



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**STATEMENT
BY
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

TITLE **21st Century Schools**
DATE **17 January 2012**
BY **Minister for Education and Skills**

My statement today is to provide Members with an update on progress made and our continuing commitment in line with our Programme of Government to fund high quality buildings and ICT provision through the 21st Century Schools Programme

In July last year I issued an update statement on the progress of the 21st Century Schools Programme which at the time reflected the difficult decisions that were necessary in moving the Programme forward as a result of the significant reduction in capital funding available to the Welsh Government.

However, despite the reduction in capital funding, every project which has been approved by my Department under the Transitional stage of 21st Century Schools is being delivered and will be delivered over the next two years. This programme as a precursor to 21st century Schools will dovetail into the new programme which is planned to start in financial year 2014-15.

Following my July 2011 statement, local authorities were asked to review and re-submit their forward outline programmes of investment that underpin their Strategic Outline Programmes (SOPs) against sharper prioritisation criteria, for example; rationalisation of the school estate, including reduction in surplus places, together with the cost effectiveness of delivery and alignment with All Age Transformation. In addition I also signalled the Welsh Government's intention that the maximum rate of grant support would be set at 50%.

I am pleased to say that local authorities met that challenge and have re-assessed and prioritised their investment proposals in line with published guidance and DfES officials met with every authority prior to submission of their investment programmes.

Authorities outline programmes of investment submitted, seek to address not only the poor condition and surplus capacity in the schools estate, but also any investment required for additional learning needs, Welsh medium education and faith based school provision.

The 21st Century Schools programme underlines our close working partnership with colleagues in Local Government, the Welsh Local Government Association, Diocesan Directors of the Voluntary Aided Sector and CollegesWales.

It is through this partnership working that a capital programme has been agreed that ensures all 22 local authorities will receive Welsh Government Grant support of some £700million over a seven year period commencing in 2014-15. That said it will be our intention where funds allow to bring forward individual capital projects at an earlier stage.

This investment will build upon the £415million of capital investment that is already being provided by the Welsh government from the Transitional Funding Programme.

Authorities have been given surety of a long-term capital programme and that is vitally important in the current economic climate, the investment in schools announced in December 2011 also sends a positive message to the construction industry that this Government is planning for the long term and investment in our schools will provide much needed support to the Welsh Economy.

The 21st Century Schools programme will encourage local authorities to secure community benefits such as training and apprenticeship opportunities, through the adoption of a 'Community Benefits' approach to procurement which includes equality of opportunity, local supply chain opportunities especially for smaller organisations and positive environmental impacts.

I will continue to work with the Finance Minister on the issue of securing additional capital including the development of alternative sources of funding. Collaboration across the Welsh public sector is essential to ensure we deliver the strategic projects and programmes that will have the greatest impact on the Welsh economy both in terms of direct employment and educating our future workforce.

It is important that we look to maximise our investment of the Welsh pound, by 2014-15, the Welsh Government's capital budget will be almost 50% lower in real terms than in 2009-10.

We will look to explore more effective design of school buildings to make our investment work harder and my officials are already meeting with leading

architectural organisations both within Wales and outside of the principality exploring innovative ways of delivering schools for the 21st century.

The announcement of nearly £1.4 billion is an important contribution to the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan, identifying and prioritising our investment into the schools estate through the 21st Century Schools programme.

Finally, it is important to recognise how far we have come since the launch of 21st Century Schools in March 2010. Securing capital investment in these difficult economic times is essential, not only for better education outcomes, but also for improving the economy of our communities.

I want schools in Wales to be places that inspire our young people; places that can accommodate 21st century technology and be adapted to meet the changing needs of learners in a rapidly developing knowledge economy. Schools also need to be resources for their local communities and they need to work seamlessly and coherently with providers of education and training.

My statement today underlines the Welsh Government's absolute commitment to improving the lives of people in Wales.

check against delivery

**Embargoed until after Leighton Andrews
has delivered the statement.**