

Councillor Lyndon Jones
Convenor
Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Councillor Jennifer Raynor
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Our Ref: JR/CM
Your Ref:
Date: 5th August 2019

Dear Councillor Jones

EDUCATION SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL – 11 JULY 2019

Thank you for your letter dated 31st July 2019.

I am pleased that the Panel found clear examples of good practice in developing wellbeing and attainment of pupils attending Dylan Thomas Community School.

You correctly point out that many of the achievements of the school and pupils are not recognised by the Welsh Government's present measurement of outcomes.

It is a matter of concern that 60% of pupils arrive at Dylan Thomas School with a reading age significantly below their chronological age. The Panel may wish to look at the programme initiated by the former Head of Cefn Hengoed, Sue Hollister, in raising attainment and aspiration in Cefn Hengoed's feeder primary schools in the East Side.

I would totally agree about the importance of being able to forward plan with as much financial certainty as possible in the medium term.

For this reason, officers each year provide each school with three year indicative school budget shares as well as offering as much further advice and guidance as possible over the course of each year to inform future school spending plans.

Unfortunately Councils, and indeed the Welsh Government itself, face the same challenges from the current continuing scale of financial uncertainty and the fluidity of local government finance settlements.

Schools, with their delegated budgets, are of course able to manage funding issues over more than one financial year as they are able to carry forward accumulated reserves to cushion the impact of in year fluctuations in funding streams as well as, where appropriate, seeking approval for a managed deficit. Such flexibility is not available to other Education or indeed Council services.

The Council will continue to press the case with the Welsh Government (WG) for greater future funding certainty, and for the significant cost implications of UK and WG decisions regarding pay awards, pension contributions and free school meal entitlements to be funded within local government finance settlements, as it did in its contribution to the recent school funding inquiry. I am sure that the WG will continue to make a similar case to the UK government. We will also continue to press for earlier announcements of specific grant allocations to schools.

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR JENNIFER RAYNOR
CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT, LEARNING & SKILLS