



Ein cyf/Our ref: WQ87651

**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
**Welsh Government**

20 March 2023

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your Written Question for answer by 10th March on the steps being taken by the Welsh Government to close the disadvantage gaps in Welsh schools in deprived areas (WQ87651). I promised to write with a substantive response as soon as possible.

The Welsh Government is taking a range of different steps to tackle the impact of poverty on educational progression and attainment. We are taking a system-wide approach, working across the education system and across government. I will be making a statement to the Senedd on 21 March and publishing a roadmap to set out our approach across education for the remainder of this Senedd term.

I will provide a further update to the Senedd on the steps we are taking through the lens of tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment in my oral statement on 28 March.

Some of our key actions involve supporting Local Authorities, regional consortia, and schools to put in place interventions that build on evidence of what works:

- The £125 million Pupil Development Grant (PDG) is a critical mechanism to target funding towards those schools and pupils that need it most. We are reviewing our approach to targeting, monitoring and evaluation of the PDG, drawing on international best practice, to ensure the use of this funding is as effective as it can be.
- Our commitment to Community Focused Schools aims to bring communities and schools together and improve engagement with families. In addition to support for community-focussed school managers, I have announced £40 million capital funding for Community Focused Schools over financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. This builds on £20 million capital funding in 2022/23 to increase the accessibility and community use of schools.
- To support schools to address challenging issues around attendance and welfare of learners we are expanding the number of family engagement officers in schools through £3.85 million investment in 2022/23, increasing to £6.5 million in 2023/24.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

[Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

- The link between attendance and educational attainment is clear and I have also announced investment of £2.5 million into the education welfare service for 2023/24. This will provide vital support to schools and families, exploring the reasons behind school absence, offering information and guidance, advising families about specialist support services, and making referrals to appropriate services when required.
- We continue to build on the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP), with £4.85 million allocated for 2023/24, in line with funding for previous years. Evaluation points to improvement in school engagement, wellbeing and aspirations as a result.

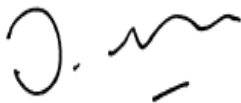
In addition to these important investments, the Welsh Government is commissioning research and pilot activities to address gaps in our understanding and develop new approaches. For example, I have appointed seven Attainment Champions, who have had success tackling the impacts of poverty in their own schools, as part of a pilot programme. These experienced headteachers are exploring approaches to providing peer-to-peer mentoring to partner schools to share their expertise and best practice across Wales.

The Welsh Government also continues to provide direct support to mitigate the worst impacts of poverty, including help to reduce the cost of the school day through the Schools Essentials Grant.

The challenges faced by children and young people experiencing poverty go beyond the education system and I am also working closely with colleagues across Government to tackle these issues collectively.

I will provide a further update on the actions underway across my portfolio in an oral statement on 28 March.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of loops and a horizontal line at the end.

**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**  
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg  
Minister for Education and Welsh Language