

Huw Lewis AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills



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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Aled Roberts AM  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay

19 May 2015

Dear Aled,

Thank you for your questions regarding the Regional Consortia and Schools Challenge Cymru at Oral Assembly Questions on the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2015. I also said I would write to you with further details in response to your question regarding the involvement of higher education institutions in the Schools Challenge Cymru Pupil Offer, following my oral statement on 28<sup>th</sup> April.

In terms of your questions on 6<sup>th</sup> May, my officials have been in discussion with Members Research Services around the request to consortia for information, in particular in respect of the volume of information requested. Consortia Managing Directors have regular meetings with my officials and this matter was tabled for discussion at the latest meeting on 18 May. My officials will ascertain how consortia can best facilitate the request and whether they require any input from Welsh Government in co-ordinating a response to the Assembly Research Service. My officials have informed Research Services of this approach and have agreed to contact them after the meeting to update on progress.

In respect of consortia performance, we know from our regular engagement with consortia, for example through the challenge and review events and the work of our expert link officers, that they are making good progress in delivering the National Model for Regional Working. Alongside this ongoing interaction, in the autumn term, the Welsh Audit Office and Estyn undertook joint fieldwork as part of the value for money study and remit reports on consortia in Wales. The reports are due for publication in early June.

One of the critical actions for the successful delivery of Schools Challenge Cymru is the need to build capacity and resilience in our system and deliver a relentless focus on improving the quality of leadership and teaching and learning through effective professional development.

Pathways to Success schools face a variety of challenges, often working in challenging socio economic communities. On occasion, the quality and capacity of their workforce and leaders has slowed the pace of improvement. The SCC Programme seeks to nurture and utilise the best expertise that already exists within the system by placing an emphasis on effective collaboration to drive sustainable improvement and move knowledge to where it needs to be. In this respect Schools Challenge Cymru can act as a catalyst for wider, system-wide change, meaning many schools in Wales will benefit as some of Wales' finest practitioners and highest performing schools share their expertise and leadership, supporting teachers in Pathways to Success schools to achieve the improvements needed.

With this in mind, and within the overarching context of the National Model for Regional Working, we asked Managing Directors of Regional Education Consortia to put forward proposals for building capacity in their region, with funding from Schools Challenge Cymru.

The plans were tailored to the local context of each region, and contained a range of ways to both build capacity and release expertise into the system and in so doing build sustainability, including:

Responding quickly to the development and support needs of school leaders

Sharing the best and most successful practice between schools – on going review of impact and success to share regionally

Literacy and numeracy – appointing NQTs to be based in strong English and Maths departments releasing the Heads of Department to work part time across schools in the programme.

Developing improvement hubs – identifying and accrediting a small number of excellent improvement hubs to develop sustainable capacity for teaching and learning.

Investing in the Continuous Professional Development of teachers through the Outstanding Teacher Programme and Improving Teacher Programme.

Leadership – releasing Head teachers, Deputy Headteachers, and Assistant Headteachers from good and outstanding schools for a certain amount of time to work with schools identified as needing support.

Teach First – recruiting Teach First graduates to work in core subjects in Pathways to Success Schools. (50% of salary covered by SCC)

Future Leaders/Outstanding Leaders Programme – Identifying and supporting leaders in a number of schools to participate in a high quality leadership coaching programme.

Providing additional capacity in Pathways to Success Schools to manage the SCC programme, including mentoring for key leadership and teaching and learning programmes.

Celebrating success, and supporting ongoing improvement – identifying strategies to support the sustainability of schools post end of grant

Effective dovetailing intervention and accountability with LA statutory functions and support role of consortia

The breakdown of allocation for 2014/2015 per consortia equates to:

CSC -	£1,603,000
ERW -	£427,000
EAS -	£1,392,000
GWE -	£538,000

Turning to your question on the involvement of higher education institutions in the Pupil Offer, we have indeed received expressions of interest from universities, as well as colleges and other academic institutions. Both Universities Wales and Colegau Cymru took part in the national Pupil Offer event and met with the Pathways to Success Schools to begin exploring the creation of mutually beneficial partnerships. A number of the schools are now working with providers in the higher and further education sector in different contexts. This includes the project I highlighted at Willows High School, involving mathematics undergraduates from Cardiff University, as well as specific pilots aimed at delivering new experiences and increasing engagement in a number of academic disciplines.

Our Pupil Offer is geared towards supporting schools to work with a range of partners in new ways and aims to deliver the types of opportunities and experiences for our young people that can make a significant, positive impact on their education and, indeed, their lives. I want this programme of work to enrich the educational and life experiences of learners, while communicating high expectations and raising their ambitions to succeed in everything they choose to do. Both colleges and universities have a key role to play and both I, and my officials, continue to welcome discussions with any organisations that would like to participate.

Yours sincerely



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