

COUNCIL – 26 JULY 2017

AGENDA ITEM 13

Question from Councillor T Thomas to the Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration

“What is the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration doing to narrow the literacy, numeracy and general attainment levels for children in receipt of free school meals”?

Response from the Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration to Councillor T Thomas

The Programme for Government identifies the importance of closing the attainment gap for poorer pupils and makes a clear commitment to ensure that every child gets the best start in life through an extended Pupil Development Grant (formerly known as the Pupil Deprivation Grant).

The Cabinet Secretary for Education has pledged that the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) will continue for the remainder of this Assembly term. This long-term commitment will enable schools to make sustainable decisions on investment that help identify and address barriers to learning.

The PDG for the financial year 2017–2018 is as follows:

- for each child aged 5 to 15 years old who is eligible for free school meals (eFSM), as reported in the January 2016 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) return, the school will receive £1150;
- each child who is looked after (LAC) as reported in the April 2016 Children in Need Census, the regional consortium will receive £1150 (this will subsequently be allocated via the relevant local authority on a needs basis); and
- for each child aged 3 to 4 years old in the Foundation Phase maintained and non-maintained settings, an allocation of £600 will be made.

The strategy to tackle deprivation across Central South Consortium (CSC) region encourages all schools to support their disadvantaged pupils in their individual contexts. Best practice sharing in the spirit of a self-improving school system is intrinsic to this.

Regional consortia identify this as one of their main priorities. The CSC Business Plan for 2017–2018 identifies improving the outcomes of the most vulnerable and underperforming groups in the region, working in partnership with local authorities and community partners.

Schools should:

- understand the nature of deprivation in their context and accurately track the performance of eFSM pupils;

- have a clear rationale for how they deploy their PDG effectively;
- outline how they will use this accurately in their school's development plans; and
- publish how they will spend their PDG to other stakeholders (ie through the school's website).

CSC will:

- ensure schools plan effectively, and that they allocate the PDG in a clear manner to raise the attainment of eFSM pupils;
- ensure schools monitor and evaluate the impact of their strategies;
- challenge schools to set stretching targets; and
- broker support from the strategic team and hub schools or other schools where schools are having little or no impact on the performance of eFSM pupils.

All challenge advisers have undertaken work this year to ensure all Bridgend schools have planned, monitored and evaluated strategically to ensure schools are improving the attainment of their eFSM pupils.

Cllr Charles Smith
Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration