

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

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

Cyllido Ysgolion yng Nghymru - Gwybodaeth Bellach | School Funding in Wales - Further Information

SF FI 01

Ymateb gan: Comisiynydd y Gymraeg Response from: Welsh Language Commissioner

Dear Clerc,

Further information in relation to the consultation on school funding in Wales

As you're aware, we recently submitted evidence to the Children Young People and Education committee's consultation on school funding in Wales. Since submitting our evidence, we have become further aware of ways in which insufficient funding could directly undermine attempts to develop Welsh language provision. We would be grateful if this letter could be published alongside our initial evidence.

Recently, Gwynedd council has consulted on proposed changes to the county's language centres which offer intense immersion education for pupils who cannot speak Welsh ([see agenda item 6 for further information and a webcast of the meeting](#)). Gwynedd council are considering several different options, all of which involve cutting the staffing costs of the provision. According to Gwynedd Council, these options are being considered due to cuts to the funding they receive from the Welsh Government's Education Improvement Grant. This funding has supported the provision for years.

As outlined in our initial evidence, in addition to ensuring that local authorities have sufficient central budgets, the Welsh Assembly's education grants also play a vital role in driving *Cymraeg 2050* policy objectives. In the past, the Welsh Government used the Welsh in Education Grant to develop and improve Welsh language provision across Wales. In 2015 the Welsh Government decided to combine several education grants (including the Welsh in Education grant) into one main grant, namely the Education Improvement Grant. The Education Improvement Grant is distributed to regional consortia, who have discretion on how to allocate this funding based on local priorities. We understand that there has been a reduction (in real terms) in the funding allocated to

Comisiynydd y Gymraeg
Siambrau'r Farchnad
5-7 Heol Eglwys Fair
Caerdydd CF10 1AT

0345 6033 221
post@comisiynyddygyymraeg.cymru
Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg

comisiynyddygyymraeg.cymru

Welsh Language Commissioner
Market Chambers
5-7 St Mary Street
Cardiff CF10 1AT

0345 6033 221
post@welshlanguagecommissioner.wales
Correspondence welcomed in Welsh and English

welshlanguagecommissioner.wales



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

regional consortia as part of the Education Improvement Grant, and that this in turn has meant reductions in the funding allocated by regional consortia to the local authorities.

In the context of Gwynedd specifically, this means that less funding is available from the regional consortium to fund the language centres. Our understanding of the situation is that GwE regional consortia have maintained the percentage of the budget allocated to the language centres in Gwynedd, in line with previous funding arrangements (that is, when the funding was hypothecated under the Welsh in Education Grant, and the grants provided by the Welsh Language Board previously). It thus seems that it is the reduction in the initial budget of the Education Improvement Grant that is the key issue here, rather than the consortium realigning spending priorities. Due to the pressure already placed upon local authorities due to reductions in the central budget (which has already led to significant cuts to school funding in many local authorities), it is unclear how local authorities are expected to maintain current spending levels and/or standards.

I'm aware that this is a very complex issue, and that there exists lively debate on whether such grants should be hypothecated or not, and the appropriate balance between funding local authorities directly as opposed to funding regional consortia, and so on. Nonetheless, when listening to the discussion today during Gwynedd's education scrutiny committee, it is clear that a lack of funding (irrespective of the source) means that local authorities have no option but to consider cutting funds to a service that has an outstanding track record in creating fluent Welsh speakers, and which has been praised as exemplary by the Welsh Government and ESTYN alike.

It is very telling that this is the reality of the situation facing many local authorities – especially in light of the Government's 2050 strategy and also recent statements regarding the importance of the Welsh language to the new curriculum for Wales.

Yours sincerely,

Meri Huws
Welsh Language Commissioner