EAL pupils will not be a priority for schools in general, and as those already trained and experienced in providing support for our pupils move on, so will the expertise of the schools diminish/disappear. WG need to take a strategic policy lead, in conjunction with Ethnic Minority community groups and organisations such as Show Racism the Red Card and Race Council Cymru, using the good practice research already commissioned and ensure that ring fenced funding is available to deliver this good practice throughout Wales. Involving our ethnic minority communities in the process is essential – they need to part of the ongoing policy formation for Wales.

5. Do you have any other concerns about the amalgamation of the other previously separate grants into the Education Improvement Grant? If so, please provide details.

I would think that GRT support will suffer in the same way as the EMAS services if the grant is not protected and based on need, rather than a static or reduced commodity year on year.

6. Finally, are there any other issues relating to the terms of reference that you would like to draw to the Committee's attention?

What happens after April 2018? We have been told by colleagues in another authority that the EIG will cease to exist.

The timing of this consultation (taking out the week of half term) at a time when most authorities are dealing with the Refugee new arrivals, is not conducive to sharing with a wider group of stakeholders ie Schools and community groups. I received notice of this consultation via a colleague in Carmarthenshire this week.