

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

17 SEPTEMBER 2019

REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF FINANCE

PUPIL DEVELOPMENT GRANT (PDG) - ACCESS GRANT 2019-20

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Cabinet on the PDG Access Grant which is part of the Welsh Government Local Authority Education Grant 2019-20.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priority/priorities:-

1. **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
2. **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2018-19, the PDG Access Grant replaced the former Welsh Government (WG) School Uniform Grant for pupils in receipt of free school meals and entering secondary school for the first time (Year 7). It was extended to include free school meals pupils of Reception age. For 2019-20, this WG grant has been further extended to include pupils who are eligible for free school meals and entering Reception, Year 3, Year 7 and Year 10 in primary, secondary and special schools, resource bases and pupil referral units. Pupils with a protected entitlement to free school meals, as a consequence of the implementation of Universal Credit, are not eligible for the PDG Access Grant.
- 3.2 The grant is also available to all looked after children of compulsory school age.

3.3 Asylum seeker pupils entering Reception, Year 3, Year 7 and Year 10 in the 2019-20 school year are also entitled to this funding if they fulfil the eligibility criteria.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

4.1 The purpose of the PDG grant is to enable Local Authorities to provide assistance to families on low incomes, and in receipt of free school meals, with the purchase of:-

- School uniform including coats and shoes;
- School sports kit including footwear;
- Uniform for enrichment activities, such as scouts, guides, cadets, martial arts, sports, performing arts or dance;
- Various equipment including school bags and stationery;
- Equipment for out of school hours trips, for example waterproof clothing.

4.2 IT equipment such as mobile phones, ipads and tablets are excluded.

4.3 The value of the grant is up to £125 for each eligible pupil with the exception of those pupils entering Year 7 who are eligible for up to £200.

4.4 Parents of eligible primary school pupils receive the full grant payment by cheque or BACS upon application. Eligible pupils in secondary and special schools receive a combination of a uniform pack or voucher for redemption at an approved supplier and a 'cash' top up by BACS to the full value of the grant upon application.

4.5 To the date of this report, 512 PDG Access grants have been awarded to eligible primary school pupils, 36 grants to eligible pupils attending special schools, and 561 grants awarded to eligible pupils attending secondary schools. In addition, a small number of grants have been awarded to looked after pupils attending schools in other authorities, in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. Parents can still apply for the grant by requesting, completing and returning the application form to the school by 31st December 2019.

4.6 Subsequent to this Cabinet report, a press release will be issued by the Communications Team to ensure as many eligible applicants are aware of the grant and this deadline.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

6.1 An initial assessment identifies that there are no equalities issues related to this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. As the report is for information it is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of wellbeing goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 Bridgend County Borough Council was awarded a grant of £204,658 for 2019-20, based on an indicative number of 1,410 eligible pupils. As 1,120 applications have been processed to date, there are potentially a further 290 remaining to be claimed in 2019-20. The deadline for claiming is 31st December 2019.

8.2 The funding will be paid to BCBC in two instalments, based on costs incurred in the delivery of the purposes of the grant. If the number of eligible pupils awarded the grant is greater than the indicative number estimated by WG, additional funding will be awarded by WG, as appropriate.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that:-

- Cabinet note the update on the PDG Access Grant from Welsh Government including the number of applications that have been received to date and the potential number of pupils who are still eligible to claim the Grant.

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Background documents

None