

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Cyllido Ysgolion yng Nghymru | School Funding in Wales

SF 06

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Response from: Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Areas of focus	Comments:
<p>The sufficiency of provision for school budgets, in the context of other public service budgets and available resources</p>	<p>Funding needs to be mainlined into schools via the RSG. Hypothecated grants that are currently provided to regional consortia need to be transferred into the RSG in order that local authorities can maximise the funding of schools.</p> <p>Attracting and retaining an adequate teaching workforce is a policy imperative. Teachers are the most important resource in schools and the quality and effectiveness of their teaching is essential for pupil learning (Rockoff, 2004; OECD, 2005). Resource heavy regional models are denying schools the funding they need to employ staff.</p> <p>Schools are facing increased demands relating to ALN and curriculum reform, however WG is not funding these areas of growth sufficiently.</p> <p>Early intervention and preventative provision should be prioritised with increased funding for areas relating to Early Years / Foundation Phase.</p> <p>More discretion / flexibility on funding should be given to schools and LG.</p> <p>Support for vulnerable pupils, eg Traveler / Gypsy Roma needs to be funded based on known need in each LA. Developing an equitable distribution of school funding requires us to take into account both horizontal equity (allocating similar levels of resources to similar types of provision) and vertical equity (allocating different levels of resources to pupil groups with different needs).</p> <p>Similarly, LG needs to receive sufficient funding for pupils with complex needs who may need specialist provision.</p> <p>The total Education IBA within the Local Government Settlement has increased from £2.133bn in 2009-10 to £2.242bn in 2018-19. The provisional settlement for</p>

	<p>2019-20 sees a slight increase of £20m to £2.262bn. However if it wasn't for the additional £13.7m for the September 2018 Teachers pay award and £7m for Free School Meals the amount of funding made available for 2019-20 would be cash flat. It should be noted that the 2019-20 Provisional Local Government Settlement provides no additional funds to schools next year to pay for pay awards and inflation which are expected to be 2%. In addition there has been no monies provided to pay for the increased costs of Teachers Pension costs estimated t £41m for 2019-20 and £70m in a full year. This means that the education services and schools in particular will be facing extremely difficult decisions to balance their budgets and compulsory redundancies will occur unless significant new monies are invested in the service.</p>
<p>The extent to which the level of provision for school budgets complements or inhibits delivery of the Welsh Government's policy objectives</p>	<p>It matters most that the funding reaches school budgets to allow senior leaders and governors to make locally informed decisions on policy implementation. Currently, too much 'school improvement' funding is delivered to regional consortia and is invariably diminished before it reaches the classroom. Grant funding is often delivered late and does not allow schools to plan policy implementation in coherent ways. In times of intense policy implementation, eg curriculum reform, ALNET, funding should increase based on informed decisions regarding demand on school and local authority staff.</p> <p>If schools are deliver the National Mission, then funding needs to be delivered to the front line in greater amount than it is currently; based on local authority analysis the WLGA is estimating 1000 teaching job losses across Wales during this current academic year. Welsh Government needs to be reminded that job losses (compulsory redundancy) have been a constant feature of the schools' landscape over the past 10 years.</p> <p>The Additional Learning Needs Act has been assessed by WG as having only a marginal impact on the costs faced by local authorities. This is despite the fact that the Act extends the age of support to 0 to 25 years, all pupils will be entitled to an Independent Learning Plan, some 26% of pupil numbers in NPT. This being an increase from 4% of pupils currently in receipt of SEN plans. It is envisaged that as all of these pupils and their families will need to be assessed and then</p>

	<p>reviewed annually this will significantly increase the need for Educational Psychologists and administration arrangements both in schools and in the Council's Learning Needs Service Departments.</p> <p>It should not be lost that schools are being expected, increasingly, to manage and support pupil wellbeing, mental health issues, issues relating to adverse childhood experiences, substance misuse, sexual relationship education, eating disorders / obesity, extra-curricular activities, bereavement and loss, etc, etc, with diminished budgets.</p>
<p>The relationship, balance and transparency between various sources of schools' funding, including core budgets and hypothecated funding</p>	<p>We need to increase trust in school leaders' ability to fund teaching and learning sustainably through core budgets and reduce reliance on short term hypothecated grants. We need to incentivise schools to work within clusters and thereby securing an increased return on funding by developing a partnership approach to key areas of learning and support, eg literacy, ALN etc. We also need to provide schools with guidance on how to share back office functions, allowing more funding to reach the pupil. Schools need longer term funding commitments allowing them to plan improvement over a three / multi year period with greater surety on budgets.</p>
<p>The local government funding formula and the weighting given to education and school budgets specifically within the Local Government Settlement</p>	<p>Education must be a priority. A funding commitment over a three / multi year period needs to be given allowing key reform aspects to be embedded and pupils given the learning provision they deserve. We accept that there are efficiencies to be made within the funding regime, however savings should be secured in an intelligent and safe way.</p> <p>We need to consider developing central guidelines regarding a minimum number of administrative staff for schools of a certain size. Adequate support structures with administrative staff and distributed leadership arrangements are important to reconcile administrative and managerial tasks with pedagogical leadership.</p> <p>Aspects relating to pupil wellbeing should be taken into greater account within the LG settlement.</p> <p>Public spending on education across the OECD has lagged behind the growth of GDP since 2010.</p> <p>Spending on education in Wales has reduced by 10% over the past 10 years, compared with a standstill (0%) position on social services and a 21% increase in</p>

	<p>spending on health. If the Welsh Government chooses to favour health over local government, then it should at least maximize the funding of schools.</p>
<p>Welsh Government oversight of how Local Authorities set individual schools' budgets including, for example, the weighting given to factors such as age profile of pupils, deprivation, language of provision, number of pupils with Additional Learning Needs and pre-compulsory age provision</p>	<p>We have no issue with monitoring and challenge by WG on how LAs fund schools. However, too much funding is currently directed by WG without understanding local context and priorities. It is national government's responsibility to set policy and it should be for local government to decide on how policy can be implemented most effectively and efficiently in partnership with schools. Too many directly funded projects have resulted in wasted resources, eg Schools Challenge Cymru, that should have been transferred into the RSG to support classroom provision for all pupils.</p> <p>Oversight needs to be intelligent, based on discussion and not a mechanistic compliance model that does not account for local context.</p> <p>Increased responsibility of schools over their own budget further needs to be accompanied by effective school self-evaluation and accountability mechanisms. More regulations should be developed to prevent the accumulation of excessive surpluses and for funds to be repatriated to the quantum.</p>
<p>Progress and developments since previous Assembly Committees' reviews (for example those of the Enterprise and Learning Committee in the Third Assembly)</p>	<p>The recommendations from the 2009 enquiry into school funding have not been progressed to the extent they should or could have. Similar concerns were raised regarding grant funding, when it was recommended that WG should reduce the bureaucracy of administering (grants) but seek to replace inappropriate use of grants with a more targeted and sustainable approach. This matter remains unresolved and, arguably, has been exasperated.</p> <p>The role of School Forums remains inconsistent and good practice has not impacted positively on their operation.</p>
<p>The availability and use of comparisons between education funding and school budgets in Wales and other UK nations</p>	<p>Largely of no value. It is becoming increasingly difficult to compare one funding system with another because of the varying approaches. Current comparisons add very little to our intelligence of what counts for effective funding. Similarly, mechanisms within Wales to account for per pupil funding and reserve / deficit positions need to be reviewed to secure reliability.</p>

	<p>Current statistical bulletins provide information on planned funding levels and do not provide clarity on outturn information. Value for money comparisons need to be developed allowing for the intricacies of school funding. Efficiency should not just be considered in economical terms, it should also (mainly) be considered from an educational angle, and its impact on standards.</p>
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