

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 28

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Sir Ceredigion

Response from: Ceredigion County Council

Areas of focus	Comments:
The sufficiency of provision for school budgets, in the context of other public service budgets and available resources	As with all public services in the UK, schools are facing major challenges in seeking to maintain standards, let alone improve them, given the spiralling costs, the increasing demography and the at-best-neutral financial resources. For example, Ceredigion's Revenue Support Grant (RSG) from the Welsh Government has fallen by £6.4M (6%) in the last 5 years, from nearly 80% of the Council's total resources to little more than 70%. When also factoring in pay awards, price inflation and increased demands, Ceredigion has had to find £34M of savings since 2012. With delegated school budgets accounting for nearly 30% of the Council's total budget, it is inevitable, despite Ceredigion's (and other LA's) best efforts to protect school funding from the worst effects of the Welsh Government's cut to the RSG, that schools' resources have suffered a major real terms cut as a consequence of the aforementioned pressures, a situation being further exacerbated by the Welsh Government's failure, thus far at least, to provide any funding towards the significant increase in teachers' pension costs from September 2019, which will cost £1.6M in a full year representing a 4% cost pressure on school budgets. The recent march in London by headteachers is an example of how precarious and concerning the leaders of the teaching profession consider the situation to be.
The extent to which the level of provision for school budgets complements or inhibits delivery of the	Welsh Government's reducing of its funding for local government on an on-going basis at a time of spiralling costs undermines Council's ability to deliver on the Welsh Government's policy objectives despite its best attempts to do so. Welsh

Welsh Government's policy objectives	Government policy objectives can only be delivered if it maintains at least real-terms-neutral financial resources to the bodies charged with delivering those objectives.
The relationship, balance and transparency between various sources of schools' funding, including core budgets and hypothecated funding	The channelling of grant funding via regional education bodies, rather than directly to Councils and their schools, leads to delay in schools being awarded and receiving funding, to uncertainty as to the requirements attaching to the funding and to decisions regarding the allocation / spending of grant funding being taken remotely rather than by the schools familiar with the needs of their learners. The multiplicity of grant funding, which as stated above is not always clear or well-targeted, distracts from schools' core focus on delivering education and improvement for their learners. The greater transparency and flexibility of delegated core funding from local authorities, in contrast, affords schools much more scope to pursue and deliver their core objectives of providing good all-round education.
The local government funding formula and the weighting given to education and school budgets specifically within the Local Government Settlement	The funding formulae lack a clearly explained rationale in relation to the delivery of education and the relative costs of delivering in different contexts, e.g. urban versus rural, bilingual versus English-only, the effect of deprivation – social, economic and rural.
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	The existing regulations provide a strong basis to ensure that funding to schools is allocated appropriately by LA's, i.e. a minimum of 70% to be allocated on a pupil-led basis, along with a robust context within which individual Councils can allocate funding in accordance with the educational needs of their learners and the particular circumstances of their schools. The existing regulations strike an excellent balance between the need for a consistent national framework with LA discretion to be able to address local needs and circumstances.
Progress and developments since	The existing regulations date from this period and provide a solid, practical and effective framework for

<p>previous Assembly Committees' reviews (for example those of the Enterprise and Learning Committee in the Third Assembly)</p>	<p>governing the allocation of resources to schools and of related financial matters.</p>
<p>The availability and use of comparisons between education funding and school budgets in Wales and other UK nations</p>	<p>England, like Scotland and Northern Ireland, chooses both to fund its schools and to report how it funds its schools differently to how we do in Wales. As much as some people like to compare statistics, however unlike-for-unlike their nature, it is probably futile to attempt to manipulate either nation's data in order to produce a meaningful comparison. Whatever scarce resources may be available in this field should be deployed in highlighting and explaining the differences of approach rather than in trying to perform some hopelessly impossible reconciliation of sets of data quite different in their nature.</p>