



Councillor Lyndon Jones
Convener – Education Scrutiny Performance
Panel

Please ask for: Councillor Jennifer Raynor
Direct Line: 01792 63 7429
E-Mail: cllr.jennifer.raynor@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: JR/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 26 February 2021

BY EMAIL

Dear Councillor Jones

Thank you for your letter dated 2 February 2021. I respond as follows.

1. Can you update us on the current figure for the number of pupils requiring computer equipment and/or connectivity including how many of these are pupils entitled to Free School Meals?

We are confident that all families/households that require connectivity or a device have been offered one. We have not cross-checked this information against those who are entitled to Free School Meals as all schools have managed the process themselves, however recent research from the Sutton Trust shows that FSM isn't necessarily an identifier for those that are digitally excluded.

The Welsh Government have announced a further 50,000 devices across Wales which will see a further 3000-4000 devices arriving in Swansea. This will allow us to support those families who are sharing a device between a number of different learners. Following a recent school survey we believe that the number of families that are sharing devices between learners to be around 2000.

2. What is the current underspend on the Looked After children Pupil Development Grant (formally deprivation). Why is this the case and how would any underspend be used?

The Looked after Children (LAC) element of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG), is a sum of money issued by Welsh Government to be used as a school improvement grant, to "disproportionately advantage" care experienced children. It is distributed to local authorities, via their regional consortium. For Swansea, currently, that is ERW, (Education through Regional Working). This financial year we were allocated £292,756.80, all of which has been allocated to schools using a funding formula (see attached), derived by the PDG LAC working group. Members of the working group consists of representatives from Education finance, Management Systems Unit, challenge advisers, LAC Education and headteachers.



As of 11 February 2021, only four schools have not claimed for their allocation amounting to £5261.75 from the total grant allocated this financial year. However, all these schools have been offered support, by the LAC education coordinator, primary support officer's and challenge advisers. We fully anticipate all PDG LAC will have been claimed by 18 February 2021. Therefore there will be no underspend and no alternative use for the grant will be looked at.

There have been some schools who have claimed their PDG LAC a little later than anticipated. We have investigated this thoroughly and noted our findings below:

- Prior to the financial year 2019/20, the LAC element of the wider PDG, was retained by the local authority, and used primarily to employ staff to work directly with the children upon referral to the service. The notion that the PDG LAC is a school improvement grant, as instructed by Welsh Government, is relatively new which will take time to embed.
- The information about the allocation for the financial year 2019/2020 arrived extremely late, and we were not in a position to proceed until January 2020. Since school would have had very little time to plan for the funds; we allocated it directly to schools without sight of their plans. This made evaluation much more difficult, but we felt we had no choice under the circumstances. Some schools thought this would be the case again, despite information highlighting the need for a plan, and information being send to them much earlier in the financial year.
- Due to the situation with COVID, most headteachers have been required to digest a huge amount of information. Some schools simply missed the information about PDG LAC, and have been grateful for reminders in the newsletter and follow up emails.
- Some schools and clusters with large numbers of LAC learners have benefitted hugely from the grant. While others with relatively low numbers have found that they are claiming for small amounts of money. They have found it difficult to know what to use such small amounts for. We have worked with these schools to look at resources and training that could be beneficial.

Yours sincerely



Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Jennifer Raynor
Aelod Y Cabinet Dros Wella Addysg, Dysgu A Sgiliau
Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills