

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref KW/05882/19

Jane Hutt AM
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18 April 2019

Dear Jane

Thank you for your e-mail dated 10 April regarding the allocation of funding for schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Welsh Government has received a high level of correspondence about this issue and the following letter has been prepared to cover the concerns raised.

I fully acknowledge the real pressures that local authorities and schools are facing. Due to the UK Government's continued austerity programme, Wales has around £800m less to spend on public services, in real terms, than we had in 2010-11. Despite this, the Welsh Government continues to take action to support budgets for local authorities in order to protect school spending. The independent Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) recently published a report stating that school funding per pupil has fallen faster in England than in Wales.

Education and social services are the largest spending areas for local councils. Each Council decides their own spending priorities. School funding decisions in your area are therefore the responsibility of Vale of Glamorgan Local Authority. As Education Minister, it will not surprise you that I urge all Local Authorities to make the right decisions on behalf of local people to ensure their schools receive adequate levels of funding. Currently, the Vale of Glamorgan Council spends the least per pupil in the whole of Wales.

While Local Authority budgets in England have seen significant reductions, the Welsh Government has made different decisions in order to support front line services. Even in this difficult financial climate, the Local Authority settlement represents a cash increase overall, compared to 2018/19. We have worked to ensure that no authority faces a reduction of more than 0.3%.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The funding formula for Local Authorities has been created and developed in close consultation with local government and is continually reviewed through the Distribution Sub Group. The formula takes account of a wealth of information about the demographic, physical, economic and social characteristics of authorities. In the schools part of the formula, over 90% is based on data that is updated annually. The Welsh Government has previously presented local government with proposals to update the current funding formula further; however, this proposal was not pursued. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that an update of the data would benefit any one specific authority.

Although the local government settlement provides the largest single contribution to local government funding, Local Authorities have a range of funding sources available to them, including specific grants and council tax. The amount of funding set aside for school budgets is for Local Authorities to determine.

The school funding allocation made by Vale of Glamorgan reflects the decisions that the Council has taken in setting their budget. The School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010 provide the framework within which Local Authorities set their funding for schools. The Regulations ensure consistency with the requirement for 70% of schools budgets to be set based on pupil numbers. Local Authorities have discretion to distribute the remaining 30% on the basis of a range of factors so that they can take account of individual school circumstances. Both the high percentage based on pupil numbers and the broad range of other factors, which can be considered in setting school budgets, help to ensure pupils are not disadvantaged and individual local needs are met.

Schools have the opportunity to influence their Local Authority decisions on school budgets, by engaging in dialogue with Authorities including through their budget forum, which is required in law. Authorities must consult their schools budget forums and all schools in their area when setting or making changes to a funding formula. The main purpose of the forum is to provide all major stakeholders with an opportunity to offer advice to the local authority on school budgets in each financial year.

In addition to the funding provided through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to Local Authorities, the Welsh Government continues to provide significant additional grant funding to support improved outcomes for learners in Wales.

We recognise that to continue raising standards, our schools and teachers need support additional to the core funding we provide and the Welsh Government continues to provide significant grant funding to schools, local authorities and regional education consortia.

In 2019/20, Vale of Glamorgan schools will receive more than £2.93 million through the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) which equates to more than 2,780 learners supported. To date the Vale of Glamorgan schools have received more than £15.7 million through the Pupil Development Grant.

The Vale of Glamorgan has been awarded a total of £722,417 under this current government to reduce infant class sizes. In addition, I recently announced an additional £15m to support teacher professional learning, which is the single biggest investment in our workforce since devolution. Due to this announcement, schools in the Vale will benefit from over £730,000 additional funding.

In relation to teachers' pay, we are directing all of the £23.5 million announced by the Westminster Government towards funding the school teachers' pay award. For 2018/19, £8.7 million was made available via specific grants to the local authorities. £13.7 million has been included in the local government settlement for 2019/20 to fund the increase in teachers' pay in maintained schools from nursery to year 11, and the remaining £1.1 million

will continue to be delivered outside the settlement, as a specific grant, for teachers in school sixth forms. In addition to the £23.5 million, we have announced a further £15 million which was deployed over this financial year and next (£7.5 million in 2018/19 and £7.5 million in 2019/20) to help local authorities meet cost pressures including those associated with teachers' pay.

You will also be aware that the Welsh Government has invested heavily in schools infrastructure. The Vale of Glamorgan has a programme envelope of over £32 million for Band A of the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme between 2014 and 2019, with a contribution of over £14 million provided by Welsh Government. Among others, this funding has seen the refurbishment of the Llantwit Learning Community project, the opening of Ysgol Dewi Sant, the enlargement of Ysgol Gwaun Y Nant, and the construction of a new building for Oakfield Primary School.

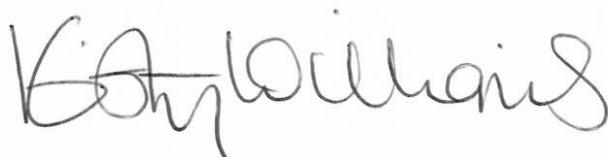
I am pleased to say that the Vale of Glamorgan has also been given approval in principle for a significantly larger funding envelope for investment in its school estate from 2019 through our Band B programme.

Recent increases to the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme intervention rates have the potential to save local authorities millions of pounds which could be invested elsewhere in our education system, including in the maintenance of schools. In addition, a £40 million maintenance grant was recently distributed to local authorities to address pressing issues in their education estate.

With regard to setting of school session times, this is a decision for schools and governing bodies. Schools must fully consult before making any changes, ensuring that the number of teaching hours is not being compromised and that the curriculum is being delivered in its entirety.

I hope this information is helpful in setting out how schools in the Vale of Glamorgan are funded.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

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