



March 2018

Pupil Development Grant

I believe strongly in the importance of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG). It is crucial to delivering the future success of our learners and *Our national mission* sets out my commitment to extending it. With that in mind, I am writing to inform you of plans I have put in place for the PDG that will take effect from April:

- It's absolutely right that we are ambitious for even our youngest learners, so I'm increasing the Early Years PDG from £600 to **£700**, with a simplified formula for schools;
- We will continue to fund pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) or who are looked after in primary and secondary schools at a rate of **£1,150** per learner;
- Those in education other than at school (EOTAS), who are not dual-registered, will continue to receive the same rate of funding – also **£1,150**; and
- We have **expanded the definition** of the PDG – to provide schools with the flexibility to support learners who have been e-FSM in the previous two years; and
- **I have guaranteed allocation levels for the next two financial years** – so that schools have stability to plan ahead and certainty at a time of significant unpredictability.

As I have set out in *Our national mission*, I want Wales to have strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being; a system there to support our most disadvantaged learners. That's why I have decided to expand the definition of the PDG. This will provide you with the flexibility to support learners who have been e-FSM in the previous two years. The expanded definition is:

The PDG should be used to support the needs of all children who are or have been eFSM in the previous two years or are looked after. The PDG is intended to provide support to disadvantaged learners to overcome the additional barriers that prevent those from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential.

Evidence tells us that we must do more in Wales to identify, support and stretch our more able learners. I want to be clear the PDG supports all eligible learners including our most able learners. To be truly equitable and excellent we must ensure that all pupils are supported to reach their potential. I am aware of excellent practice, but this must be shared and developed.

I have listened to your concerns about the need for the PDG to be a long term commitment so you can plan more effectively. I am pleased to confirm, therefore, that the arrangements outlined above will be in place for the next two years (2018-19 and 2019-20). I have also previously given assurance of our commitment to the PDG for the remainder of this Assembly term. I hope that this long-term commitment will enable schools to make sustainable, long-term decisions on investment that help identify and address barriers to learning and also provide a level of stability in an otherwise uncertain and challenging financial context.

Alongside the regional looked after children co-coordinators, each consortium now has in place a strategic adviser for PDG. Their focus will be on raising the attainment of all learners eligible for free school meals. They will strengthen collaboration across Wales to ensure that good practice is shared and built upon. These advisers will be able to provide extra support and guidance – whether it is decisions around interventions; whole school approaches; tracking; or supporting evaluation of current practices – I would encourage you to take full advantage of this assistance.

My officials will continue to work with consortia to implement these new arrangements.

Your continued hard work and strong leadership alongside the dedication of your teams is critical to delivering *Our national mission*. I am grateful to you for your continued commitment to closing the attainment gap and supporting all our children and young people to achieve their full potential.

Yours sincerely

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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education