CYPE(5)-09-18 – Paper 1

The inquiry will focus specifically on:

- Schools' use of the PDG and the extent to which this benefits the pupils it is designed to be targeted at;
- The relationship between PDG-funded support for pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and expenditure on activities designed to improve attainment of all pupils;
- Regional consortia's use of the PDG on looked after and adopted children, and the impact this is having;
- Progress since the previous Children, Young People and Education Committee 2014 inquiry; *Educational outcomes for children from low income households;*
- The impact of the Schools Challenge Cymru programme and the consequences of its closure on the participating 'Pathways to Success' schools;
- How the lessons and legacy of Schools Challenge Cymru can be used to complement subsequent policies and initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes;
- Evaluation of attainment data in light of the PDG and Schools Challenge Cymru programmes;
- Targeted funding / support for more able and talented pupils;
- The value for money of both the PDG and Schools Challenge Cymru programmes.

*The inquiry is not looking at educational improvement more generally as such an inquiry would be too wide in scope for an individual Committee inquiry. The inquiry is therefore not about the general £100 million pledged within this Assembly for improving school standards across the board but is focused on funding which the Welsh Government targets at improving the performance and standards of specific groups of pupils and schools.

** There are various funding streams, which are over and above general education funding. However, this inquiry is primarily concerned with the pupils and schools targeted by funding from the PDG and Schools Challenge Cymru. These include the aspects of the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) intended to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic learners, and funding for meeting learners' Additional Learning Needs (ALN). The Committee has already undertaken an inquiry into the EIG as well as scrutiny of the ALN Bill.

Estyn Response re: Pupils Deprivation Grant/ Pupil Development Grant (PDG)

Estyn reports on a school's use of PDG funding in all inspections (except when there are no or very few pupils at the school who are eligible for free school meals). Estyn inspectors consider how well schools use PDG funding as a part of their overall evaluation of a school's resource management. In particular, inspectors consider the impact of provision funded by the grant on improving the progress, attainment and wellbeing of those pupils eligible for free school meals. Comprehensive guidance in relation to the activities that inspectors undertake to inspect approaches taken by schools and local government education services to reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment and wellbeing is available here. Estyn has published thematic reports and training materials in relation to schools' approaches:

Tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools: working with the community and other services, 2011

Effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools - November 2012

Working together to tackle the impact of poverty on educational achievement - December 2013

Working together to tackle the impact of poverty on educational achievement - Training Material, 2014

Summary report – pupil deprivation, 2014

Schools are complex and it is not always possible to identify cause and effect in relation to the use of the PDG.

Main findings

- Performance of disadvantaged pupils, at all key stages has improved since the introduction of PDG. However, the performance gap between those eligible for free school meals and other pupils has not closed significantly at any stage of learning.
- In recent years, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved at a faster rate than that of other pupils. However, overall there are considerable differences in the attendance rates of too many pupils who are eligible for free school meals in comparison with other pupils. For example, pupils eligible for free school meals are far less likely to have an overall attendance of over 95% than their peers.

- The gap in attendance between eFSM pupils and others increases at every key stage and is a particular cause for concern in key stage 4. Evidence suggests a strong correlation between poor attendance and low attainment especially for disadvantaged pupils. This is particularly notable by the end of key stage 4. The overall national picture does not suggest that schools have used grant funding well enough to address the poor attendance issue.
- Too few schools use the PDG well to ensure that the most able pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve as well as they might. This is rarely a central aspect of school PDG plans.
- Over time, the strategic use of the PDG for looked after children (LAC) has not been effective enough. Schools have not been clear enough about how they can access training or support provided through their grant to support LAC pupils. However, recent developments with Welsh Government and the regional consortia have the potential to bring about a more effective and sustainable use of funding.
- Local authorities and regional consortia were slow to establish effective professional dialogue with schools to ensure that they use grant funding well, but this situation is beginning to improve through a better understanding within regional consortia of what works and more appropriate challenge to schools, including more partnering between schools to share good practice.
- School that are the most effective in mitigating the impact of poverty have highly effective leadership, strong arrangements to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and stay in school (not excluded), provide high quality learning experiences that interest and engage pupils delivered by effective teachers who support pupils to make the progress they are capable of making.
- In the best schools, leaders build strong relationships with parents, the local community and with specialist services to meet the needs of pupils and their families. This work has a very positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing. Generally, these arrangements for working with families and local communities are stronger in primary than in secondary schools.

Overall, schools across Wales now have a stronger focus on reducing the impact of poverty than at the beginning of the inspection cycle 2010-2017. The availability of PDG funding contributes to this stronger focus considerably. Schools know that they are accountable for using this funding appropriately. Inspection activities that evaluate the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and how well schools make use of the PDG provide valuable accountability safeguards.

Across Wales, schools' work is steadily improving outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals at each phase of education. For example, the proportion of key stage 4 pupils eligible for free school meals who achieved five A*-C grades including English or Welsh and mathematics increased year-on-year from 22% in 2011 to almost 36% in 2016.

The figure below shows that the outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals have improved steadily since 2010 in key indicators at each phase of learning. This is true for both teacher assessment from the Foundation Phase through to key stage 3 and for the nationally gathered and externally verified data at key stage 4. Whilst the performance gap between disadvantaged pupils and others has reduced slightly at most phases of learning, the gap is only slightly smaller now in key stage 4 than it was in 2011. There continues to be a strong link between achievement and the level of entitlement to free school meals in secondary schools. As the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals increases, the level of achievement decreases.

The EFSM/not EFSM totals are based on pupils from maintained primary, secondary, all age and special schools matched between the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and attainment databases. Please note that the all pupils totals here are the national figures and therefore on a different basis.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 (provisional)
% L2+ eFSM	22.0	23.4	25.8	27.8	31.6	35.6	28.5
% L2+ eFSM	55.7	56.6	58.5	61.6	64.1	66.8	60.8
% point gap	33.8	33.2	32.7	33.8	32.4	31.3	32.3

The way that schools use the PDG has improved since the funding was first introduced. This is partly due to the sharper focus on the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils within the education system as a whole. Nearly all schools now target the pupil development grant to support those eligible for free school meals. Generally, the types of activities that schools use the funding for include:

- Developing systems to track the progress of different groups of pupils including those eligible for free school meals and looked after pupils
- Improving attendance
- Family engagement work, for example through work of a wellbeing/ pastoral support officer or by involving parents in literacy, numeracy, language and play courses
- Effective work with pre-school groups, for example such as Flying Start and work with parents before pupils join nursery or reception classes
- Withdrawal programmes such as catch-up
- Improving aspects of wellbeing e.g. self-esteem (SAP, PASS)
- Paying for educational visits and residential trips including musical tuition
- Literacy and numeracy projects
- Staff development, for example to use assessment for learning strategies and develop pupils learning to learn skills

These strategies have not changed significantly since Estyn's last submission for the CYPE Committee's Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households 2015 here.

However, although most schools use grant funding to provide a similar range of strategies, the impact is too variable overall. The proportion of schools that make effective use of the PDG has remained at around two-thirds of primary and secondary schools.

Schools that tend to use the funding well usually have effective leadership. These schools use the pupil development grant strategically to improve their provision. For example, they employ staff to lead and co-ordinate all aspects of provision for disadvantaged pupils and evaluate the impact of their actions, so that they know what works well. They do not simply accept that a particular approach will work in their context because it has worked elsewhere. Leaders continually evaluate the impact that strategies have. In this way, they know what works well in their school's unique context. They do not use poverty as an excuse for under-attainment, but have high expectations of pupils and staff in all aspects of their work. In schools that mitigate the impact of poverty successfully, the quality of teaching is always good or better. In a few instances, the development of teaching approaches such as the effective use of assessment for learning strategies is a part of a school's PDG plan. They have effective arrangements to secure high rates of attendance amongst pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. A few schools tailor the curriculum and support to meet the individual needs of disadvantaged learners particularly well and helps learners to make strong

progress. However, inspection evidence cannot confirm categorically that this practice is because of the school's use of the PDG.
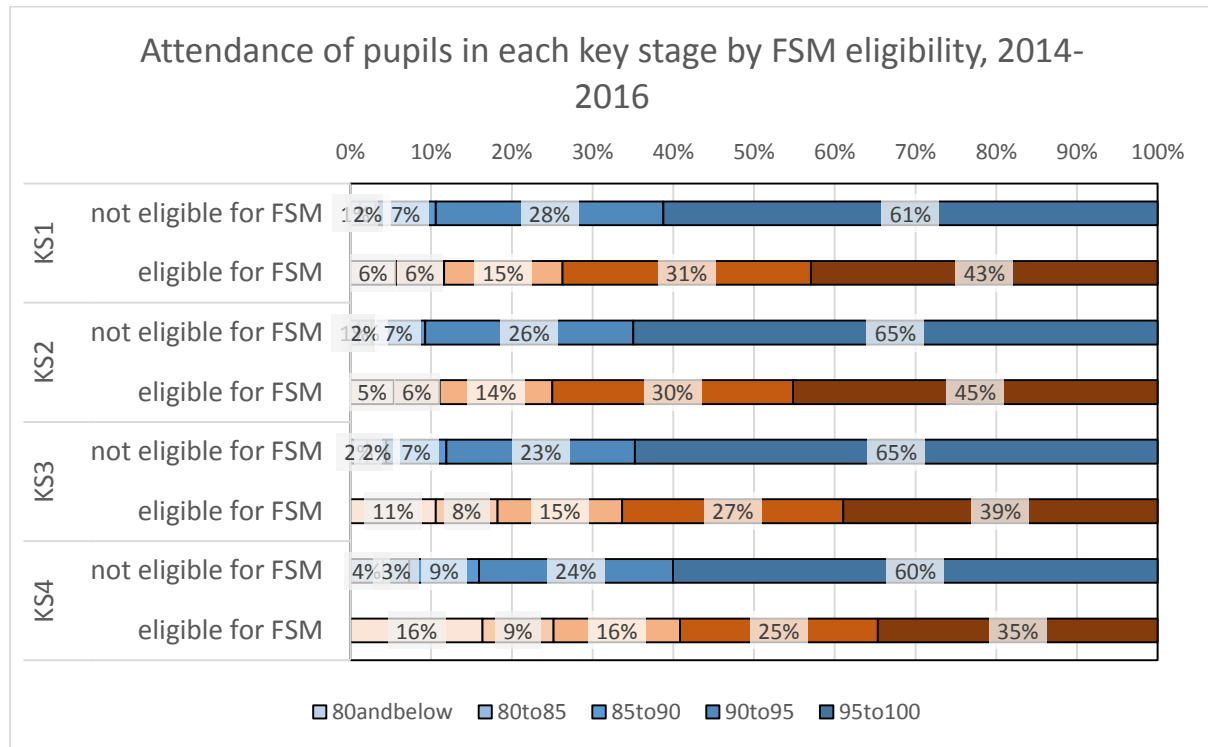
Less successful schools often adopt many of the strategies used by their more successful counterparts, such as programmes to improve pupils' literacy skills. However, they do not adapt or tailor the delivery of these strategies well enough to meet the needs of their pupils or evaluate the difference that initiatives make to pupils' outcomes. In particular, too many secondary schools use the funding for 'catch-up' programmes at key stage 4 rather than to develop pupils' skills sustainably throughout their secondary education. Estyn does not yet have enough evidence to identify whether schools have changed policy in response to the Cabinet Secretary's new guidance to schools which states that 60% of PDG allocation should now go to improving outcomes in key stage 3.

Throughout the time that the PDG has been available to schools, there has been a strong culture of using the funding to support pupils at risk of under attainment, for example those who without intervention might not achieve the level expected for their age. A very few schools have used the funding to support disadvantaged pupils who are more able to achieve the highest standards.

It is difficult to quantify the proportion of schools that use research to identify evidence-based approaches, for example the work of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and more difficult still to identify the proportion of schools that use this work effectively. However, it is fair to say that schools who are successful in mitigating the impact of poverty on educational outcomes use evidence-based strategies, such as assessment for learning strategies well. However, a few schools that are highly effective in raising standards of learning and wellbeing for disadvantaged learners challenge research findings based on the evidence arising from their own context. For example, a few primary schools with very high proportions of EFSM pupils demonstrate that their learning support assistants represent very good value for money through the impact they have on outcomes for pupils.

In recent years, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has improved more quickly than the attendance of other pupils in both primary and secondary schools. However, persistent absence of pupils eligible for free school meals continues to be a concern at all phases. Over the last three years, around 25% of pupils eligible for free school meals in key stage 2 attend for less than 90% of the time (9% for other pupils) and only 45% attend for 95% or more (65% for other pupils). By key stage 4, in secondary schools, around 40% of pupils eligible for free school meals have less than 90% attendance (16% for other pupils) and only 35% attend for 95% or more of the time (60% for other pupils). Schools will not succeed in reducing the performance gap until this situation improves. From September 2017, inspectors will be paying additional attention to the proportions of pupils that are eligible for free school meals who are persistently absent. They will focus particularly on the rate of attendance of eligible for free school meals pupils in comparison with others, for example the proportion with

attendance of over 95%. This is because there is a clear link between attendance and attainment for disadvantaged pupils as demonstrated in the figure below.

Attendance of pupils in each key stage by FSM eligibility, 2014-2016

Region	Free School Meal eligibility	Attendance		Foundation Phase		Key Stage 2		Key Stage 3		Key Stage 4		
				Pupils	Percentage achieving FPI	Pupils	Percentage achieving CSI	Pupils	Percentage achieving CSI	Pupils	Percentage achieving Level 2	Percentage achieving Level 2 Inclusive
Wales	FSM eligible	90% and under	80% or below	271	52%	280	64%	602	52%	718	48%	15%
			80% to 85%	366	71%	341	70%	414	65%	396	64%	22%
			85% to 90%	920	73%	875	77%	872	70%	694	76%	32%
		90% and under Total		1,557	69%	1,496	73%	1,888	63%	1,808	62%	23%
		Over 90%	90% to 95%	2,102	77%	1,782	77%	1,477	76%	1,191	79%	40%
			95% to 100%	3,127	80%	2,637	82%	1,858	78%	1,682	82%	49%
		Over 90% Total		5,229	79%	4,419	80%	3,335	77%	2,873	81%	45%
	FSM eligible Total			6,786	77%	5,915	78%	5,223	72%	4,681	74%	37%
	Not FSM eligible	90% and under	80% or below	218	60%	246	74%	579	65%	987	58%	29%
			80% to 85%	379	73%	406	82%	697	79%	830	73%	36%
			85% to 90%	1,783	82%	1,813	86%	2,094	84%	2,168	83%	48%
		90% and under Total		2,380	79%	2,465	84%	3,370	80%	3,985	75%	41%
		Over 90%	90% to 95%	7,498	89%	6,700	91%	6,325	90%	6,312	89%	62%
			95% to 100%	17,897	93%	17,716	93%	15,247	93%	15,895	94%	76%
		Over 90% Total		25,395	91%	24,416	93%	21,572	92%	22,207	92%	72%
	Not FSM eligible Total			27,775	90%	26,881	92%	24,942	91%	26,192	90%	67%
	Grand Total			34,561	88%	32,796	89%	30,165	87%	30,873	87%	63%

It is important to note that the statistics within the figure above are from overall national outcomes. There are schools that succeed in improving attendance and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Case study video Cefn Hengoed here.

Exclusions

One of the main messages arising from the exclusions data is that, overtime, there is no overall trend of reduction in the rate of exclusions for pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Pupils from this group are still much more likely to receive fixed term exclusions than others.

Number and Rates of exclusions in Wales, by characteristic.

	Year	Permanent Exclusions		Fixed-term exclusions	
		Number	Rate (per 1000)	Number	Rate (per 1000)
Looked After Children	2012	9	*2.0*	998	*218.9*
	2013	9	*2.0*	1,196	*259.4*
	2014	5	*1.1*	868	*189.0*
	2015	*	*	922	*205.5*
	2016	7	*1.6*	902	*201.2*
Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals	2012	38	0.5	6,988	*84.8*
	2013	37	0.4	6,436	*77.2*
	2014	30	0.4	6,084	*74.7*
	2015	37	0.5	6,828	*84.3*
	2016	36	0.5	6,762	*85.8*
All Pupils	2012	91	0.2	14,922	32.2
	2013	102	0.2	13,879	30
	2014	89	0.2	13,113	28.3
	2015	89	0.2	14,719	31.6
	2016	109	0.2	15,078	32.3

Source: Children in Need Census (unpublished), Exclusions record (http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/permanent-fixed-term-exclusions-from-schools/?lang=en)

Notes

* data has been removed as it is too small and may disclose information

Based on all pupils in maintained schools

Data on Looked After Children has been taken from a separate data collection and so is not directly comparable

Cohorts of pupils are not shown as a pupil can be excluded more than once, however, the cohort sizes of these groups are very varied so again, comparisons should be made with care - e.g. in 2016 there were 4,484 Looked After Children, 83,498 pupils eligible for Free School Meals and 466,555 pupils in total in maintained schools in Wales.

Estyn has only identified a very few school that use the funding inappropriately, for example to reduce budget deficits.

Local Authorities and Regional Consortia

The timing of the introduction of the PDG coincided with the move to regional working. This caused some confusion in relation to accountability and leadership in relation to grant usage. Initially, the four regional consortia were slow to implement measures to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners. However, they are beginning to work more strategically. For example, all regions now have a designated officer to co-ordinate their approach to mitigating the impact of poverty. They monitor the progress of disadvantaged learners appropriately and have suitable arrangements to check whether schools use grant funding for the intended recipients.

PDG for Looked After Children

In July 2016, Estyn's produced a best practice report Raising the attainment, achievement and aspiration of children who are looked after. The report was a best practice report and not a full evaluation of the quality of all provision across Wales. Estyn has limited evidence of the impact of the PDG for looked after pupils. However, overtime, there have not been clear or effective systems to ensure that schools know about the availability of LAC PDG.

Recent developments arising from work between the Welsh Government and the regional consortia give cause for optimism that there is now a mechanism for the effective and sustainable use of the funding. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this new strategic approach on outcomes for pupils and it is not yet clear how well schools across Wales understand these new arrangements. Estyn will be looking into this aspect of the regional consortia's work during future visits.

Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC)

Key strengths

- A majority of schools have built on the effective changes implemented as part of Schools Challenge Cymru. In particular the establishment of the AIB to facilitate a more collaborative approach as well as provide a forum for a range of partners to meet regularly to discuss school improvement progress.
- This programme recognised that a minority of schools needed more extensive and bespoke assistance and resources to support improvement and that the secondary sector faced different and sometimes more complex challenges to improve leadership, provision and standards.
- Extensive professional support and training helped to ensure that there was greater consistency in the quality of evaluations and analyses.

Challenges
- The timing of the establishment of the Schools Challenge Cymru was unfortunate as it occurred at the same time as the setting up of regional consortia. During the first 18 months, the programme operated outside consortia arrangements and some early decisions were made without consultation or discussion with relevant regional staff.
- In a minority of instances, short-initiatives, such as intensive external support for examination classes where promoted and used at the expense of long-term sustainable solutions to improve teaching and learning.
- A few advisers initially worked with too many schools, this limited the range of support they were able to provide
- Extensive support and training had helped to ensure that there was greater consistency in the quality of evaluations and analyses.
- Overall, there was too much variability in the quality of advice and guidance given to schools.

Estyn was not involved in the identification of SCC schools and we were not asked to carry out an evaluation of SCC. Although evaluations of the Pathways to Success programme were commissioned by Welsh Government. Over time, Estyn developed good links with Welsh Government staff and the team of SCC advisors. HMI met termly with the SCC advisers, providing updates on the Welsh context as many were appointed from outside Wales.

Case studies from inspection:
- In school A, the SCC advisor and senior leadership team had a shared understanding of areas needing improvement and the actions required to bring this about. In this school, the Accelerated Improvement Board (AIB) provided clear direction, set high expectations and monitored progress towards improvement robustly. This was increasing accountability, which we evidenced in the documentation and in interviews during the latest follow-up visit, at all levels from middle managers through to the governing body. Although it was too early to evaluate the sustained impact of this on pupils' standards, it appears that the new headteacher, with the support of the challenge advisor, had been able to tackle underperformance more rigorously, which has led to appropriate staffing changes in underperforming subjects and departments.
- School B was receiving significant support as a Challenge Cymru school. The inspection team concluded that SCC plans and intervention were already having an impact. For example, the school acted quickly in response to a leadership review. There was sufficient strength in teaching and in the work of leaders to give confidence.
- At school C, The funding from SCC had enabled the school to buy in more support than it would otherwise have been able to do. The school had made significant progress in developing suitable processes to improve rigour in self-evaluation and improvement planning. The school improvement plan for 2014-2015 had a clear focus on the core priorities for improvement. In September 2014, the school introduced a more

robust approach to the evaluation of pupils' progress. Middle leaders were involved in all aspects of evaluation and review.

- In school D inspectors found significant duplication of documentation – too many plans leading to a lack of clarity and the SCC programme appeared to have had limited impact on the quality of improvement planning at the school – documentation was poor e.g. plans without targets and actions vague.
- Local authority and consortia representatives were not always included in the planning and delivery of support for individual schools. The lack of collaboration does not support a sustainable model for school improvement. For example, it was expected that a LA representative sat on the AIB but in a few cases witnessed on follow-up visits, lines of responsibility and accountability were not always clear.

Inspection Outcomes for School Challenge Cymru Schools

- Estyn inspected all forty SCC schools during the inspection cycle 2010-17. Six of the SCC schools were inspected twice in this period. The judgments for current performance and prospects for improvement for the most recent inspections of these schools were as follows:

Judgement	Current Performance	Prospects for Improvement
Excellent	No schools	No schools
Good	4 schools, 10%	8 schools, 20%
Adequate	21 schools, 53%	20 schools, 50%
Unsatisfactory	15 schools, 38%	12 schools, 30%

- During the last inspection cycle (2010-2017), 24 schools that became part of the SCC programme were inspected before the start of SCC. Twenty-two of those schools required follow up with 10 going into a statutory category. SCC schools, which remain in follow up, are usually there due to issues around teaching. Nearly all those who have been put into a statutory category have recommendations to improve the quality of teaching and assessment and the quality of leadership, most commonly, of middle leaders.
- Five schools in the programme have been inspected 2016/17 with two judged to be in need of Significant Improvement and three requiring Special Measures

- Estyn has not identified any pattern of accelerated progress out of follow-up categories for SCC schools.