



Vale School Governors' Association Cymdeithas Llywodraethwyr Ysgolion y Fro and Governor Support Unit Newsletter

Note from the Chair

Thank you to everybody who signed our petition to the Senedd regarding the inadequate funding for schools in Wales. This afternoon, 13th November, I and three colleagues have been giving evidence, at their request to the Senedd Petitions Committee about the parlous situation for school funding in Wales. The aim was to highlight what this means in practical terms for the young people in our schools, the pressures on school leaders and on Governing Bodies.

You can watch the whole session on <https://www.senedd.tv/Meeting/Archive/c383373b-9631-47d1-b91b-a70cab3d1367?autostart=True>

Schools have obligations laid down by Welsh Government in delivering a proper education, a safe environment in both building and safeguarding terms, the Curriculum for Wales, appropriate ALN provision etc. The money given them is not enough to deliver those obligations. Hence many schools in Wales have set deficit budgets. Normally that means that the school overspends and pays back the local authority over three years. 40% of schools in the Vale are unable to set a repayment plan for this year's deficit.

I was joined by:

- Matt Gilbert, Headteacher of Barry Island Primary School who highlighted the effect of budget cuts in catering for pupils with Additional Learning Needs.

A budget can be set but cannot be delivered if extra Teaching Assistants are required to meet each child's need. Overspending is inevitable to provide equitable education to all pupils.

- Dave Blackwell, Headteacher of St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School who talked about the difficult choices required to deliver a balanced curriculum and the rise in teacher pupil ratios. He also talked about the inequity in funding between similar schools in different parts of Wales.
- Laurence Matuszczyk, Chair of Merthyr Tydfil Governors Association who talked eloquently about the difficult situation for School Governors, who have to implement the consequences of low funding. He talked about having to sit on redundancy panels and of each Governing Body's duty of care for the wellbeing of Senior Leaders at their schools.

The Committee will be passing on our concerns to the Finance Committee and the Children and Young People and Education Committee.

I will keep Governors posted about how things progress.

Dr Martin Price
Chair of VSGA and Vice-Chair of Governors, St Richard Gwyn Roman Catholic High School, Barry

In association with the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Governor Support Unit

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VSGA has an email address that you may contact us on.

It's VSGA@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

alternatively you can contact VSGA by post at:

VSGA Governor Support Unit
Learning & Development Dept.
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices, Holton Road,
Barry CF63 4RU

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Special points of interest:

- AVAGO was formed in 1996 and re-launched in 2006 as Vale School Governors' Association (VSGA)
- The Management Committee is made up of 15 elected governors together with 2 elected parent governor representatives

VSGA was set up to:

- Promote best practice in governance in schools within the Vale of Glamorgan LEA
- To promote partnership amongst schools and between schools and the LEA
- To work with stakeholders to ensure adequate resources for schools within the LEA
- To represent the Association's views on issues relating to school governance and the management and resourcing of schools to relevant authorities and organisations

HR update for Schools

Teachers Pay Award

Welsh Government have agreed the pay award for teaching staff which was 5% across all scales and allowances effective from 1 September 2023. The award will be paid in the November payroll, backdated to 1 September.

A brief reminder of points that were contained in last year's/previous documents:

Pay Awards

Progression on main scale/leadership scale is annually unless formal capability procedures have been implemented.

Upper Pay Scale

Teachers may apply to go on the UPS annually and an assessment made whether they meet the relevant criteria (section 15 in the document).

Once on the UPS, progression is on a two-yearly basis, unless formal capability procedures have been implemented.

TLR awards

TLRs are awarded for undertaking a sustained additional responsibility, for the purpose of ensuring the continued delivery of high-quality teaching and learning and for which the teacher is made accountable. There are two permanent awards, TLR 1 (which requires responsibility for managing significant number of staff) and TLR2. The document was amended last year in relation to awards for part time teachers as below:

'The allowances (except for TLR3) of a part-time teacher may be determined in accordance with the pro-rata principle and no less than contracted working hours or may be determined to be paid in full, if the teacher undertakes the full duties associated with the allowance. The duties agreed should be capable of being undertaken within the normal hours of the part-time teacher concerned. The appropriate level of allowance payment and duties should be agreed between the individual teacher and the employer.'

TLR3 awards are time limited for specific projects only.

All TLR posts require a job description clearly outlining the additional responsibilities. Any changes to TLR posts/values/structures are subject to appropriate consultation within the school.

Pay Policy

Discussions are currently taking place with Welsh Government regarding production of an all Wales pay policy and HR colleagues from CSC are contributing to this. Further update will follow once way forward is agreed.

Below are links to relevant documents.

Written Statement: Teachers' Pay Award 2023 (5 October 2023) | GOV.WALES

Datganiad Ysgrifenedig: Dyfarniad Cyflog Athrawon 2023 (5 Hydref 2023) | LLYW.CYMRU

2023 version:

<https://www.gov.wales/school-teachers-pay-and-conditions-wales-document-2023>

<https://www.llyw.cymru/dogfen-cyflog-ac-amodau-athrawon-ysgol-cymru-2023>

Revised 2022 version:

<https://www.gov.wales/school-teachers-pay-and-conditions-wales-document-2022-revised-september-2023>

<https://www.llyw.cymru/dogfen-cyflog-ac-amodau-athrawon-ysgol-cymru-2022-diwygiedig-medi-2023>

Support Staff Pay Award (NJC)

The pay award for NJC staff was agreed on 1 November 2023 as detailed below. It is likely backdated payments will be made in Decembers payroll.

For one year, 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

- £1,925 (pro rata for part-time employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive

- 3.88 per cent on all pay points 43 and above (but graded below deputy chief officer in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4)

If you require any further information on above matters, please contact your HR Business Partner or me.

Sue Alderman
Principal HR Business Partner
stalderman@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Supporting Staff Wellbeing and Mental Health in Vale of Glamorgan Schools

Through the process of self-evaluation for the development of a 'Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing', many of our Vale of Glamorgan schools prioritised workforce / staff wellbeing as an area for action. Evidence has long highlighted that issues that affect teacher well-being can have a significant knock-on effect for learner well-being. Emotionally and mentally healthy teachers are better able to develop strong teacher-learner relationships.

The latest UK 'Teacher Wellbeing Index' from Education Support makes for startling reading with record numbers of respondents reporting work related stress (78%, a 3% increase on 2022) and 55% reporting that their workplace's organisational culture is having a negative impact on their wellbeing (an increase of 13% on 2022). Even more concerning is that 39% of teachers reported suffering from a mental health issue, the highest level since the survey began.

As a response to this national and local need there are a number of services and initiatives that are on offer. Please do support your schools to promote and use these widely.

Local Authority Support

Teams within the Local Authority provide support and access to specialist help for schools and staff including a new Employee Assistance offer, replacing Care First from **Westfield Health** which provides 24-hour advice and information. Structured counselling is now available only from Occupational Health. The Engagement Service based out of Ysgol Y Deri can also offer professional supervision to Senior Leaders in schools - <https://www.yyd.org.uk/team-3>

Regional School Advisory Service – Education Support

Funded by Welsh Government, this FREE service provides support to schools across Wales to prioritise wellbeing. A dedicated Regional Advisor can provide resources and guidance on policies, practices and strategies to help schools support staff mental health and wellbeing. This can include support to develop a tailored action plan, a staff survey and set up a staff wellbeing group, run wellbeing workshops and provide individual and group supervision. The offer to schools includes all staff from supply to Teaching Assistants.

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/get-help/help-for-your-staff/staff-wellbeing-service-in-wales/wellbeing-advisory-service/>

Also available is the free, immediate, confidential emotional support offered to school staff through the charity's helpline.

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/get-help/help-for-you/helpline/>

Support from the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools

The local 'Vale of Glamorgan Healthy Schools Team' can provide support, guidance and training on implementation of the 'Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing'. Do encourage staff responsible for wellbeing and health promotion in your school to sign up for the 'Vale of Glamorgan Healthy Schools' network page on hwb. This enables access to a wide range of health promoting schools resources including a nationally developed guidance document on school staff wellbeing. More information on the scheme here;

<https://cavuhb.nhs.wales/patient-advice/local-public-health-team/key-areas-of-focus/healthy-schools-pre-schools/healthy-schools-scheme/>



Corporate Compliance.

Meet our Team

Geoff Twigg, Corporate Compliance Manager

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Using our in-house expertise, or securing specialist contractors, we can take the worry out of your building compliance responsibilities in schools and other public buildings.

The Corporate Compliance Team undertake initial site visits in respect of building compliance to establish your compliance needs, whether statutory or recommended.

Building maintenance and management forms a critical part of the day to day activity in all our schools and there is a clear responsibility on managers and senior members of staff to ensure building systems and installations are safe to use. Failure to complete the relevant compliance checks and inspections can have serious consequences and the HSE would look to prosecute and even imprison where the failings are significant. To support headteachers and governing bodies, the Council has a Corporate Compliance team in place to audit building compliance within schools. There are limitations on the activities this team can achieve, however they are available to offer guidance to schools in order to support you in meeting the responsibilities both headteachers and governors hold.

To this assist in meeting your responsibilities as a governing body, it is recommended that you have a regular agenda item for your Premises Committee to review building compliance and check on the following:

	Service area	Inspection output	Observations/actions	Activity	Possible Governance Actions
	Gas Installations	Pass/fail	Engineer will reduce significant risk by isolating the gas system.	Annual	Check service and inspection completed
Electrical	Fixed Electrical installations	Graded Failure	Failings and faults within the installation are coded/graded from urgent/immediate fix and parts of the system may be shut down, whilst other minor faults are identified and do not require immediate attention.	Three/five yearly	Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion
	Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)	Pass/fail	Failed items should be rendered unusable at the time of inspection and the site manager should remove and	Biennial	Check equipment has inspection tag/sticker and

	Service area	Inspection output	Observations/actions	Activity	Possible Governance Actions
			replace the appliance. Generally, there is no inventory available to check all appliances have been tested but all equipment visible should be appropriately labelled.		is no older than 2 years
	Emergency Lighting	Graded Failure	Failings and faults identified within the installation are graded from urgent/ immediate fix to recommend to meet current code.	Biannual	Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion
	Stage Lighting	Graded Failure	Failings and faults identified within the installation are graded from urgent/ immediate fix to recommend to meet current code	Annually	Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion
Fire	Fire Risk Assessments (H&S Function)	RAG	The survey will identify both physical building improvement and housekeeping requirements.to demonstrate housekeeping activity, a signed record of daily, weekly, monthly, etc. activity should be kept	Three/five yearly	Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion. Also check fire, doors are kept shut and close properly.
	Fire detection system	Graded Failure	There will be a range of building and management actions which need to be addressed and will include cyclical servicing of the installation, regular maintenance and weekly recorded checks as well as	Annually / Weekly	Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion

	Service area	Inspection output	Observations/actions	Activity	Possible Governance Actions
			remediation to the installation.		
	Fire Fighting Equipment	Pass/Fail	Failed equipment should be removed from site by the inspecting engineer and replacements discussed with the site manager.	Annual	Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion
	Sprinklers	Pass/Fail	Sprinkler heads will be recorded as a failure and the inspection record will provide a fail. Failure will be recorded as an outstanding certificate.	Annual	Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion
	Dry Risers	Pass/Fail	Dry risers will be recorded as a failure and the inspection record will provide a fail. Failure will be recorded as an outstanding certificate. Wet riser faults are more likely to leak into the building and site managers will have possibly noticed and taken action (two buildings only)	Annual	Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion
Micro Biological	Asbestos	RAG Based Assessment	Asbestos products identified by non-intrusive inspection are recorded and monitored during annual inspection. Any works undertaken should update the management plan	Annually	Ensure a Refurbishment and Demolition survey is completed before instructing any modifications to the school (Not applicable in newer schools)
	Legionella	RAG Based Recommendation	There will be a range of building and management actions	Annually / Weekly	Check inspection report has

	Service area	Inspection output	Observations/actions	Activity	Possible Governance Actions
			which need to be addressed and will include cyclical servicing of the installation, regular maintenance and weekly recorded checks as well as remediation to the installation.		been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion. Also check regular testing of tap temperature and running little used outlets is recorded weekly (even during school holidays)
Other	Lifts	Graded Failure	Insurance assessor will provide recommendations and timescale for remediation against each. Recommendations could range from immediate lift isolation to longer term maintenance.	Quarterly	Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion
	Lightening Conductors	Pass/Fail	Certificate issued with recommendations for effective grounding during a lightning strike.		Check inspection report has been issued and any remedial works are planned for completion

The Corporate Compliance team keep a check on all certificates and notify your school when these are about to expire. They will also contact the Headteacher in relation to outstanding certification where it has not been received. It is relevant to note that where recommendations for work has been made to remedy defects at the time of the inspection, the Corporate Compliance team are unable to determine if this has been resolved or planned for remedy. You are therefore advised to satisfy yourself that the appropriate course of action is being taken and that sufficient budget is being made available to keep the school safe.

The checks covered by the Corporate Compliance Team does not cover some apparatus not forming part of the building such as, play equipment, trees, portable hoists, etc and you may also want to add these to your check list.

Using 3rd Party Intermediaries/Brokers for procuring utilities

The purpose of this article is to provide Public Sector energy users with information, guidance and advise on appropriate questions to ask Brokers / 3rd Party Intermediaries to establish their capabilities and suitability for the provision of Flexible Energy supply contracts to the Public Sector. All public bodies are required to adhere to the principles of "Managing Public Money", this includes 'risk management' principles when participating in commodity (Electricity and Gas) markets.

The energy sector can be a difficult place to navigate, especially when approached by a 'Broker'. The sole purpose of a brokerage is to make money through commissions, which are not always transparent and can be hidden amongst other charges.

Firstly - It is important to obtain all proposals in writing, a clear statement of the charges applicable to the public sector contracting body and most importantly a written statement or 'warranty' to confirm that the only income the intermediary is earning from the contract are the fees payable by the public sector contracting body and there are no 'hidden / undisclosed' incomes derived from trading activity or the supplier relationship.

Here are some red flags to look out for:

Undeclared commissions

Consultants usually get their commission in one of two ways; either directly from the customer or in an 'uplift' that is usually factored into the p/kwh (pence per kilowatt hour). The customer should be told explicitly how much commission a broker is receiving and from which source.

Double commissions

Brokers can sometimes get paid commission twice, once from the customer in the form of a management fee and then again by the supplier. You are entitled to know how much commission they are getting and how they are receiving it.

Quota based supplier incentives.

Some suppliers have quotas set with specific suppliers that they need to fulfil. This means that customers are referred to suppliers that are not always best for them or that meets their needs. This means that no competitive tendering takes place Such a practice is not compliant with OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) procedures as it is anti-competitive.

Lack of service delivery

What is promised by the salesperson is not always what is delivered and customers are left with a sub-standard service. Define in writing what service requirements are scheduled to be within the contract and these should be documented in writing pre-contract.

Lack of trading expertise for flexible contract management

Electricity and Gas markets are incredibly complex. By using a broker you are paying for the consultants expert view of the market so they can risk manage a flexible contract. However, some consultants have little actual experience of how to 'trade' effectively within the guidelines of "Managing Public Money". Are they fully familiar with the principles of "Managing Public Money" (MPM), what 'governance' controls are in place and what written assurances are provided?

Recommending and unsuitable strategy

Consultants prefer to use a portfolio approach to managing customers as it is cheaper and easier to administer. However, this means that the service the customer gets is not bespoke to their individual needs and might not be the best strategy for them. All public bodies are required to adhere to the principles of "Managing Public Money", this includes 'risk management' principles when participating in commodity (Electricity and Gas) markets.

Anti-competitive practices

A good consultant should always represent the customers best interests. They should find the most appropriate solution for the client and delivers value for money. Any 'Letter of Authority' (LOA) should include a specific statement stipulating that the relationship is governed by the 'Law of Agency' and that your agent must act in your best interests at all times.

Increasing undisclosed commissions in a falling market environment

Some consultants utilise 'falling' market conditions to increase their undisclosed commissions whilst not passing-on in full the lower market prices achieved. Always utilise a legally binding income warranty at the point of contract.

Hidden 'Sleeving'

A little known trading activity where energy is purchased from an authorised market at a 'discount' to the market cost and sleeved into the supply contract at an undisclosed profit. Always ensure you have the right to receive 'trade confirmations / deal tickets' to evidence both the contracting parties and the traded cost.

Useful questions to ask:

1. "What % "Volume / Variance" clauses (also known as 'Take or Pay') are on your supply contracts?"
Response should be between 10-20%.
2. "What is the total volume in Terra Watt Hours that you trade in your basket?"
HM Treasury guidelines state the Public Sector is required to maximise its aggregation opportunities for all procurement activity.
3. "Do you have your own trading room and if so how many staff work in it?"
4. If the answer to 3 is "No" then – "So you rely upon suppliers profit Optimisation Desks to undertake the trading on your behalf?"
5. "What % of your basket is actually traded as Baseload and what % is treated as Residual / Peak at your last supplier shaping exercise?"
6. "How do you purchase the Residuals / Peak volumes?"
Possible answers are 1. We trade it on the 'Peak' market (AVOID this it's very expensive) 2. We negotiate a fixed price / Kwh in advance of supply each month / quarter / Season / Year 3. It is negotiated at the start of the supply contract in a similar way to a Fixed price supply contract
7. "Do you comply with HM Treasury Risk Management guidelines? How can I be assured your 'hedging strategy / trading activity' is compliant with HM Treasury policy? Who audits your Trading function?"
8. "Do you charge 'shape fees', if so how much?"
9. "Would I have to pay commissions / fees / charges / margins on my trades, if so how much?"
10. "Do you purchase and sell at the 'Bid / Offer' prices or a margin beyond these?"
If there's a margin beyond the Bid/Offer price then it is Broker commission and or supplier profit.
11. "How far in advance of the 1st supply date do you trade customer Baseload?"
HM Treasury guidelines recommend 30 months (3 years) to spread commodity risk effectively i.e. via CCS.
12. "Do you provide a 'sell-back' facility and if so how much do you charge?"
13. "Do you operate a Risk & Governance Committee and if so does this include customer representatives and who is the Chairperson?"
14. "Would you be willing to sign a full legal indemnity to assure our Authority of your compliance with "Fiduciary Responsibility" plus a legally binding 'warranty' on your maximum income / fees / commissions to ensure compliance with HM Treasury guidelines on transparency?"
15. "Can we enter and leave your baskets / aggregated portfolio at any time?"

You may find the following webinar useful:

<https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/webinar/request/48445/how-to-complete-an-energy-review-and-working-with-third-parties>

VSGA Management Committee 2022-24

The Management Committee is comprised of elected governors plus the two Parent Governor Representatives (one each from the Primary and Secondary sectors).

No.	Title	Initial	Surname	School
1	Mr	P	Cate	Jenner Park Primary
2	Mr	N	Craggs	Gwenfo C/W Primary
3	Ms	J	Evans	Fairfield Primary & Gladstone Primary
4	Mrs	M	Gibbs	Romilly Primary
5	Mr	G	Griffiths	Ysgol Gwaun y Nant & Ysgol Sant Curig
6	Cllr Mr	A	Hennessey	Rhws Primary
7	Mrs	C	Hunt	St Nicholas C/W Primary
8	Mrs	S	Jenkins	St Andrews Major C/W Primary & St Cyres Comp
9	Dr	C	Lee	St Cyres Comp
10	Cllr Mrs	J	Lynch-Wilson	Llantwit Major Comp
11	Dr	M	Price	St Richard Gwyn R/C High
12	Mr	D	Treharne	Llansannor C/W Primary
13	Mrs	T	Vaughan-Taylor	Cowbridge Comp
14	Mr	O	Williams	Ysgol Sant Baruc
15	Cllr Mr	M	Wilson	Fairfield Primary & Victoria Primary

Parent Governor Representatives (PGRs)

Parent Governor Representative Primary - Lucy Barrowclough - Llandough Primary School

Parent Governor Representative Secondary - Ghislaine van de Burgt - Whitmore High School

