

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg |
Priorities for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYPE 24

Ymateb gan : Cymdeithas Athrawon a Darlithwyr (ATL Cymru)

Response from : Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL Cymru)

Question 1 - Within the remit set out above: what do you consider to be the priorities or issues that the Children, Young People and Education Committee should consider during the Fifth Assembly?

Ahead of the Assembly elections we ran a campaign called #PutEducationFirst. ATL Cymru members are clear - the Welsh Government must put education first. We undertook a survey of members ahead of the elections in May. The results, together with our manifesto asks, are reported here. We believe the Committee should consider the issues carefully in terms of their work over the coming Assembly.

1) Build a strong curriculum with portable qualifications

Asks:

- Implement Donaldson Review changes to the curriculum
- Minimise guidance documents produced by Welsh Government
- Give Qualifications Wales the trust and time to build high-quality portable qualifications, respected across the UK and beyond

Two thirds (69%) of respondents had heard about plans for a new curriculum, but only half (52%) had heard about it at work. More than one in ten (12%) had only heard about the plans from ATL Cymru.

Our young people need a broad and balanced curriculum to give them the skills and knowledge they need for life. ATL Cymru welcomed the findings of the Donaldson Review. Curriculum reform must now be done once and done well. We want to see fewer changes to policies and targets.

The Welsh Government has made a series of changes over recent years to the testing and qualifications framework for children and young people in Wales - to address what the OECD described as a

'lack' of 'long term vision'.¹ The proposed changes need time to bed in, and must be properly resourced, in order that both teachers and learners can make the most of the opportunities they offer.

We welcome the creation of an independent regulator in Qualifications Wales. The body must now be given the trust to promote a robust, consistent programme of study for all learners and show to the world how Wales is equipping its young people to fulfil their potential.

2) Develop an excellently skilled workforce

Asks:

- Continued Professional Development (CPD) for the whole education workforce
- Welsh Government funding for CPD

Nearly three quarters (70%) of respondents do not think their CPD opportunities are good enough. One in five (22%) said that their school or college did not offer them opportunities to undertake CPD.

Welsh Government's *New Deal*² for the education workforce goes hand-in-hand with an increasing expectation on members of the education workforce to have higher levels of qualifications and training.³ ATL Cymru is clear that the whole education workforce must be included in CPD plans and funding – not just school based teaching staff. Support staff and supply teachers were very unhappy about the lack of CPD opportunities.

Role of the Education Workforce Council (EWC)

ATL Cymru members have concerns that the newly expanded EWC (formally GTCW) is expected to have a role within the future of the New Deal for teachers. We would ask for no further expansion of the remit of the EWC without fair representation of the whole workforce. The GTCW had elected members, whilst the EWC has members appointed by Welsh Government without full recognition for the whole workforce.

3) Invest in education

Asks:

- Fair funding for schools
- Use of the 'Ever 6' for Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) eligibility
- More money for school buildings
- Stop cuts to the Further Education (FE) budget

95% of respondents do not think enough money is invested in

¹ www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-26962501 quoting from www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/FINAL%20Improving%20Schools%20in%20Wales%20-%20An%20OECD%20Perspective%20-%20with%20cover.pdf

² <http://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2015/150316newdeal/?lang=en>

³ <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/education/10-year-plan-for-the-early-years-childcare-and-play-workforce/?lang=en>, <http://learning.gov.wales/news/sitenews/new-deal/?lang=en>

education in Wales.

The school funding gap between Wales and England was last reported in 2010 as £604 per pupil.⁴ That means the average primary school is underfunded in Wales by nearly £118,000 per year, and the average secondary school by over £540,000.⁵

Whilst the level of the funding gap can be disputed, ATL Cymru members know any funding gap means fewer opportunities for children and young people in Wales to fulfil their potential. This just isn't good enough.

The Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) must use the 'Ever 6' to ensure consistent eligibility and better planning. The pupil premium in England uses this tool⁶ to aid eligibility, as it means that those pupils who have been eligible for support in the last 6 years receive support, not just those whose parents have returned a form this year.

The FE sector is facing an unprecedented funding crisis, and is increasingly expected to do more for less. With cuts of up to 10% in individual college budgets, the FE sector needs investment to safeguard the future of Wales. FE colleges faced a devastating 6% cut on average in their budgets in 2015/16.⁷ The withdrawal of up to 50% of funding from adult provision⁷ both in FE and work based learning has had a disproportionate impact on older learners, especially women.

As Colleges Wales said "These cuts are deep. Wales will feel their effects for a long time to come".⁷

4) Provide fair terms and conditions for support staff

Asks:

- Pay support staff the living wage
- School support staff should be included in CPD
- Welsh Government must include support staff in all CPD planning and resourcing

More than nine out of ten (93%) of respondents said that support staff do not get enough recognition from Welsh Government for the work they do.

⁴ www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-12280492 quoting from <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/local-authority-budgets-education/?lang=en>

⁵ <https://stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Pupils>

Number of pupils divided by number of schools: primary schools = 195, secondary schools = 898 pupils per school.

Actual figures underfunded: Average primary school by £117,780 a year, and the average secondary school by £542,392

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-2015-to-2016-allocations/pupil-premium-2015-to-2016-conditions-of-grant

⁷ www.collegeswales.ac.uk/en-GB/steep_cuts_to_adult_skills_will_affect_wales_economy-728.aspx

From April 2016 support staff in schools and FE colleges now have to register with the Education Workforce Council. Increased professionalisation should come with recognition of their role and parity in their terms and conditions.

With a study finding that 65% of all primary Pupil Deprivation Grant-funded interventions were delivered by teaching assistants⁸, these key members of staff should be properly rewarded for their contribution as key members of the education workforce.

Support staff need favourable terms and conditions to make this a profession that attracts the best entrants. Those who support learners must be properly rewarded:

“Despite the vast increase in the roles and responsibilities of support staff, their pay remains woefully inadequate, with many stuck in a permanent poverty trap.”⁹

It is important that children and young people in Wales are supported by the best people – trained and supported to help them with their learning.

5) Keep the state education system

Asks:

- Keep the state education system
- Don't introduce free schools or academy schools

Most (91%) of our members who responded do not think that the free school system in England is working.

The state education system in England has been eroded by the ever increasing numbers of 'academies' and 'free schools'. It is very costly. Between 2010 and the end of 2013, £637 million had been used to set up free schools which educate fewer than 22,000 pupils.¹⁰

ATL Cymru wants our state schools to be kept free from privatisation. We want to maintain and develop a state school system that caters for all children and is free to all.

More responsibility must not be devolved from local authorities without appropriate funds and resources to meet the needs of pupils.

“We want public funds invested in learners' education, not used to line shareholders' pockets”

Too many schools in England are opening in areas where there is little

⁸ <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/21168/1/141022-evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant-year-1-en.pdf>

⁹ www.atl.org.uk/media-office/media-archive/ATL-campaigns-to-fight-injustices-facing-school-support-staff.asp

¹⁰ www.educationnotforsale.org/

need for school places, and too many are closing because of problems with sponsors' financial probity or poor educational standards.¹¹

For more information please see our website
www.atl.org.uk/puteducationfirst

Question 2 – From the list of priorities or issues you have identified, what do you consider to be the key areas that should be considered during the next 12 months (please identify up to three areas or issues)? Please outline why these should be considered as key priorities.

1. The role of further education – its long term funding and the capacity of the sector to undertake more with less money.

This especially needs consideration in light of the recent Brexit vote, and will need careful consideration after the Diamond Review is published.

A huge amount of experienced staff have taken voluntary redundancy, with 865 full time equivalent jobs gone in the FE sector between 2012/13 and 2014/15¹².

Action is needed now to ensure that children and young people reach their full potential.

2. Workload in the education sector. With so many new initiatives – Donaldson, Furlong, Professional Standards, the digital competency framework, changes to the Welsh Bacc, new deal, ALN etc – the education workforce needs some support. When will Estyn change their framework so that schools can move towards the new curriculum for example?

CPD must be available to everyone in the education sector. New initiatives should be phased in, and other work stopped as appropriate to accommodate this.

All education professionals need more support to ensure that learners can achieve their potential.

3. Federations of schools. The proposals by the Cabinet Secretary need urgent attention. The Committee could initiate a national debate about this, to ensure the policy meets the needs of learners

¹¹ www.atl.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/shape-education/manifesto-equal-access.asp

¹² <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Staff-at-Further-Education-Institutions/fulltimeequivalentstaffnumbersatfurthereducationinstitutions-by-institution>

and education professionals.

ATL Cymru is happy to give evidence on any of these issues.