

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee
Grant gwella addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr, a phlant o
leiafrifoedd ethnig | Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and
Traveller, and Minority Ethnic Children

EIG 13

Ymateb gan : Undeb Cenedlaethol yr Ysgolfeistri Undeb Athrawesau
(NASUWT Cymru)

Response from : The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of
Women Teachers (NASUWT Cymru)

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPEC) inquiry into the impact of amalgamating the previously ring-fenced grants from 2015/16 into the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic Children (the EIG inquiry).
2. The NASUWT is the largest teachers' union in Wales representing teachers and school leaders.

GENERAL COMMENTS

3. The NASUWT maintains that the development of effective provision to support the progress and achievement of minority ethnic pupils and those with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and/or Welsh as an Additional Language (WAL) would provide a hallmark in Wales for a genuinely inclusive education

system in which all children and young people are given the fullest possible opportunity to make the most of their potential as learners.

4. The Union asserts that while levels of funding made available to support ethnic minority achievement and EAL and WAL services are an essential aspect of an effective programme in this area, evidence also makes clear that securing good-quality provision in practice depends on the establishment of mechanisms that seek to ensure that resources made available to support such services are used for the purpose for which they are intended and are not diverted to support other areas of activity. For example, the removal of dedicated funding for EAL services in Northern Ireland following funding reforms introduced in 2005 led to significant deterioration in the extent and quality of provision across the greater part of the education system.
5. The NASUWT is concerned that the decision to amalgamate the previously ring-fenced grant for specific areas relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children into the EIG in Wales could result in problems similar to those experienced in Northern Ireland.
6. NASUWT members working in these service areas, and other related services, have expressed strong opposition to the decision to amalgamate the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG) and the Gypsy and Traveller Grant into the EIG, as it is felt that the

lack of ring-fencing of the these grants is seriously compromising the effectiveness of support for the intended learners.

7. The Union notes that in March 2014, the Minister for Education and Skills stated:

'Unlocking every child's potential is at the heart of the Welsh Government's strategy for education and reflects article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We have high aspirations for all learners, and are committed to supporting the success of students from all backgrounds. This vision is equally true for our minority ethnic pupils who may need English and/or Welsh language support, or face risk of underachieving for other reasons. I recognise that some pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds may need additional support to fully embrace the educational opportunities in Wales. That is why we have continued to provide Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant and the Gypsy and Traveller Education Grant - discrete funding through which, we ensure pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds needing our support are provided with it, to reach their potential.'

8. The NASUWT asserts that the discrete nature of the funding referred to in this statement has been lost because the EIG is now distributed through the Consortia/local authorities and has then been devolved directly to schools to be used at they see fit. This has led to a reduction in the number of centrally employed staff who can be deployed on a needs basis.

9. In addition, the Union maintains that the identification of discrete, ring-fenced funding provided a greater degree of transparency and accountability over the money provided by the Welsh Government for the MEAG and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners each year.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

10. The NASUWT offers the comments and observations which follow on the three areas under scrutiny by the CYPEC.

How the Welsh Government monitors the way local authorities use the Education Improvement Grant and how the new, amalgamated grant supports Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children, with specific reference to improving educational outcomes.

11. The Union is not sure how the Welsh Government monitors the way the EIG is used by local authorities but the perception of NASUWT members working in related services is that the Consortia hold the purse strings and, as such, influence how each local authority uses the EIG.

12. The NASUWT maintains that, under the terms of the EIG, the specialist teachers, previously employed to provide support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children, are

having to change, or have changed, to new models of support which distance them from directly supporting these children. The focus on outcomes within the EIG has diminished the nurture that was provided previously.

13. The CYPEC should note that the EIG has only been in place for two years. Consequently, the NASUWT suggests that any correlation between the outcomes achieved through the EIG and previous outcomes would lack security as children may have already received specialist support which could have impacted positively on their education under the previous grant support system.
14. The NASUWT reminds the CYPEC that the Welsh Government and all public authorities have a legal duty to demonstrate how they are meeting the Equality Act 2010 and the corresponding Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED).
15. The PSED make clear that public authorities are required to demonstrate how they are eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations for groups with protected characteristics. The educational outcomes and support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children fall within the remit of these duties as groups with a protected characteristic.
16. Consequently, in assessing how local authorities monitor the use of the EIG, the NASUWT suggests that the CYPEC should

considered how the Welsh Government met its statutory equality obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

17. The Union believes that the CYPEC would be assisted in this endeavour by requesting sight of the Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) that have been, or should have been, undertaken in relation to the decision to amalgamate the previously ring-fenced grants into the new EIG, and those that have been undertaken subsequently by local authorities on the use of the EIG, as these should demonstrate, or otherwise, that 'due regard' has been given to the Equality duties in terms of the move to, and distribution of, the EIG as it applies to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.
18. The NASUWT maintains that scrutiny of the EIAs should enable the CYPEC to contextualise the experiences of NASUWT members working in the related services referred to here, and elsewhere in this written evidence.

The effectiveness of other Welsh Government policies and strategies for supporting the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.

19. In acknowledging that it could be argued that other funding streams – for example, the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and/or Fresh Start – may address particular needs for some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Ethnic Minority children who are eligible for

free school meals (eFSM), the NASUWT asks the CYPEC to note that those needs are not specific to all the learners within these areas, and that these initiatives do not address the very specific needs of these learners generally, such as language acquisition, or of those who fall into the eFSM categories because they are asylum seeker or refugee children.

Any key issues arising from the amalgamating the other previously separate grants into the Education Improvement Grant.

20. The NASUWT maintains that the EIG does not lend itself to addressing appropriately and adequately the huge variation in need in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children across the Consortia regions. Furthermore, the Union questions seriously the understanding within the Consortia of the needs of these learners and maintains that they are not prioritised in the way envisaged by the Minister for Education and Skills in March 2014.

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