

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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(By Email)
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Dear Ms Neagle,

I have seen a copy of your letter dated 14 March to the Cabinet Secretary for Education concerning the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic learner provision.

This Council fully supports your request for further information as set out at various points in your letter in bold type. We are particularly concerned at the apparent absence of a Child Rights Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment from the Welsh Government. We have seen neither.

I suspect that we might have to agree to differ on the merits of de-hypothecation of specific grants; but that is not the real issue here. At the time of writing, the simple fact is that all of this adds up to a major cut in support for learners in these categories which actually threatens the future of the entire provision. To give you some local context here, it represents a 74% cut in the funding compared to 2017/18 or an 86% cut if one excludes the funding our own schools are prepared to put into these services at their own discretion. Nearly all of this funding is used to employ dedicated support staff and its removal would certainly result in job losses.

Against this background, this Council's Cabinet will be taking a report next month on how to plug some of the gap; but I think it is inevitable that the service will be significantly reduced and whatever we do, will represent a partial one year fix only. It seems to me that we will

have little choice but to review the future of the entire service going forward as it cannot be sustained on the basis of this level of budget reductions. We are aware of some rather vague ideas of a regional arrangement based around the four authorities who will be receiving direct, but reduced, support (Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham); but again we have no clear idea as to how this is going to work in practice or whether it is practical at all.

Thus I believe your letter - and the specific questions you have put to the Cabinet Secretary - are very timely indeed. In my view, it is extremely regrettable that most/all local authorities are left in this position a matter of a couple of weeks before the new financial year commences.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Debbie Wilcox, the Leader and Education spokesperson of the WLGA.

Yours sincerely,



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Leader of Council

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