

Grant funding doubled for Wales' most disadvantaged pupils

Following on from last month's Draft Budget, Education Secretary Kirsty Williams has announced that funding for Pupil Development Grant (PDG) – Access will be doubled from £1.7m in 2018-19 to £3.5 million in 2019-20.

The PDG-Access fund offers parents up to £125 and also covers equipment for activities within the curriculum, such as design and technology.

Parents can also access funding for equipment for out of school hours trips, including outdoor learning.

Looked-after children and learners eligible for free school meals can receive funding if they are entering reception class in primary school, year 7 in secondary school or aged 4 or 11 in special schools, special needs resource bases or pupil referral units.

The £3.5m boost for PDG-Access brings overall funding for the Pupil Development Grant to £97m in 2019-20.

Described as “invaluable” by schools, the PDG gives greater support to learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and Looked After Children (LAC). It is intended to overcome additional barriers that prevent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Breaking the cycle of disadvantage and poverty is critical to the long term well-being and success of our children and central to our National Mission for Education.

“Figures released this week show that at Key Stage 2 and 3 the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers is the narrowest we have seen in 10 years.

“This should be welcomed but we now have to make sure that we keep finding new ways of overcoming barriers to learning.

“That's why we have doubled financial support to learners in the Foundation Phase and extended the PDG to cover early years learners, those in pupil referral units and learners who are educated other than at school.

“With the additional money we're investing in PDG-Access, even more pupils will be able to access opportunities, either in or outside of school. I encourage parents to take full advantage of this and to keep applying to their local council for funding.”

Finding new ways of helping parents with the cost of school uniforms will be one of the issues addressed by a consultation to be published later this month.