

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-872
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/05387/19

David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions committee.
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27 February 2019

Dear David

Thank you for your letter dated 15 February regarding the petition you have received from James Wilkinson, 'Protect school funding or admit to the weakening of service provision'. You seek my views on the issues raised before its first formal consideration.

The Welsh Government recognises the pressures that local authorities are facing and our budgets reflect our continued priorities for local services, schools and social care. We have taken action to safeguard local authorities and front line school services.

The decisions the Welsh Government has made as part of the overall budget provide local government with a realistic settlement against the background of the current financial climate and one which is improved on the indicative settlement approved in the last budget, where councils were looking at a reduction of 1% in core funding. The final settlement represents a cash increase overall, compared to 2018/19, equivalent to an increase of 0.2% after adjusting for transfers and includes a floor, fully-funded by the Welsh Government, so that no authority now faces a reduction of more than 0.3%, compared with the current year, on a like-for-like basis.

In addition to the core funding we provide to local government for the services which they provide, the Welsh Government continues to provide significant grant funding to support improved outcomes for learners in Wales. Over this Assembly term, we have committed to invest £100 million to raise school standards and more than half of this investment is prioritised towards improving teaching and learning, recognising that our teachers are our single greatest agents of change and improvement in the classroom.

In recognition of the costs associated with the introduction of the new Additional Learning Needs system we are investing £20 million to support the skills development of the education workforce to help build capacity within the system and ensure learners' needs can be met in a range of education settings – with £5.7m invested in 2019-20.

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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.

This will facilitate and support the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, which was granted royal assent in January and will transform the ALN system. It will pave the way for a new approach driving improvements in standards to ensure all learners can reach their full potential.

Curriculum reform is at the heart of our plan of action for education and we have focused funding to deliver Education in Wales. We are continuing to invest £10 million this year to support curriculum reform. We have set budgets which enable us to maintain our investment through pioneer schools and for the core development and delivery of the curriculum working with our partners. Our direct support to the curriculum, professional learning and digital pioneer schools continues to be maintained.

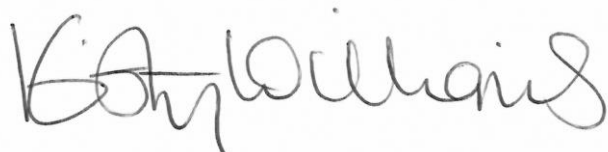
The National Approach to Professional Learning (NAPL), announced in November, will see £9 million in this financial year, increasing to £15 million next financial year, the single biggest investment in support for teachers in Wales since devolution. The funding will give schools the time and resources they need to plan ahead for the new curriculum and ensure that changes are made in a way that will prioritise the wellbeing of teachers and minimise disruption to pupils' learning. The funding will also help ensure that there is cover for staff to be released for professional learning.

Our 21st Century Schools and Education Programme represents the largest investment in our schools and colleges since the 1960s. Over £1.4 billion will be invested in Band A of the Programme, which has already significantly surpassed its target of 150 schools and colleges to be rebuilt or refurbished. A further £2.3 billion will be invested in the education infrastructure from April 2019. A key priority for Welsh Government has been to ensure that equal access to education is provided for all children and young people, including those with disabilities and additional learning needs. It is our delivery partners in local authorities and further education institutions that prioritise the projects that need to be delivered.

The original level of grant support for capital schemes was 50%. However, in November last year, after listening to our delivery partners' concerns about the pressures on their budgets, I announced an increase to the Welsh Government grant intervention rate for capital schemes from 50% to 65% of their cost. I also announced an increase to 75% for schemes affecting our most vulnerable pupils in facilities for those with additional learning needs and those in pupil referral units.

The Welsh Government will continue to work closely with local government, regional consortia and schools, within a national system, to deliver efficiencies, develop more effective ways of delivering local services and ensure that our shared vision for improving educational outcomes for learners in Wales is realised.

Yours sincerely

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

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