

Kirsty Williams AM  
Cabinet Secretary for Education

15 February 2018

Dear Kirsty,

### **Inquiry into Targeted Funding to Improve Educational Outcomes**

As you will be aware, the Committee is undertaking an inquiry into Targeted Funding to Improve Educational Outcomes. Thank you for agreeing to attend Committee on 22 March to provide oral evidence on this matter.

To help inform the Inquiry, the Committee has undertaken a consultation exercise, the responses to which are published. The Committee has also undertaken school visits, and our outreach team has held a number of focus group meetings with stakeholders. Ahead of your evidence session, I thought it might be helpful to outline some of the concerns that had emerged. One of these key areas has been the developments in terms of attainment data in 2017 that we will want to explore further.

As well as the areas outlined in the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry, we would be interested in receiving specific information from you in advance of the 22 March, on the areas outlined below:

#### **Attainment data and performance measures**

- A brief assessment of the main trends in the 2017 Key Stage 4 attainment data. What conclusions have they drawn about what the results in 2017 show in terms of the extent to which school standards and pupil outcomes are improving – including amongst eFSM and the objective of narrowing the attainment gap? (During budget scrutiny, you referred to a statistical analysis which officials were undertaking and said in response to the Committee's report that you would share this when available. Is this now available?)



- How the changes in performance measures have affected comparability of attainment data in 2017. For example, the Level 2 threshold and Level 2 threshold inclusive measures are no longer directly comparable as there is now a cap on the extent to which vocational qualifications can be considered. How has this affected entry patterns? Have entries for vocational qualifications at Key Stage 4 decreased, with schools discouraged to do so by the changes in performance measures? Has this happened to a greater extent amongst eFSM pupils and can it be attributed to the larger decreases in 2017 in the Level 2 threshold and Level 2 threshold inclusive achievement rates amongst eFSM pupils than non FSM pupils?
- What are the main measures the Welsh Government will be using going forward to assess if eFSM pupils' attainment is improving and whether the gap with other pupils is narrowing?
- What are the main measures the Welsh Government will be using going forward to assess if the Pathways to Success schools have improved their pupil attainment following their participation in the Schools Challenge Cymru programme?

### **Schools Challenge Cymru funding**

- Details of the funding received by each of the Pathways to Success schools during each year of Schools Challenge Cymru? (The Welsh Government did publish allocations for the first year of the programme 2014/15 in a [Cabinet Statement on 14 July 2015](#) but we're not aware of the following two years' allocations being in the public domain.)
- Details of how the £1.5 million allocated in 2017–18 'to provide targeted support for schools', 'building on lessons learnt from the Schools Challenge Cymru' programme' was spent – referenced in a [letter from the Cabinet Secretary dated 22 June 2017](#).
- Information on exit strategies for Pathways to Success schools, to cope with the loss of Schools Challenge Cymru funding and support.

### **Role of the regional consortia**

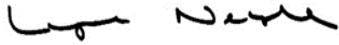
- The Committee will be taking evidence from the consortia themselves but it would be useful to ascertain the Welsh Government's position on what role the regional consortia have in the way schools use their PDG allocations to improve eFSM pupils' attainment.



- How the regional consortia spend/distribute their PDG allocations for looked after and adopted children.

The Committee very much looks forward to receiving your response on these matters.

Yours Sincerely,



**Lynne Neagle AC / AM**  
**Cadeirydd / Chair**

