

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Cyllido Ysgolion yng Nghymru | School Funding in Wales

SF 25

Ymateb gan:

Response from: Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Budget Forum

I write as chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Budget Forum in response to the CYPE Committee Inquiry into School Funding call for evidence.

The level of funding allocated per student in the Vale of Glamorgan, but more significantly the level of funding given to the pupils in comparison to students across the rest of Wales, has been the source of much debate and disappointment to members of the Budget Forum over many years.

As a forum we appreciate that the funding of schools is the responsibility of the Local Authority we are also aware, however, that the authority must give consideration to the Welsh Government calculated indicator based assessment (IBA) when allocating funding to schools and it is difficult for an authority to fund a service above IBA in the light of other pressures in other directorates.

The Vale of Glamorgan has funded education services above IBA since April 2013 and yet pupils in the Vale of Glamorgan remain the lowest funded in Wales as demonstrated in the table below. Interestingly, there are other authorities in Wales that fund Education services below IBA and yet the budget per pupil is still higher than in the Vale.

Year	Rank for gross expenditure per pupil	IBA £'000	Budget above IBA £'000	% above IBA
2013/14	22 nd	96,392	333	0.3%
2014/15	22 nd	95,826	365	0.4%
2015/16	22 nd	95,758	370	0.4%
2016/17	22 nd	95,180	1,407	1.5%
2017/18	22 nd	94,441	3,165	3.4%
2018/19	22 nd	96,899	3,091	3.1%

The Forum has also noted that the gap between funding levels in the Vale of Glamorgan in comparison to the national average has increased by £125 per pupil in comparison to 2015/16 now standing at £568 per pupil below the national average. Further analysis shows that the funding per pupil is £1,349

per pupil below the highest figure which is a funding gap per pupil of 26% as identified in the table below.

Gross Education Expenditure per pupil

Year	VoG	Wales Average	Variance between Vale and Average	Lowest Funded	Highest Funded	Variance between Lowest and Highest	
2014/15	£5,145	£5,607	£462	£5,145	£6,302	£1,157	23%
2015/16	£5,083	£5,526	£443	£5,083	£6,322	£1,239	24%
2016/17	£5,051	£5,570	£519	£5,051	£6,349	£1,298	26%
2017/18	£5,022	£5,628	£606	£5,022	£6,382	£1,360	27%
2018/19	£5,107	£5,675	£568	£5,107	£6,456	£1,349	26%

The table also identifies that whilst the Vale of Glamorgan chose to fund the Education Budget at 3.1% above IBA the funding per pupil in 2018/19 at £5,107 is lower than the £5,145 budget allocated in 2014/15.

As a Budget Forum group we have raised our concerns with the Welsh Assembly Government, specifically asking for clarity around the funding methodology employed to calculate what presumably equitable IBA were across authorities. In their response WAG referred us to the 'green book'. Upon examination of the green book we were found that the document identifies the weightings applied within different elements of the formula without explaining the rationale used to arrive at these weighted values neither does it identify the frequency with which these weightings are reviewed to ensure that they are still relevant. As an example, there is a sparsity allowance within school funding which is not related to transport and we note that this significant amount of funding is based on dispersion calculations from the 1991 and 2001 census data.

A second example that leads us to question the robustness of the whole formula is the special school IBA calculation. The IBA calculation is weighted for children in lone households, dependent children in out of work families and dependent children in households where the head is in a low occupational classification. Whilst there is a level of correlation between deprivation and some special educational needs this is not always the case. For instance there is no evidence to suggest that autism cases are concentrated in areas of poverty. The number of pupils with autism is growing at an alarming rate with all schools reporting marked increases and special schools reporting that the demographic change is towards extremely challenging younger pupils with a diagnosis and we do not see how the formula is reflecting this fact.

The issues outlined above do nothing to provide the Vale of Glamorgan Budget Forum group that the IBA methodology employed by the Welsh Government is robust and relevant and we feel that a thorough review is needed. This opinion seems to be supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) who in their recent report '**Developing Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales**' stated that the current funding model had led to "the lack of a level playing field," and that "the evidence suggests that differences in local funding models are causing concern about unequal treatment of schools in similar circumstances," and that "the Welsh Government should therefore consider reviewing its school funding model if it is to realise its ambitions for equity and education and student well-being."

As a Forum we believe that it is important not to lose sight of the practical consequences of the funding issue that we have raised in this submission and we would, therefore, like to share a few examples supplied to us by local schools of the consequences of insufficient funding:

- Primary schools unable to meet foundation phase ratios
- Training and resource budgets used on staffing
- Creative use of grants
- Out of date ICT
- Headteachers teaching classes
- Headteachers spending more time off site trying to earn money
- Narrowing curriculum
- Restructuring admin
- Reducing technicians and support staff
- Not maintaining premises, unpleasant teaching environments
- Pupils sharing books
- PPA covered by LSAs
- 93% of school funding is spent on Staffing (1718 budget) which has risen from 92% in the 1617 FY