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Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1348
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/01431/23

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

4 September 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 15 August regarding Petition P-06-1348 Review the inadequate funding for Schools in Wales

We recognise that high levels of inflation and energy costs are causing financial pressures on our public services, including schools, and we remain committed to doing everything we can to support them. The Autumn Statement confirmed that the UK is entering what looks set to be a lengthy recession, which will result in real and significant costs for people across the UK.

The rapid rise in inflation has meant that the Welsh Government's budget is now worth less than it was at the time at which we set our spending plans. Our funding settlement from the UK Government, including the additional funding in the Autumn Statement, is not enough to meet the inflationary pressures Wales is facing, let alone all our priorities in 2023-24.

The amount of funding set aside for school budgets is for local authorities to determine, the Welsh Government does not fund schools directly. The Welsh Government provides funding to local authorities for pre-16 provision in schools in Wales mainly through the local government settlement in the form of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The RSG is not ring-fenced; the funding allocated to each authority is available to the authority to spend as it sees fit on the range of services for which it is responsible, including schools. This is in line with the Welsh Government's policy that LAs are best placed to judge local needs and circumstances and to fund schools accordingly.

A school governing body may only set a deficit budget with the consent of the authority. Where schools have large deficits local authorities should be working closely with them to ensure that they are brought back to a modest surplus as soon as possible. Schools in deficit should have a robust recovery plan in place and this should to be agreed and monitored by the authority.

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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.

Despite our budget this year being up to £900m lower in real terms than expected initially, we ensured local authorities, who fund schools, received an increase of 7.9% to their budgets compared to the previous year to reflect the priority the Government gives to local government services. The annual local government settlement provides a significant proportion of local authorities' overall funding. For 2023-24, the settlement distributes over £5.5bn between the 22 Welsh local authorities. This funding is unhypothecated so that Authorities may make decisions to reflect local circumstances and priorities.

In 2023-24, local authorities in Wales are forecast to spend £9.206bn in total. Schools expenditure in 2023-24 is budgeted to be £3.343bn, an increase of 8.0% over the previous year. Schools expenditure per pupil is budgeted to be £7,327, a year-on-year increase of 8.2% or £554. The budget per pupil can be broken down into £5,998 per pupil delegated to schools and £1,328 per pupil retained for centrally funded school services.

Although funding for schools in Wales is mainly provided through the local government settlement, the Welsh Government's education budget also supports spending in and on schools, teachers and wider education programmes. For 2023-24 this includes, for example, £37.5m to support schools through the Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards Programme; and over £120m funding for schools through the Pupil Development Grant.

Local authorities, when carrying out their duty to ensure the availability of suitable education provision in their area, should work with their maintained schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their school funding arrangements in supporting and raising the achievement of learners, including those with ALN. Schools have the opportunity to influence their local authority's decisions on school budgets by engaging in dialogue with authorities including through their budget forum, which is required in law.

Individual schools are responsible for deciding the procedures they adopt for meeting the needs of all children, for observing and assessing their progress and in most cases, for deciding the nature of any additional support they put in place.

We have invested over £62 million of revenue grant funding in ALN between 2020 and 2023 and we increased the ALN implementation grant by £5.4m, to £12m, across Wales for 2023-24. This additional grant is intended to increase the resources for schools to implement the ALN system and lead whole-school strategies to embed inclusive education.

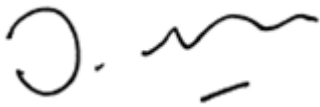
In relation to school maintenance, we also continue to invest c£300m per annum in our schools estate through our Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (SCfL), primarily focussing on strategic delivery of new build and/or large-scale refurbishments. This contributes towards the reduction of backlog maintenance and decarbonisation of the education estate in Wales, as well as reducing revenue costs. However, we still recognise the wider education estate, and have funded capital maintenance works with £43m in 2019-20, £50m in 2020-21 and a further £50m in 2021-22. During 2022-23 we provided an allocation of £60m (£50m schools and £10m colleges) to local authorities and Further Education Institutions to support capital maintenance energy efficiency works across schools and colleges in Wales.

I recognise the pressure headteachers and senior education staff are under and I have been very clear that tackling workload for school staff is a priority, recognising the inextricable link between workload and wellbeing. I am committed to reducing unnecessary bureaucracy for school leaders, recognising the positive impact this has on wider teaching staff. We commenced workload negotiation meetings at the end of April with employers, teacher unions, Estyn and other middle tier partners, and in July I made a [statement](#) about the

progress that has been made. While significant progress has been made there is still much to do and work is continuing to reduce workload and reduce the burden on education staff, to ensure tangible improvements are seen by education staff at school level. Alongside the Welsh Government's focus on reducing workload and bureaucracy, we have also provided further funding to support well-being services for school staff in Wales. The Well-being in Wales programme is now in its third year and provides support to the teaching profession through a bespoke range of services provided by the education charity Education Support.

I recognise that the cost-of-living crisis is putting schools and local authorities under significant pressure, and that there are no easy answers to resolving the issues being faced. We know it is vital that communication channels are active during these especially difficult times and are engaging closely with local government on the budget and other issues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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