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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Dear Lynne

Thank you for your letter dated 13 October requesting information in support of the Committee's inquiry into the Education Improvement Grant for Schools, and specifically in relation to the role the grant plays in supporting the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and minority ethnic children. I look forward to attending the Committee meeting on 12 January 2017 to discuss this in further detail.

I have provided information to respond to your specific questions and requests for information, but it might also be useful if I provide some brief background and context to the establishment of the Education Improvement Grant for Schools (EIG) and our policy position on minority ethnic, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learner achievement in Wales.

Background and context.

The EIG was introduced in April 2015 replacing 11¹ individual grants in a single, more outcome-focused arrangement. Linked to Qualified for Life, our strategy for the education of 3 to 19 year olds in Wales, the overarching aims of the EIG were to support improvements in the quality of teaching and learning; address learners' barriers to learning and improving inclusion; improve the leadership of educational settings; and improve the provision for learners and the engagement of learners.

¹ The 11 grants rationalised and forming the EIG were: 14-19 Learning Pathways Grant, School Effectiveness Grant, Foundation Phase Revenue Grant; Welsh in Education Grant; Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant; Specific Grant for the Education and of Gypsy and Traveller children; Lead and Emerging Practitioner Grant; Higher Level Teaching Assistants Grant; Induction Grant; Reading and Numeracy Support Grant; Additional funding for Band 4 and 5 schools grant.

There were a number of drivers to rationalise and simplify our grant funding arrangements, within education and more widely within Welsh Government, reflecting the needs of our partners. Robert Hill in his report on the future delivery of education services in Wales called for increasing financial flexibility and reducing the administrative burden for schools. The Williams Commission report highlighted the need to address the financial pressures on local government through the mass dehypothecation of grant funding and a focus on key outcomes rather than activity. Previous to this the PriceWaterhouseCoopers report and subsequent work of the Frontline Resources Review had outlined the need for action to reduce the administrative costs and bureaucratic burdens of funding on schools and local government.

The financial drivers were significant in a time when there were substantial and increasing pressures on Welsh Government budgets, including on education budgets, with year on year real terms decreases; managing the implications of the Nuffield report on health in Wales; protecting schools from the worst of the changes; and, in 2014-15, managing the impact of in-year reductions to the education budget.

Working with Local Authorities and the WLGA to seek to mitigate these pressures on schools and school services, the Welsh Government responded with the rationalisation of a number of individual grants which led to the establishment of the EIG. Local government had committed to pass on more of the funding they received directly to schools and with the introduction of the National Model for Regional Working, the EIG provided a means to support the regional delivery of school improvement services across Wales.

In March 2014 the Welsh Government published a policy statement, Minority Ethnic Achievement in Education in Wales² which outlined its position on enabling all children to achieve their full potential and sought to place minority ethnic achievement within the wider strategic framework governing education in Wales.

At the time, one in ten learners in Wales were from an ethnic minority background, contributing to the rich cultural, social and linguistic diversity we have and value. The Welsh Government was committed to unlocking every child's potential. This is still at the heart of Welsh Government's policies on education today and is reflected for example in my recent announcement to provide an additional £4.5million in 2017-18 as part of the significant funding available through the Pupil Deprivation Grant.

The Welsh Government remains committed to supporting the success of learners from all backgrounds. As the policy statement outlined in 2014, this vision is equally true for our minority ethnic learners who may need English and or Welsh language support or who may face risk of underachieving for other reasons. Prior to the introduction of the EIG, whilst there had been specific support for our minority ethnic, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners, this was, as now, in the context of a far greater investment in the wider school services which must contribute to our vision for all learners to have the tools and opportunities they need to access and embrace the full curriculum and to achieve of their potential. We are not there yet and there remains much work to be done. Over this Government term it is my priority to work to ensure that all of our children and young people have an equal opportunity to reach the highest standards.

2 Minority Ethnic Achievement in Education in Wales, Information document no: 132/2014, March 2014:
<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/140327-minority-ethnic-achievement-in-wales-policy-statement-en.pdf>

I fully appreciate this will not be easy. In the 2014 policy statement, the Welsh Government recognised some of the challenges, with resources becoming constrained and with increasing demands on our existing services; the challenge was how we continue to build capacity in our services and classrooms to support our minority ethnic learners as they work towards their aspirations.

Policy decision to amalgamate the grants into the EIG.

1. Details of any impact assessment, particularly in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children made by Welsh government in advance of the decision to amalgamate the grants into the EIG.

Welsh Government officials undertook equality impact assessments in relation to the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant and the Specific Grant for the Education of Gypsy and Traveller Children in August 2014 and these were updated in April 2015. These are published on the Welsh Government website³ along with a further impact assessment from June 2014, updated in April 2015, relating to the savings which were to be found from the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant in 2014-15.

In addition to these specific impact assessments, as part of the budget setting process and submission of advice to Ministers to manage any budget pressures, consideration is given to the impact of funding levels on programmes and grants. The decisions made in relation to the rationalisation of grants and establishment of the EIG relate to the previous Government term.

2. Details of any other options considered before the decision to amalgamate the grants, including whether or not any of the grants could have continued as distinct grants.

A line by line review was undertaken in support of the Budget process. Subsequently a number of grants were identified for consideration by the then Minister for Education and Skills to include in the new arrangements which would result in the establishment of the EIG. I understand the grants were identified on the basis of their shared or related aims and outcomes. Two specific grants which remained under separate arrangements were the Schools Challenge Cymru grant and the Pupil Deprivation Grant funding. The Schools Challenge Cymru programme was provisionally a two-year programme and due to end in 2015-16. The Pupil Deprivation Grant was established as a consequence of agreement between the Welsh Liberal Democrat and Welsh Labour parties and on that basis deemed appropriate to keep under separate arrangements.

Specifically in relation to the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant and the Specific Grant for the Education of Gypsy and Traveller Learners, by 2014-15 the grants had ceased to increase and remained static. The Welsh Government's policy statement published in March 2014 called for more innovative approaches, partnership working, closer links to school improvement service planning and delivery to ensure the services continued and to seek added value from the investment through the grant funding. Prior to the establishment of the EIG, consideration had been given to merging both grants for the 2015-16 financial year.

3 Equality Impact Assessments: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/education-improvement-grant-equality-impact-assessments/?lang=en>

3. During the draft budget round of 2015-16, the then Minister said the new system should result in better outcomes for learners. Please provide any early evidence of this, in particular in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.

The new arrangements were intended to simplify systems, reduce bureaucracy and enable a greater focus on achieving outcomes for learners with less resource spent on administering and managing the grants and less focus on recording the inputs and outputs at a national level.

It is too early to assess the impact of the new grant arrangements on the educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and minority ethnic learners as the grant has only been in place since April 2015. The arrangements will take time to embed and we are confident that they are beginning to do so. The flexibilities offered through the EIG should enable Local Authorities, consortia and schools to target the funding at the areas of greatest need.

The Welsh Government collects data nationally on the performance⁴ of ethnic minority learners. The current published data includes the period 2015. We will publish updated information in January reflecting the pupil-level data by pupil characteristics which will include the period 2016.

The overall performance of learners has improved. The summer GCSE results have been provisionally verified and show that Wales maintained its high level of performance with an overall pass rate of A* - C of 66.6 per cent, consistent with the last two years and the highest level seen in Wales. Two thirds of all entries attained at least a grade C. In terms of the Level 2 inclusive threshold, 35.5 per cent of pupils eligible for FSM achieved the threshold. The attainment gap between pupils eligible for FSM and their non eligible counterparts is 31.2 percentage points and has narrowed once again, but clearly not enough.

Process of allocating funds and measuring value for money

4. An explanation of the way in which the EIG is allocated, including the role of regional consortia, local authorities and individual schools in delegating and targeting funding to improve education outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.

The EIG is allocated to regional consortia. Local authorities are required to provide an element of match funding to the grant, typically around £11million. In line with the governance arrangements agreed through the National Model for Regional Working, local authorities and consortia then agree the funding distribution of the grant and the priorities for spending at a regional and local level through their regional Joint Committee and Advisory Boards. Consortia have regional business plans in place, agreed through their governance arrangements, which take account of the total funding available to them and for schools to support school improvement.

⁴ Academic Achievement by Pupil Characteristics: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/academic-achievement-pupil-characteristics/?lang=en>

A minimum of 80% of the EIG must be delegated to schools. A maximum of 1% of the EIG can be used on the administration and management of the grant. The balance can be used for example for further delegation to schools, targeted funds to schools, and regional and local provision for the benefit of schools. This can include support for the Minority Ethnic Achievement and Traveller Education Services. In some areas this is delegated directly to schools.

In determining the EIG grant allocations to consortia, the Welsh Government uses a funding methodology which reflects the allocation of the previous legacy grants to Local Authorities and consortia, but which is updated with the latest verified Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data. This was a deliberate decision to smooth transition to the EIG and to provide stability for Local Authorities, consortia and schools. Consideration was given to revising this approach and establishing a single funding methodology, however for stability the current method has been retained.

In determining how to distribute the grant, consortia will take account of their priorities within the region and individual local authorities. Given that needs vary across and within regions, the flexibility afforded by the EIG is important in supporting schools, consortia and local authorities to deliver against the intended outcomes of the grant and against their local and regional priorities.

For example, within the South East Wales Education Achievement Service area, the Gwent Ethnic Minority Service (GEMS) has operated on behalf of all of the local authorities in the former Gwent area for a number of years. It has a shared platform with the consortium and in the transition to the EIG, decisions were taken jointly by the five Directors of Education and the consortium Managing Director to protect and maintain support for the Ethnic Minority Achievement and Traveller Education Services.

As with the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant previously, local authorities are able to delegate the funding they receive through the EIG to school budgets to enable schools to prioritise the form of support they need for their learners. Aside from in the South East authorities where a regional approach is in place, across Wales funding from the EIG is mainly passported to local authorities to manage their Minority Ethnic Achievement and Traveller Education Services. This mirrors the arrangements previously in place for the two dedicated grants where the Welsh Government directly funded the individual local authorities.

The total investment available to support learners at risk of underachievement, including those from minority ethnic, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, is substantial when we consider all funding streams including the levels of support for English and Welsh as an Additional Language, the investment through the PDG, the EIG grant funding and most significantly the existing core funding for schools.

5. The amount of EIG that was allocated to, and subsequently spent by, each regional consortium and Local Authority in 2015-16, as well as allocations for 2016-17. Please could this information be broken down to show amounts allocated to specific interventions to improve education outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.

The regional allocations of the EIG are:

	2015-16	2016-17
CSC	£43,461,472	£41,358,670

ERW	£39,978,422	£38,078,607
GwE	£30,919,693	£29,398,348
EAS	£26,661,413	£25,446,375
Total	£141,021,000	£134,282,000

The principle drivers of the new arrangements were to simplify systems and better focus on outcomes rather than inputs and outputs, and reduce the cost of administering and managing the grant to ensure funding concentrated on delivery and improved outcomes for learners.

The EIG is a new grant and must continue to support the changing needs of our schools. This is important as we move towards bespoke curriculum and assessment arrangements for Wales. In conjunction with local government, the Welsh Government took the decision to remove the requirement to track grant expenditure by the themes of the 11 legacy grants. This was seen as a significant opportunity to reduce system costs at school, local authority and consortia level, and reflects the emphasis on outcomes not on tracking activity at a national level.

Therefore at a national level the Welsh Government does not collect data which identify how much of the EIG is spent on specific areas or themes within the overall grant, including on specific programmes and interventions. This information may be available or obtainable from regional consortia and local authorities.

6. Information about the Welsh Government's arrangements for monitoring the expenditure of the EIG in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.

As outlined, the Welsh Government does not monitor the financial input through the EIG into the services which support groups of learners at risk of underachieving. The flexibility within the EIG arrangements better enable Local Authorities, consortia and schools to prioritise their funding to areas of greatest need. At school level we estimate there would be a significant system cost in tracking expenditure which supports the educational achievement of individual groups of learners, in particular when we consider these groups of learners may benefit from support from other funding streams including the Pupil Deprivation Grant. As a principle we have sought to reduce the administrative costs of the grant and increase the focus on delivery and outcomes.

7. Please provide details of any actual and projected cost savings that have arisen from this policy change.

The EIG reduced by around 9% in its transition from the existing 11 legacy grants and reduced by a further 4.7% in 2016-17. At the same time the costs associated with managing and administering the grant have reduced. In 2014-15 some of the 11 legacy grants capped administrative expenditure at between 3% and 5% of the grant. The Welsh Government set the maximum allowable administrative expenditure against the EIG at 1.5% in 2015-16 and reduced it to 1% in 2016-17. The reductions in system costs have enabled consortia, local authorities and schools to gain better efficiencies and value from the grant funding to offset at least in part against the overall reductions to the grant in previous years.

8. Information about any other financial benefits that have arisen as a result of this policy change.

At all levels, through schools, local authorities, consortia and Welsh Government, we estimate there are additional resource savings in terms of time. The reduction in the administrative arrangements as well as the requirement to use the now statutory school development plans rather than individual grant plans is estimated to have yielded significant time savings, in particular at school level.

There is a balance in ensuring accountability through the system. Placing the drivers for improvement for these groups of learners within the context of the wider school improvement services is an important factor in mainstreaming the needs of these learners and enabling them to better access support.

In Lliswerry high school in Newport for example we have seen how the school has taken a multi-layered approach with school improvement grant funding to put in place effective interventions to support all learners.

In relation to the support that consortia provide to schools, the use of the school development plan as a single planning tool should better enable challenge advisers to see the whole school needs in context and better challenge and support schools through their planning to delivery.

Evaluation

9. Any evidence that the amalgamation of the grant has resulted in better education outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.

As I have outlined earlier, it is too early to assess the impact of the new grant arrangements on the educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and minority ethnic learners as the grant has only been in place since April 2015.

10. Details of the terms and conditions attached to regional consortia and local authorities' use of the EIG, particularly in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.

Under the terms and conditions of the EIG, consortia are charged with improving educational outcomes for all learners in all settings including those vulnerable groups who are more likely to underachieve.

The EIG supports the strategic objectives in Qualified for Life, the Welsh Government's long-term vision for education for 3-19 year old learners in Wales.

The grant's terms and conditions specify the funding must be used to contribute to the delivery of the following broad requirements:

Improving teaching and learning;

Improving education outcomes, including literacy and numeracy, at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 for all learners in all settings, including for example those learner groups who are known to be at particular risk of underachievement for example, but not limited to, as relating to gender, or those with Additional Learning Needs, English and/or Welsh as an Additional Language, or from certain ethnic minority groups such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners; and

Improving outcomes for pupils in receipt of FSM and to narrow the gap between nFSM and eFSM pupils.

Qualified for Life is currently being refreshed and the terms and conditions of the EIG for future years will take account of this.

In addition to the standard terms and conditions of grants issued under Welsh Ministers, there are requirements around the level of delegation to schools, the level of eligible expenditure on administration and management, the use of School Development Plans and the requirement to work towards the Foundation Phase ratios.

11. Details of the outcome and outcome measures for 2015-16 and 2016-17 for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.

As outlined in the sections above, the purpose of this funding is to support consortia and the responsible authorities within each consortium, to improve educational outcomes for all learners. The EIG supports our national priorities for schools, including improved outcomes in literacy and numeracy and reducing the impact of deprivation on educational outcomes. These outcomes are supported by a range of key performance indicators and consortia detail their approach to school improvement in their regional business plans. In addition, an Education Performance Framework is being trialled this year. The Framework asks consortia, within the high level objectives identified under point 10, to highlight the main key performance indicators which support those outcomes and provide timescales and key milestones for delivery. These are linked to the full consortia business plans and should, moving forwards seek to better identify the additionality of the EIG over and above some of the core school improvement work consortia and schools undertake.

I am keen to see a direct link between the aims in Qualified for Life and documents related to it through to consortia business plans and to School Development Plans, to demonstrate that the grant funding is being spent in the most effective way in line with our shared priorities. Initiatives supported by the grant should be sustainable and in line with the intentions of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

12. Details of the monitoring arrangements for adherence to the terms and conditions of the EIG, particularly the outcome and outcome measures, and the sanctions available to Welsh Government if they are not met.

The grant is outcome focussed. The activities and interventions funded by the grant and its outcome measures are monitored regularly by consortia challenge advisers and subject to termly review and challenge meetings, which are also used for monitoring performance and achievement of outcomes.

A closing end year report from consortia will include details of progress made throughout the grant period and an overall evaluation of the programme supported by case studies as appropriate.

There are a number of stakeholder groups and established relationships between Welsh Government, consortia and local authorities including regular meetings through ADEW and links to consortia subject leads. The Welsh Government provides secretariat for the Minority Ethnic Achievement Local Authority Group and the Gypsy Traveller Forum.

There is scrutiny, monitoring and assurance undertaken at a local and regional level through the agreed governance arrangements in the National Model for Regional Working. Consortia also undertake self-evaluation reports and updates on their business plans as part of their regional governance structures and accountability.

Estyn plays a role through the inspection of schools and Local Authorities, and also through their remit of consortia. Along with the national data the Welsh Government collects on

performance, there is a significant body of information which contributes to the understanding of the impact of Welsh Government grant funding, including the EIG.

Within the terms and conditions, Welsh Government officials may ask for any reasonable information as needed should there be specific lines of enquiry required outside of the relationships and mechanisms detailed above.

Whilst there are significant flexibilities within the grant, the grant is required to be audited at local authority level so any inadmissible spend is identified, which the Welsh Government may then recover. The Welsh Government can of course choose to remove the grant funding if it is not delivering the desired outcomes and it is worth highlighting that the grant funding should be additional. The duty rests with Local authorities to provide suitable education for all of their learners and this is mainly funded through the Local Government Settlement.

13. Welsh Government's "Minority ethnic achievement in education in Wales" information document says that it "will hold services to account for delivering improved learner outcomes". Please provide information on which services are held to account and how.

Under the terms of the previous grants the Ethnic Minority Achievement and Traveller Education Services submitted reports to the Welsh Government on the support provided through the grants. Under the structures in place for school improvement through the National Model for Regional Working and the EIG, the lines of accountability and reporting go via Local Authorities and consortia. Local Authorities and consortia are held to account by Estyn and the Wales Audit Office and through established mechanisms with Welsh Government, including through our Challenge and Review processes, the performance data we collect and publish and our relationships with ADEW who represent the Ethnic Minority Achievement and Traveller Education Services.

14. Information about specific interventions for which the EIG was used to improve education outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic children in 2015-16? Please provide information on how the impact of such interventions is monitored.

The regional approach to the service taken in the South East Local Authorities through GEMS is a positive example of collaboration to ensure the needs of these groups of learners are protected. Consortia seek to capture and share best practice through their school networks and information is increasingly being made available online.

In 2015, Estyn published a case study on the excellent work being undertaken in Lliswerry primary school⁵ to improve the educational achievement of vulnerable groups of learners. Lliswerry high school has also had success around its EAL provision and community engagement, specifically with the Roma community. I understand the school has had its first Level 2 success with Roma learners this year and there have been strong improvements in attendance.

The Pembrokeshire Gypsy Traveller Education Service, based in Monkton Priory CP School has 30% learners from the Gypsy and Traveller community. Over 50% of Gypsy and Traveller learners in Pembrokeshire are enrolled in the school.

5 Lliswerry Primary School Estyn case study: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/best-practice/successfully-supporting-disadvantaged-learners-helps-boost-achievement>

Estyn's inspection of the school April 2016 stated:

The school is a beacon for lifelong learning in the community. For example, the partnership work that has enabled parents, staff and other members of the community to develop new skills and qualifications at the school is a significant strength. Through this work, the school has been innovative in establishing outstanding links with the Gypsy and Traveller community. The wide range of courses, including basic skills courses for parents, GCSE and a degree course offered at the school has brought the community into the school. This has ensured a vibrant learning environment that provides high aspirations for all and has provided parents and carers with the skills to help their children. Three Gypsy and Traveller former learners now working as Learning Support Assistants in Pembrokeshire have gained a BA in Social Inclusion and Social Policy.

The Welsh Government has also worked with Show Racism the Red Card and developed a bi-lingual toolkit which provides information and activities to help settle Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in school. It was developed in consultation with members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and is available via the Hwb network. It is designed to help remove barriers, promote understanding, and create a welcoming, inclusive school experience. The toolkit complements Travelling Together – a suite of resources published on Learning Wales in 2014, to promote the integration of Gypsy and Traveller culture into the national curriculum.

I trust the information provided is helpful to the Committee's inquiry and I look forward to discussing this with the Committee in January.

Yours sincerely



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