

Ysgol Penglais School Response to the Consultation on School Funding in Wales - December 2018

1. Introduction

1.1 The Governing Body of Penglais School are choosing to respond to the consultation on school funding in Wales due to the visible and detrimental impact that the budget cuts and increased costs have had on the standard of education and wellbeing of students and staff in the school. This response will focus on the bullet points listed under the inquiry focus.

2. The sufficiency of provision for school budgets

2.1 The allocated budget per student has effectively reduced year-on-year since 2013-14 until a modest rise in 2018-19, although this is still well below the value six years ago (see Table 1). During this time, staff costs have continually increased both through annual increments increase as well as additional pension costs, national insurance costs and increase in staff wages, which have been unfunded.

Table 1. School budget per student as paid and after taking inflation into account (2017 terms, Bank of England)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Value as paid	£4,540	£4,379	£4,337	£4,425	£4,506	£4,618
Value in 2017 terms	£4,946	£4,660	£4,571	£4,584	£4,506	£4,618

During this time, total funding for the 6th form provision in Ceredigion has also decreased (see Table 2)

Table 2. Welsh Government sixth form allocations as paid to Ceredigion (£,000) and after taking inflation into account (2017 terms, Bank of England)

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Value as paid	£3,731	£3,699	£3,735	£3,608	£3,500
Value in 2017 terms	£3,971	£3,898	£3,735	£3,608	£3,500

2.2 The impact of this is that since 2013 the number of full-time teaching posts has had to reduce from 86.6 to 70.1, a reduction of 16.5 full time teaching staff, despite the fact that the student numbers has only decreased by 60 (in a school of about 1200 students). In 2017-18 alone, the equivalent of 7 members of staff were made redundant to contribute to the reduction of costs by approximately £280,000.

2.3 A further impact is that class sizes have had to increase, with classes of 35 being a regular feature of top sets Maths and Science, and the lower sets are gradually increasing. The largest KS3 class has 31 students across the majority of subjects.

2.4 This year we will need to consider the viability of running a Welsh-language group in Key Stage 3 which will have an impact on the progress and attainment made by Welsh First Language speakers.

2.5 The impact on morale of staff is visible having endured year after year of cuts and redundancies. In a recent staff survey, only 31% of staff felt that morale was good in the school despite 76% of staff saying they would recommend the school as an employer.

3. The extent to which the level of provision for school budgets complements or inhibits delivery of the Welsh Government's policy objectives

3.1 The provision for school budgets makes it very difficult to deliver the new Welsh curriculum. For example, one area of difficulty is the implementation of the Digital Competency Framework when the ability to spend on ICT hardware is severely hampered by the reduced budget.

4. The relationship, balance and transparency between various sources of schools' funding, including core budgets and hypothecated funding

4.1 There is an imbalance between money allocated through core budgets and funds that are given to schools through various grants.

4.2 Towards the end of 2017-18, when restructuring and redundancy processes had been made in Penglais School, approximately £150,000 was received in various grants from the Welsh Government, ERW and local authority. Whilst this was welcome in reducing the deficit and enabling the school to finish with a surplus, such late provision grants do not allow the school to plan effectively and efficiently, and the school will continue to have to make cuts to staffing unless the core budget increases.

4.3 The use of funding by ERW has not always had an impact on the school in line with the amount of money that has been spent. We would question the value for money offered by ERW.

5. 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

5.1 There is an imbalance between the funding given to all schools in Ceredigion with many factors playing a part in this. Penglais receives on average approximately £600 per student less than the other schools in the county.

6. Conclusion

6.1 We are clear that the current funding situation for schools is nothing short of a crisis. The Welsh Government needs to act quickly to respond to the calls from the schools and local authorities. Failure to do so threatens the standards of education within the schools and puts at risk the successful delivery of the national mission of education for Wales.

Ysgol Penglais School Governing Body

Richard John - Chair

Mair Hughes - Headteacher