

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg |
Priorities for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYPE 81

Ymateb gan : Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru

Response from : Welsh Local Government Association

Question 1 – Within the remit set out above: what do you consider to be the priorities or issues that the Children, Young People and Education Committee should consider during the Fifth Assembly?

In developing this response, the Welsh Local Government Association has consulted with local authority elected members with the responsibility for education and children services and also the Association of Directors of Education in Wales. Local authorities have also submitted their own responses to this consultation.

There are a number of priorities relating to education and schools outlined in the [WLGA business plan for 2016–2017](#). This business plan has been agreed by all local authority leaders across Wales, in addition to this consultation response. The issues outlined in this response are reflected in the priorities laid out the WLGA business plan.

Schools Capital Finance

Since the Schools Buildings Improvement Grant ceased to exist in 2010, local authorities in Wales have been working with Welsh Government on the development and implementation of the 21st Century Schools Programme, a multi-billion pound schools building improvement programme. The priorities set out in 21st Century Schools were jointly agreed and endorsed by both local and national government and the programme has been funded through a combination of Welsh Government funding and local authority capital funding. The first phase of the 21st Century Schools programme is now coming to a close and work has begun on developing the second

phase of the programme. It would therefore, seem timely for the Committee to examine the successes from the first phase of the programme and to consider whether the aims of the programme were met over this first phase, and to see if there are lessons that could be learnt to take forward to the next phase of the programme. The Wales Audit Office are currently undertaking a review into the programme to date and their report could usefully form part of the evidence provided to the Committee if an enquiry into 21st Century Schools was undertaken.

Schools Governance

There are a number of significant changes taking place in the education system in Wales, including the development of a new curriculum for Wales, updating of professional standards for teachers and also an increased emphasis on the role that leadership takes in the success of schools. Local authorities, through their regional school improvement services have also sought to improve standards in schools in Wales through embedding practice such as school-to-school support, which sees school improvement work and the professional development of teachers being undertaken within and between schools. These changes in the education system in Wales are essential if Wales is going to see continued improvement.

In order to support these changes schools across Wales need a rigorous and supportive governance structure. The WLGA have called for a review of the current system of governance in schools and would like to see this issue feature as one of the priority areas for the Committee. Questions that the Committee could consider would be whether the current system reflects the changes in education over recent years; whether governance in schools is up to the challenge of future change; and to seek examples of where innovative approaches to governance have benefited school improvement.

Federation of Schools

The WLGA business plan is clear that local authorities in Wales are supportive of an increase in the number of schools that are part of a federation. There are a range of benefits from the federation of

schools, mostly notably it provides schools with the ability to share expertise enabling a widening of the curriculum and creates a partnership between schools to develop school improvement support. It also provides opportunity for head teachers to lead across schools, which addresses head teacher recruitment issues in some areas of Wales. In addition, it provides a clear opportunity to share staff in areas such as business and finance functions, which could lead to improved financial efficiencies in schools. Federation between phases (3 – 16/18 age range) can tackle issues associated with transition between schools and having a number of schools federated can also result in improved governance, partly addressing issues in governance highlighted above.

There are a number of examples across Wales of federations and the WLGA would like the Committee to consider looking at the benefits that have been realised through these federations, and also the challenges associated with federation.

Well-being and education

The well-being of children and young people is of paramount importance to local authorities across Wales. It is well known that there is a close connection between poverty and educational performance and a growing body of evidence to indicate that the well-being of children and young people both within and outside of the school setting is an important determining factor in educational performance. Schools have a crucial part to play in ensuring that children and young people are supported in order to fulfil their educational potential, and do so already, for example, through the provision of school based counselling. It is also essential that children and young people are supported outside of school, within their families to ensure that their well-being needs are met and they are ready and able to learn when they access education, either through formal or informal routes.

The Future Generations Act 2015 and the Social Services and Well-Being Act 2016 have provided a statutory basis for public services to work together and education services across Wales are demonstrating

innovative work in this area. The WLGA would like to suggest that the Committee hold an enquiry to look at the importance of well-being in educational performance and seek examples of good practice from across Wales and beyond to support the continued development of work in this area.

Question 2 – From the list of priorities or issues you have identified, what do you consider to be the key areas that should be considered during the next 12 months (please identify up to three areas or issues)? Please outline why these should be considered as key priorities.

The WLGA would like to suggest that the area of school governance should be given priority over the next 12 months, in addition to work to look at the federation of schools. The WLGA considers that these are pressing issues that need to be addressed in the short term in order to see a continuation of the recent progress made in the education system in Wales.