

Schools to share in over £90m to help disadvantaged learners

The Cabinet Secretary has written to schools across Wales to confirm how much they will directly receive in 2018-19.

In addition to over £90m committed this year, £187m has been guaranteed for the remainder of the Assembly term, so that schools have the stability to plan ahead.

The PDG helps schools tackle the effects of poverty and disadvantage on attainment and is targeted at learners who are eligible for Free School Meals or are Looked After Children.

Schools use the PDG in a number of different ways, including nurture groups for children who may be socially and emotionally vulnerable, out-of-hours school learning, on-site multi-agency support and better tracking of pupils as they progress through school.

This year, the PDG for the youngest learners (pupils aged 3-4 years old) has increased from £600 to £700 per pupil. This builds on last year's doubling of financial support from £300 to £600 per learner in the early years.

Primary and secondary schools will continue to receive a rate of £1,150 per learner, and this rate also continues to apply to learners in education other than at school (EOTAS).

From this year, schools will also have greater flexibility to support learners who have been eligible for Free School Meals in the previous two years.

Advisers and coordinators from education consortia are also on-hand to provide extra support and guidance for schools on using the funding.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Reducing the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers is at the heart of our national mission to raise standards. This is one of the most effective ways in which we can break the cycle of deprivation and poverty.

“Time and again, teachers have told me how much of a difference PDG funding has made in raising aspirations, building confidence, improving behaviour and attendance and in involving families with their children's education.

“Teachers have also called for greater certainty around future PDG funding and that's why I'm pleased to be able to guarantee allocation levels for the next two financial years and reaffirm our

commitment to the grant for the lifetime of this Assembly.

“We have always said that the PDG is there to support all pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals, not just those that are struggling academically. That’s why I want schools to ensure they are supporting more able pupils as well.

“I would also encourage all schools to make full use of the PDG advisers and coordinators from the education consortia – they’re there to help when it comes to making the best use of the funding and ensuring that we raise attainment across the board.”

An independent evaluation of the PDG last year found that many schools consider the funding to be ‘invaluable’, with further evidence from Estyn and the Welsh Government’s raising attainment advocate, Sir Alasdair MacDonald, showing the majority of schools are making well thought out decisions on how to spend the funding.