

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 20

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Ilywodraethwyr ysgol Merthyr Tudful ac Ysgol Gynradd Edwardsville

Response from: Edwardsville Primary School and Merthyr Tydfil School Governors' Association

It is recognised that the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry is focussing on the sufficiency of school funding in Wales and the way school budgets are determined and allocated. I have no doubt this detailed information will be provided by all the Authorities across Wales as well as the Cabinet Minister for Education. However, I feel it is very appropriate to respond to this consultation on how the reductions in funding is impacting on school's ability to deliver the education our children must have and deserve. This lack of funding will ultimately damage the delivery of the excellent Education in Wales: Our National Mission agenda, which I believe is well supported by everyone involved in education.

Despite the reduction in funding by Welsh Government to the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council over the past few years. The Authority has tried not to impact education, which has been one of its main priorities. However, the significant level of reduction in funding for the authority over the years has forced the budget available to education to reluctantly reduce. As a result of these reductions the impact experienced by schools has been: -

1. Teaching and non-teaching staff redundancies have been made.
2. The hours Learning Support Assistants are employed for were cut in line with the basic school day. Therefore, the use of these people's expertise during non-contact time has been lost.
3. With staffing resources being kept to a minimum it greatly reduces any schools' flexibility to meet the immediate needs of the most vulnerable children who might require intervention support and or effectively address any wellbeing issues.
4. Since September 2018 the Local Authority has frozen the level of enhanced payment for, the pupil 1:1 support. Even though this budget

is already overspent for this financial year there is still an increase in demand. Despite the facts of point 3 above schools are doing their utmost, by stretching their resources to the limit, in an attempt to meet the needs of these vulnerable pupils as best they can.

5. Many schools have had to make the difficult decision not to pay for peripatetic music and prioritise spending on core curriculum activities.
6. The use of technology in the teaching and learning environment is well recognised by the expectations set for Information Communication Technology (ICT) and the new Digital Competency Framework (DCF). The ongoing cost of maintaining/updating the equipment across a school is very challenging in this financial climate.

It is known there are ongoing significant funding reductions and there is great concern regarding the additional financial demands' schools will need to address related to: -

7. The requirements of the Professional Teaching Standards, which will generate increased costs associated with the Continuous Professional Development identified by all staff.
8. The transition to the new curriculum will have a cost in releasing all school staff to receive the necessary training. It is also expected there will be an increase in the costs of the resources needed to deliver this more innovative way of teaching and learning.
9. The introduction of the new ALN Bill requirements will increase the responsibility of Schools to assess pupils needs who must ensure those needs are met. This will increase the workload on the staff at a time when there is no slack to absorb this.
10. It is not clear at this time how the additional funding of teacher pensions, circa £75,000 for Merthyr Tydfil will be paid in 2019-20. If the responsibility falls to the local authority then this will obviously add further pressure on an already stretched budget.

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive. It is hoped the above information will have the serious consideration of the Children, Young People and Education Committee because it is believed the Merthyr Tydfil Local Authority are providing as much funding as possible to its schools.

It's appreciated the aggregated overall schools surplus balance at the end of the 2017-18 financial year increased from 2.6% to 4.78% (4.10% adjusted) and stood at 1.78% (1.10% adjusted) above the Merthyr Tydfil local authority benchmark target. The reason for this increase was schools were aware that a significant saving would be required again in the 2019-20 financial year and they prudently carried forward as much budget as possible to mitigate the impact. The overall schools' surplus balances are projected to be 2.7% (end 2018-19), 2.2% (end 2019-20) and 1.2% (end 2020-21).