



yr undeb dros addysg

**RESPONSE OF
THE ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS AND LECTURERS
TO A REQUEST FROM
THE ENTERPRISE AND LEARNING COMMITTEE
FOR
FURTHER INFORMATION ON SCHOOL FUNDING**

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represent over 160,000 education professionals in the UK. We draw our membership from teachers, head teachers, lecturers, and support staff in maintained and independent schools and Further Education colleges. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 professionals working in Welsh education.

We welcome the Committee's renewed interest in school funding arrangements. The lack of proper funding impinges upon our members daily and is a major obstacle to the delivery of the finest quality teaching and learning in too many of our schools. We would urge the committee to give serious concern to the overall budget settlement for education in Wales as well as the mechanism for its distribution. The anecdotal evidence of poor school buildings and insufficient provision, rendered particularly visible in border counties, is now overwhelming. Repeated denials of these experiences by the Assembly government are held in derision by the profession. The Assembly government is failing pupils, teachers and support staff by its continued denial of this inadequate funding, especially in regard to capital projects.

Transparency of the funding process

While some of the funding fog has lifted it is still far too dense. Although the mechanisms for funding are now more clearly understood at the theoretical level, it is still very difficult to work out in practice where money actually goes once it enters the distributive tunnel. We would welcome an independent assessment of schools' capital and revenue needs. We think this assessment should then provide a basis for agreement between the Assembly and local authority for the amount of funding required to provide adequate and sustainable education for pupils and students in a particular locality. We believe that funding following on from that assessment should then be ring-fenced for education and not allow siphoning off into other services, as seems to occur in several authorities. It

would be helpful if the local authority were required to prepare a written report which would account for any underspending of this agreed amount.

We are concerned that ill-thought through adoption of the consortia-channelled funding for 14 – 19 provision advocated in the recent Webb report, *Promise and Performance*, will make the funding fog even thicker.

Access to information on the web

We would urge the development of a framework based on consistent financial reporting across authority boundaries to ensure that comparisons between authorities, and between schools within authorities are much easier to make.

Additional funding.

We believe that the bulk of school funding should come via a developed and comprehensive needs-based formula rather than one based on pupil numbers, and that any additional revenue streams be kept to a minimum. The present bidding culture is complex, arbitrary, and disproportionately time consuming in terms of auditing requirements. There are numerous complaints about lack of information about additional funding offers being communicated to school budget holders in sufficient time. We believe that the answer lies not so much in better communication, though this would be welcome, but in the reduction of the number of additional funding streams and the development of a needs-based funding formula.

Investment in school buildings

The fabric of school building gives cause for concern to many members and pupils. A survey of our members in 2007 revealed that the vast majority were teaching in substandard school buildings. We have concern that revenue funding is often propping up capital funding. We would urge an independent audit of school buildings to be carried out and an independent assessment be made of the capital expenditure needed to make them fit for purpose. This figure,

differentiated on an authority by authority basis, would then provide the core for the Assembly's funding for capital projects.

We do not believe that PFI is a suitable or cost effective option for school building. As well as grave concerns about the real costs of such projects we believe that such schemes runs counter to the entire ethos of Welsh public service provision.

School Budget Fora

Some fora are operating reasonably well others are not. Those that are operating effectively have adequate representation from the teacher and head teacher unions in the locality. We believe that this representation strengthened and made obligatory, and that all teacher and head teacher unions be guaranteed places on the local forum. Only in this way will information about school funding be accurately, widely and effectively distributed.

ATL Cymru
1st February 2008