

Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	COVID education grants to support pupils
Date of Meeting	10 June 2020 <sup>1</sup>
Author of Report	Owen Owens, Senior Manager Education Resources Service
Relevant Officer	Garem Jackson, Head of Education
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams

## 1. Background

- 1.1 As a result of the COVID pandemic, an **Accelerating Learning Program Grant** has been received by schools to assist pupils.
- 1.2 Although a range of other grants have been available to support schools due to COVID requirements, only the **Accelerating Learning Program Grant** is directly for supporting pupils. Other grants have been for different purposes, for example, supply cover for staff who were off due to COVID requirements, recouping the costs of school adaptations due to COVID requirements, loss of income of secondary school catering service, etc.

## 2. Conditions of Grant

Below is a summary of the grant conditions from the Welsh Government:

### Accelerating Learning Program

- 2.1 *The funding is expected to help schools meet the requirements **of Recruitment, Recovery and Raising Standards: Accelerating Learning Program** announced by the Education Minister on 9 July 2020.*
- 2.2 *During the crisis, it became apparent that many learners have not progressed as far as might be expected in their progress in learning, and some learners are more severely affected than others. This funding enables investment in schools to allow them to recruit and deploy more people to help learners address their needs following the initial COVID-19 crisis and school closures.*

- 2.3 *The primary purpose of the funding is therefore to enable investment in schools to allow them to recruit and deploy more people to help learners address their needs following the initial COVID-19 crisis and the closure of schools.*
- 2.4 *All pupils are eligible for additional support when they return to school in September, although the scope of the support required will vary considerably depending on individual circumstances. As resources are limited, we will prioritize planning the allocation of resources as follows:*

***Priority Groups for Assistance:***

- 2.5 *The funding is targeted at specific areas identified as most vulnerable, as follows:*
1. *Pupils preparing for examinations in the next academic year (namely pupils in years 11, 12 and 13).*
  2. *Vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils, as defined by various approaches.*
  3. *Year 7, due to the disruption in transition from primary to secondary school.*
- 2.6 *These specific cohorts are an indication of what headteachers will consider when distributing support. Although the funding formula is based on specific cohorts of learners, it is expected that the funding will be used to ensure that any learners who need support have the opportunity to receive that support wherever possible. It is therefore not reserved solely for the use of the three priority groups listed in points 1-3, and should be used to allow access to support where needed for children who have suffered the impact of various aspects of the pandemic.*
- 2.7 *As individuals who are not listed in the 3 priority groups will also need support, it is an important principle to allow Headteachers to have autonomy in deciding which groups or individuals they want to help as part of their individual school plans.*

***Support to Provide***

- 2.8 *Curriculum reform remains our top priority for education in Wales. Accordingly, this Program will focus on support for:*
- *Literacy, numeracy and digital competence within a broad and balanced curriculum - for examination years this will include advanced reading and writing skills, higher level maths skills where applicable, and digital competence at an appropriate level and as appropriate ' relevant to learners progressing with their qualifications.*

- *Develop independent learning skills, to enable and motivate learners in all groups to progress more quickly by working more effectively on their own and out of school.*
- *Support and engagement through coaching - in recognition that the most disengaged learners will need training and emotional support as well as help with exam preparation and skills.*

***What the funding should be used to provide:***

2.9 *This grant provides specific financial resources to create new capacity in the education system.*

- *Schools may appoint Qualified Teachers including Newly Qualified Teachers, Teaching Assistants and other school support roles (for example roles designed to provide coaching support), in line with the school's understanding of learners' needs.*
- *The new capacity may be full or part time, or an increase in hours for an existing contract where those skills are needed.*
- *New colleagues may work across more than one school where clusters of schools work in a collaborative partnership.*
- *Headteachers may appoint new teachers to the school to release existing teachers who know their pupils best to work with them to accelerate their progress (filling their normal temporary posts).*
- *The skills of new colleagues will need to reflect the needs of groups and learners.*
- *The delivery model within which new colleagues will work will be specific to the needs of the school and its learners.*

**3. How much money have Gwynedd schools received?**

3.1 The Accelerating Learning Program Grant allocation has reached schools in two tranches, September 2020 and March 2021, with the national total allocated being £29 million and £33 million. The total amount of money allocated to Gwynedd schools is approximately £2,220,440. The allocations by school sector are shown in **Appendix 1**

**4. Grant Planning and evaluating impact**

4.1 It is expected that every school will have a spending plan for the grants. To support schools in planning effectively for grant expenditure, GwE has produced a Regional Grant Planning Dashboard.



4.2 This is a system that helps schools plan the use of grants including the Accelerating Learning Grant. The Dashboard provides totals of grants awarded to schools in the financial year and links to relevant guidance documents and terms and conditions of grants. There is an evaluation section on the Dashboard for the Headteacher, Governing Body Representative and Improvement Support Advisor to approve the plans. The information in the Dashboard can also be summarized so that it can be shared with governors and the wider school community.

4.3 For 2020/21 the use of the Dashboard was optional for schools. Almost all in the primary have started using it, with most secondary schools using the Dashboard and the rest planning using their own templates.

4.4 Here is one example of how planning on the Dashboard looks for an individual school:

Enw'r Ysgol	RHAGLEN DYSGU CARLAM (RhDC)					2020/21			Cyfanswm Grant (£) ⚠
	Grant yn weddill (£)								
Carfanau Blaenoriaeth	Nifer Disgyblion wedi'u cynnwys	Meysydd Cymorth	Braslun o ddatrasiad cwricwlwm a gynigr	Datrasiadau staffio a gynigr	Math cynhwysedd	Amserlen		Math o wariant	
						O	Hyd a+		

The columns and choices are in accordance with the grant guidelines allowing a school to choose from and offer their own narrative about the specific expenditure.

4.5 Improvement Support Advisers work with schools to evaluate the impact of the grants. **Once schools have had the opportunity to fully utilize the grant they will be in a more mature position to measure its impact.**

## **5. School Plans**

### **Primary School Accelerating Learning Plans**

- 5.1 All schools have plans for recruiting staff to undertake intervention programs to restore and raise standards.
- 5.2 In practice the schools have used the funding for one, or a mixture of these temporary approaches:
  - Increase the hours of part-time assistants already on the staff of the school
  - Increase the hours of part-time teachers already at the school
  - Recruiting new assistants on a full or part-time basis
  - Recruitment of teachers (supply) full or part time
- 5.3 Yet, it was generally difficult for a few schools to find new assistants and the understandable reluctance and limitations of bubbles made it difficult for a few schools to attract new employees to a school. The main expenditure of the money has therefore been on increasing the hours of internal school staff.
- 5.4 These additional staff or hours were used for the assistants or teachers to either work with specific groups of pupils or to release other members of staff to do this.
- 5.5 In order to identify pupils to be receiving intervention through this program each school identifies their vulnerable pupils and those with needs through normal processes. Nearly all schools also assessed their pupils in early September 2020 and identified pupils where their language and maths skills had slipped. Intervention groups have been set up in almost all schools to provide recovery support for these pupils.
- 5.6 The plans identify a number of different interventions. Many schools have made very good use of GwE Accelerating Learning resources and research into the most effective interventions.

### **Secondary School Accelerating Learning Plans**

- 5.7 In general, the schools have prioritized the funding for specific cohorts of pupils such as pupils preparing for examinations (Yr.11, 12, 13), vulnerable and disadvantaged children, year 7 and any specific groups or individuals who need extra help. Targeted support areas include literacy, numeracy and digital competence, developing independent learning skills and engaging through training.
- 5.8 Schools have been creative in terms of the solutions that have been adopted with one secondary school for example having:

- supported and encouraged identified year 11 pupils to receive additional support during the lock-out period by appointing digital learning coaches to ensure continuity of learning;
- appointed an additional teacher to run literacy and numeracy sessions for specific groups of pupils who needed extra support during the lock-up period;
- appointed a lead for a cross-school Accelerating Learning Program to plan further pupil support and support the SMT with whole-school provision.

5.9 There are other examples where either time has been increased or new assistants / mentors appointed for mentoring and catch-up sessions. The main focus here was to ensure appropriate support and assistance for disaffected pupils during the lock-out period so that they could catch up with peers.

5.10 The use of the grant for targeting post-16 pupils has been similar to the above with the focus on supporting pupils with their learning, with a proportion of the money also being used for standardization and moderation centre assessment grades. Some schools have targeted specific intervention for year 12 and 13 pupils who have been identified for receiving additional support by appointing learning coaches and assistants to support them.

5.11 There is another example of responding to the concern of losing teaching time by adding lessons on the year 12 and 13 timetables when they returned to the school site. This was done by appointing additional staff to teach at KS3 so that the normal KS5 staff could be released and deployed to deliver more AS / A level lessons.