

Date/Dyddiad: 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018  
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Ms Kirsty Williams AM  
Cabinet Secretary for Education  
Welsh Government  
5<sup>th</sup> floor  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
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Dear Cabinet Secretary

### **Education funding per pupil in the Vale of Glamorgan**

We refer to previous correspondence on the issue of pupil funding levels in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Budget Forum wrote to you on behalf of the Forum on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017 regarding the level of funding budgeted per pupil in the Vale of Glamorgan compared to the rest of Wales. In that letter we identified the following concerns:

- Pupils in the Vale of Glamorgan continue to be funded at the lowest level in Wales.
- The budgeted expenditure per pupil in 2017/18 is at the same level it was in 2012/13. When considering the cost of inflation, and increases in superannuation, in addition to the new apprenticeship levy, there is significantly less funding available per pupil now than there was in 2012.
- The gap between funding levels per pupil in the Vale of Glamorgan and the national average has increased by £163 per pupil. In 2015/16 pupils in the Vale of Glamorgan were funded at £443 below the Welsh average and in 2016/17 Vale of Glamorgan pupils were funded at £606 below the Welsh average.
- The gap between the lowest and highest funded authorities in terms of funding per pupil has increased each year from 23% in 2014/15 to 27% in 2017/18.

- The Vale of Glamorgan Council has funded education services above IBA since April 2013 and yet funding per pupil remains the lowest across Wales.
- Other local authorities have funded education below IBA and yet pupils in those authorities still receive higher funding than pupils in the Vale of Glamorgan. This leads us to believe that there is something inherently wrong with the Welsh Government IBA and SSA formulae.

Similar concerns were raised in the Leader's letter of 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017 to the then Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, and copied to yourself.

It was requested that you share your methodology applied at a national level to the Local Authority IBA calculations that result in such apparent inequalities in levels of funding for students across Wales to the detriment of pupils in the Vale of Glamorgan. It was also requested that you would consider a review of the IBA methodology in an attempt to ensure greater transparency and to ensure equity in funding to schools across Wales.

In your response dated 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017, you referred us to the Green Book, which we have spent some time analysing. You assured us that the formula is kept under a continual programme of review and improvement by the Distribution Sub Group (DSG), although the Green Book itself states that the most recent total review was in 2001. We also note that The Vale of Glamorgan Council is not represented on the DSG.

The Chair of the Forum wrote back to you on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017 as we were of the opinion that a number of our concerns remained unanswered.

In that letter it was explained that the Budget Forum had spent some time analysing the Green Book and two specific examples were provided, showing where we felt that your formula is flawed and no longer relevant. The two examples given were not our major or only areas of concern, but were provided to show how quickly we had identified two areas where the methodology was clearly in need of updating. This has led us to conclude that there are likely to be other areas within the formula that are flawed; and that a total review is clearly required.

A response to this second letter was received from your colleague, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government, Alun Davies. This response made reference to the four principles underpinning the formula being equity, stability, clarity and relevance. It is our opinion that the same letter contradicts this statement by confirming the use of 1991 census data to drive the distribution of £165 million of sparsity funding and a special education formula based on numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, which we note has remained unchanged since 2003. We would like to ask if you are genuinely convinced that the four

principles: equity, stability, clarity and relevance can genuinely be attributed to a formula that is so clearly out of date and has not had a total review since 2001.

The two responses that we have received from Welsh Government have given us no confidence in the methodology used to distribute education funding across Wales and have given no indication of any willingness by Welsh Government to address, what we consider to be, the genuine issues that we have raised.

Therefore we have, with regret, come to the conclusion that the most appropriate course of action for the Vale of Glamorgan Budget Forum to take, is to share our concerns with the parents of the pupils whose education we are responsible for. In addition, we will make it publically known that it is our opinion that the education of pupils in the Vale of Glamorgan is disadvantaged in comparison to pupils in other authorities by the use of an historic, flawed and out of date Welsh Government formula.

Yours sincerely

Yours faithfully



Councillor John Thomas  
Leader  
The Vale of Glamorgan Council



Dr V M Browne  
Head Teacher  
Chair of The Vale of Glamorgan  
Council Budget Forum