

New fund sees appointment of 80 new teachers to reduce class sizes

The new teachers will be appointed to schools which have large infant class sizes and also have high levels of deprivation, special education needs and/or where teaching and learning need to improve.

The new teachers will help to create smaller infant classes, so a school which currently has two infant classes of 29 or more pupils could instead have three smaller more manageable infant classes.

This will improve both the quantity and quality of the time that teachers spend with their pupils, while also helping to reduce teachers' workload.

The £36m fund comprises of £16m of revenue which allows local authorities to recruit the extra teachers, and £20m of capital which allows local authorities to build the additional classrooms and learning space needed to further reduce class sizes.

All local authorities in Wales will benefit from extra teachers after submitting bids for the revenue element of the grant, which amounts to £1.3m in 2017/18. Bids for capital element of the grant will be approved shortly.

The Education Secretary yesterday visited pupils in the nursery class at Awel y Môr Primary School in Port Talbot who will, as of this September, benefit from an extra teacher when they move into Reception.

Awel y Môr is a prime candidate for the funding, having above national average levels of both free school meals and SEN.

Kirsty Williams said:

"Time and again, teachers and parents tell me that class sizes are a concern. That's why one of my first actions as Cabinet Secretary was to announce this £36m fund.

"International research and evidence tells us there is a positive connection between smaller class sizes and attainment, particularly for our youngest pupils from poorer backgrounds.

"Additional teachers at schools like Awel y Môr will be able to devote more time and individual attention to each of their pupils.

"That's good news not only for the pupil and the teacher but the school's ability to improve as a whole; smaller class sizes are crucial for both improved attainment in those early years of education and helping teachers to manage their workload.

"When seen in the context of broader reforms we're making such as

reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and strengthened initial teacher training and professional development, this will also make a real difference in giving teachers the time to teach and learners the space to learn.

“This is central to our mission to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system which is a source of national pride and confidence.

Sam Greasley, Headteacher of Awel y Môr Primary School said:

“This new fund will have a genuine impact on Pupil Standards. Securing smaller class sizes enables us as teachers to work more closely with individual children.

“We set high expectations for all pupils but acknowledge that pupils need differentiated levels of support, which is more achievable in smaller classes.”