
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee

Kirsty Williams AM
Cabinet Secretary for Education

13 April 2018

Dear Kirsty,

School Uniform Grant

I write regarding the ending of the School Uniform Grant from 2018–19, which has provided up to £105 per child eligible for free school meals (eFSM) as they enter Year 7.

The Committee is concerned that this might lead to a loss of important financial support to families on low incomes in purchasing school uniforms. In light of our concerns, we would be grateful if you could confirm the following:

1. Whether the Welsh Government expects local authorities to continue operating a school uniform grant scheme.
2. Whether the £700,000 annual funding has been moved to the local government Revenue Support Grant (RSG) or to central reserves (i.e. is it simply being cut?).
3. That a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) and Equality Impact Assessment were undertaken by the Welsh Government before deciding to end the School Uniform Grant, and how those assessments influenced the Welsh Government's decision.



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We are unconvinced by the rationale provided for this change, namely that prices of school uniforms have reduced significantly and therefore eligible families no longer need this financial support. Without hypothecated funding, it is not clear to us how families of eFSM pupils will still be able to access assistance in meeting the costs of new uniforms during the transition from primary to secondary school.

The Committee is aware that, in the 2018–19 budget setting round, there has been a Welsh Government-wide approach of de-hypothecating local authority funding and movement of a number of funding streams into the RSG. You will be aware from our letter dated 14 March 2018, and previous representations, of our concerns about this approach in the specific case of funding for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic learners. We have also raised several questions about the transparency with which movements of funding from specific grants into the RSG are being undertaken.

We have similar concerns about the School Uniform Grant. From the published budget documentation, the reduction in funding for the School Uniform Grant appears to be part of a reduction in 2018–19 to the budget line which finances the Education Improvement Grant (EIG). As with the removal of funding from the EIG, it is not clear where this money has gone as it is not documented in the local government settlement as a transfer into the RSG, unlike other hypothecated grants which have ended. There are therefore some commonalities in our concerns about these two issues.

In light of this, we would be grateful if you could confirm the following:

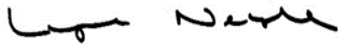
4. Whether the Welsh Government expects local authorities to provide financial support from their RSG allocations to eligible families for purchasing school uniforms.



5. Whether this constitutes a grant transfer (and, if so, why it is not documented as such in the 2018–19 Local Government Settlement).
6. If the £700,000 funding for helping eligible families purchase school uniforms is now contained within the RSG, what mechanism exists to demonstrate the movement of the funding and subsequent monitoring of its use for this purpose.

The Committee looks forward to receiving your response to the points raised in this letter, including the specific questions highlighted in points 1 to 6.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle AM
Chair

Cc Mark Drakeford AM, Cabinet Secretary for Finance

