

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 22

Ymateb gan : Dinas a Sir Abertawe

Response from : City and County of Swansea

1. From 2015-16, the Gypsy Children and Traveller Children Grant and the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant were merged into the new Education Improvement Grant. What impact has this had on the levels of educational support available to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic children, and their educational outcomes?

(If this is a concern to you, how should this be addressed?)

There have been increasing numbers of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds entering Swansea Local Authority schools. This group now makes up 13.6% of the total school population in Swansea (PLASC January 2016). The majority of these learners is in the process of acquiring English as an additional language (EAL) and in need of extra specialist support to access the curriculum in order to fulfil academic potential.

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit (EMAU), a central local authority team of specialist EAL teachers and bilingual teaching assistants, currently provides support for 3000 learners from ethnic minority backgrounds (aged 3 – 16 years) in 75 Swansea primary and secondary schools. The work of EMAU in schools is wholly dependent on Welsh Government external grant funding via the Education Improvement Grant (EIG).

In FY2015/16 and FY2016/17, Swansea Local Authority has maintained an equivalent level of funding for ethnic minority achievement (out of its 20% maximum retained EIG element) to that provided in the final year of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG). While the local authority has endeavoured to protect funding levels, a historical legacy of reductions and cuts in real terms has affected the recruitment/retention of specialist staff and the ability of EMAU to maintain levels of support for learners from ethnic minority backgrounds. Uncertainty around future grant levels and funding streams is exacerbating this situation.

In order to mitigate against reducing levels of specialist support, the EMAU team has reduced direct learner support significantly to focus more on embedding capacity-building approaches that upskill the school workforce and grow the self-sufficiency of

schools to better meet the needs of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds. Direct EMAU specialist teacher support is now being prioritised for identified EAL learners in Years 2, 6, 9, 10 and 11 who with additional support have an improved chance of attaining expected educational outcomes. There are very limited levels of direct teacher support for EAL learners in other year groups, in particular early years, and no support for those in school-based post-16 provision.

The overarching strategy to build capacity in schools and focus specialist support on particular year groups is currently serving to maintain a strong track record of educational outcomes for learners from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, should future EIG funding levels for the local authority reduce further and/or school delegation rates increase then the capacity-building strategy would be placed in jeopardy before schools are ready to take fuller responsibility for meeting the needs of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds and maintaining their educational outcomes.

2. How effective are other Welsh Government policies and strategies for supporting the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children?

(If this is a concern to you, how should this be addressed?)

Welsh Government policies and strategies aimed at reducing the impact of poverty on educational outcomes, in particular the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and Flying Start, may impact on educational attainment for some ethnic minority learners who are eligible. In general, however, research has shown that poverty interventions do not have the same effects on all ethnic groups and ethnic minority learners are more resilient to the pressures of poverty on attainment compared with their White British peers.

Welsh Government initiatives to improving school and classroom practices are however likely to have benefits for pupils from all ethnic groups.

Other Welsh Government policies and strategies are too widely focused and hit or miss in terms of raising educational outcomes for learners from ethnic minority backgrounds as they do not have strands within them that focus on the discrete and distinctive needs of this group e.g. the need to acquire EAL. Therefore in the short-term, Welsh Government needs to develop a discrete policy and strategy specifically aimed at building capacity in schools so that in the longer-term schools will be better equipped to meet the needs of growing numbers of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds more independently.

3. What more could be done to support the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic children:

- in schools;
- by Local Authorities;

- by regional consortia; and
- by the Welsh Government.

(Do you know of examples of good practice or successful policies? If so, what are they?)

Schools

All schools need to engage with a capacity-building agenda to upskill the workforce to better meet the needs of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Local authorities

Local authorities need to develop and/or implement a capacity-building agenda to upskill the workforce in schools. Swansea local authority's EMAU is upheld as a good practice example in this area.

Regional consortia:

All regional consortia need to take a strong lead on ethnic minority achievement. Consortia may also need to take more account of the different scale of need within partner local authorities when apportioning EIG where there is disparity. For example, the urban area of Swansea is vastly different from the other local authority partners in ERW Regional Education Consortium. All regional consortia need to provide support and challenge to local authorities for developing provision in schools and improving educational outcomes for learners from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Welsh Government

The Welsh Government needs to take a much stronger lead on ethnic minority achievement for Wales through the development of a discrete policy and strategy.

The Welsh Government also needs to appoint a lead individual with proven experience and expertise to drive the ethnic minority achievement agenda forward and to act as a champion for this vulnerable group of learners.

The Welsh Government also needs to undertake more monitoring and to make regional consortia more accountable for the educational outcomes of ethnic minority learners. The development of an educational outcomes framework by the Welsh Government for ethnic minority achievement is long overdue.

The juxtaposition of achievement with safeguarding within the Welsh Government is skewing the agenda of Minority Ethnic Achievement Local Authority Forum (MEALA) meetings. Too much emphasis is placed on safeguarding matters that apply to all learners regardless of their ethnic backgrounds and not enough attention is paid to improving practice, provision and outcomes for learners from ethnic minority backgrounds

If you could recommend to the Welsh Government one thing it could do to improve the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children, what would it be?

Provide stable, discrete funding over three years for ethnic minority achievement linked to a clear Welsh Government strategy whereby local authorities are held accountable for building capacity within their schools.

5. Do you have any other concerns about the amalgamation of the other previously separate grants into the Education Improvement Grant? If so, please provide details.

Similar points as described in answers to questions 1-5 above could apply to the amalgamation of the Gypsy Children and Traveller Children Grant into the EIG.

4. Finally, are there any other issues relating to the terms of reference that you would like to draw to the Committee's attention?

None