

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 19

Ymateb gan: Ysgol gynradd Waun Wen

Response from: Waun Wen Primary School

- The sufficiency of provision for school budgets, in the context of other public service budgets and available resources

We are repeatedly seeing promises of pay rises, pension increases, which are long overdue, but with no real commitment to who is going to meet the costs involved. The inevitable is that if the costs are not met by the government then they will have to be met by the schools as cuts are made to balance the books.

The “Schools Funding in Wales” document highlights that in real terms the level of spending on each pupil has been cut yet we are also being told to raise standards.

My school is heavily reliant on PDG funding without it I dread to think how I could meet the needs of complexities arriving at our school gate each day. The number of pupils with speech and language issues seems to be increasing every year and there is a massive need to tackle these difficulties as early as possible.

The aim to close the poverty gap is something that I fight to achieve every day however the pressures on the schools are growing at a rate that the budgets are not keeping up with.

Sadly the children are the ones who lose when the budgets are cut, yet they are the future and should be invested in.

- the extent to which the level of provision for school budgets complements or inhibits delivery of the Welsh Government’s policy objectives

The National Mission aims for a high quality education profession to teach our children. In Swansea, the amount of classes taught by an unqualified teacher has increased. Class sizes are increasing. Needs of ALN pupils are not

being met and the number of ALN pupils is increasing. These are some of our most vulnerable pupils and we are failing them from the start.

The introduction of the Foundation Phase was envied all over the UK and further afield, yet the costs of the recommended staffing ratios are not being met. Education Improvement Grant funding used to more than adequately provide recommended staffing ratios to deliver foundation phase provision and allow for school improvement. The number of schools able to meet the recommended adult:pupil ratio in Foundation Phase (1:8 Nursery and Reception and 1:15 Years 1 and 2) has decreased.

Leaders are under so much pressure due to the incessant 'high-stakes' accountability system in Wales and the pressure of budgets and staffing their schools that many certainly do not feel in any position to 'inspire' others. The recommendations recently published regarding pay and conditions offer no comfort to leaders. The introduction of the new Teaching and Leadership Standards does not appear to be streamlining anything.

The National mission aims for 'strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being' With regard to being inclusive, our numbers of pupils with ALN is growing and the rise in pupils with ASD diagnosis and speech and language difficulties in particular is having a massive impact on standards.

We struggle to ensure adequate provision meeting the needs of learners with statements (let alone those without a statement of ALN) and feel this will get worse with the introduction of ALNET. I find myself having to prioritise which pupils get assessed, equity surely means that all pupils who are in need will be able to access the correct support and should not have to be placed in a "queue".

My school also faces the challenge of 45% pupils with EAL. Again there are no guarantees that there will be any grant funding for these pupils in the future. I feel very strongly that "equity" is not being applied to this minority group of learners.

The National Mission recognises 'well-being' as including mental health. Schools are dealing more and more with mental health issues of both its pupils and others associated with those pupils. Waiting lists to access CAHMS are long and other agencies keep referring parents back to schools to carry our assessments which could be accessed via a health route.

With the budget being cut in real terms the ability to deliver the relevant technologies and skills is pretty much unachievable. Who pays for the infrastructure, hardware, and software and staff expertise to be able to deliver this element? In primary schools, the task of school 'technician' usually falls to someone who has shown some aptitude with technology. However, this person has other responsibilities and this is simply more work for them to do with little or no training or remuneration.

- the relationship, balance and transparency between various sources of schools' funding, including core budgets and hypothecated funding

There is a lack of transparency in how funding in Wales is spent in tiers 1 & 2 of the three-tier model. Tier 1 tells schools that money is being put into supporting schools and tier 2 tells schools it is not enough and then can't agree between themselves (LA v Region) how much funding they receive/give and what that funding should be spent on.

There is also too much duplication between regional and LA work/responsibilities and this is a waste of money that could be better used by schools.

- the local government funding formula and the weighting given to education and school budgets specifically within the Local Government Settlement

I cannot see how the formula is fair in any way to the school I work in or other schools in my authority.. We face high levels of deprivation, EAL, ALN yet my LA is consistently one of the worst funded LA's in Wales. It is supposedly the second city in Wales but nobody is prepared to invest in its children. These children deserve to be invested in and given the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty that they have been born into. In my school, we are seeing 3rd generations of families coming through and nothing has been done to change their lives. In the long run surely they are costing the government more.

- 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

I agree as a headteacher and as a parent that each child in Wales should be worth the same. However, having taught in an affluent area as well as in a deprived area I am fully aware of the additional pressures that poverty and EAL brings. All children deserve the best chance they can get and should be funded equally however there has to be additional support for the more vulnerable learners whose needs would not be met from a national formula.

- the availability and use of comparisons between education funding and school budgets in Wales and other UK nations

The difficulty in commenting on this arises from the fact that there is such a variation in spending depending on the LA in Wales, so which LA spending do you compare to other UK nations? The aims of WG to improve standards, close the poverty gap and implement a curriculum which is world leading will not be achieved with funding remaining at its current levels and with it being formulated so differently across the 22 LAs in Wales.