

Response from the Education Department, Swansea Council

1. Schools' use of the PDG and the extent to which this benefits the pupils it is designed to be targeted at

In Swansea, nearly all schools make appropriate use of the grant to meet the needs of vulnerable learners who are entitled through free school meals. A range of interventions and specific posts are employed to support improvement in social and academic outcomes. The grant spends per school are monitored to ensure that the money reaches the target group. However, the PDG is not exclusively used for eFSM pupils in every school. In schools, where there is high deprivation, FSM pupils are targeted but there may also be wider intervention to meet basic skills, attendance and family liaison needs of a wider group of pupils.

2. The relationship between PDG-funded support for pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and expenditure on activities designed to improve attainment of all pupils

It is difficult to separate elements reaching an individual pupil. For example, a special educational needs boy entitled to free school needs may receive support from a variety of sources therefore a blended support package is required. As FSM is only a proxy indicator for deprivation, there may be pupils with weak basic skills who also benefit from being part of the same intervention group as FSM pupils. Ultimately, meeting the needs of individual pupils is the desired outcome. Effective teaching would be sympathetic to the needs of all pupils and over separation of FSM pupils from their peers is not helpful. Management of the PDG within a school requires discretion to meet the needs of all pupils whether they are in receipt of FSM or otherwise.

3. Regional consortia's use of the PDG on looked after and adopted children, and the impact this is having

In Swansea, support for LAC and adopted children to settle in new schools when a change of school is necessary. Support to engage in a broad and balanced curriculum. Encouragement to attend school regularly, improving poor attendance where appropriate. Bespoke support for specific subject areas as may be required. Support at LAC Review meetings. Encouragement to engage in participation groups to identify improved support for LAC and adopted children and young people. Evidence of improved attendance and outcomes for LAC and adopted children and young people who engage in the above range of

support strategies. For the regional use please refer to the work of Sara Walters and Cressy Morgan.

4. Progress since the previous Children, Young People and Education Committee 2014 inquiry

Please see regional data pack that includes FSM performance at all phases between 2014-2017.

5. The impact of the Schools Challenge Cymru programme and the consequences of its closure on the participating 'Pathways to Success' schools

(see below)

6. How the lessons and legacy of Schools Challenge Cymru can be used to complement subsequent policies and initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes

Successful strategies that can be used to complement new policies and initiatives are:

- Routines - Back to Basics with standard operating practices
- Persistence with attendance of hard to reach learners/families.
- Consistency with behaviour – restorative practice
- Pupil Offer – 'enrichment activities' offered to eFSM/vulnerable learners
- Literacy Initiatives
- Cross Phase work with cluster primaries
- Pathways curriculum
- Collaborative improvement activities

High leverage activities that can continue to be used to complement new policies and initiatives are:

- Data analysis - Using data and individual pupil tracking to provide personalised support and intervention for learners.
- Powerful professional development – focus on classroom practice: up-skilling teachers and leaders through mentoring and coaching.
- Building capacity at leadership level.
- Improvement planning – (Additional Resources)
- Accelerated improvement boards

Challenges to be aware of when intervening in schools to a significant degree:

- Judging the right amount of pressure not to overload or demoralise staff.
- WG/Regional Consortia/Local Authorities – use of high stakes accountability has created a culture of fear. Better at challenging schools about current performance than supporting them to improve.
- Obsession with report writing/ checklists/ scrutiny/ monitoring - bureaucracy
- KS2 & KS3 outcomes based on teacher assessment only.

- Using time effectively to get most impact – doing the right things in the right order.
- Setting realistic targets set for schools that are achievable in the current climate.

7. Evaluation of attainment data in light of the PDG and Schools Challenge Cymru programmes

Over the last 5 years to 2016 (it is difficult to make comparisons with 2017 data due to all the changes), overall attainment has generally improved across all schools in Swansea at slightly faster rate than that seen nationally. Whether this is specifically due to the funding associated with PDG and SCC is difficult to say. However, Swansea's two SCC schools improved at over twice the rate of improvement across in Swansea as a whole over the last 5 year to 2016. It should be noted that these schools were starting from a relatively a low base, therefore they had more ground to make up. Overall, data outcomes and the general evaluation of SCC and PDG work in Swansea indicates that the overall impact has been positively relative to Wales.