

BRIEFING PAPER

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SMALL AND RURAL SCHOOLS – WELSH GOVERNMENT INNOVATION IN SMALL AND RURAL SCHOOLS GRANT FUNDING: 2017/18

The Cabinet Secretary for Education has set out her plans for a national strategy for small and rural schools, recognising that schools in different parts of Wales face different challenges. The National Strategy for Small and Rural Schools supports the Welsh Government's wider aim to strengthen and extend school-to-school relationships and prioritise education leadership in order to raise standards and tackle the attainment gap.

As part of the National Strategy the Cabinet Secretary announced new funding of £2.5m for 2017/18 to promote innovation and raise standards in small and rural schools in Wales.

Allocation and payment of funding to local authorities

The Welsh Government (WG) have determined the distribution of grant to local authorities using a formula incorporating factors for sparsity and school size as follows:

- 70% by reference to sparsity (based on the population in each local authority outside settlements above the thresholds of a specified population from the 1991 Population Census); and
- 30% by reference to the number of (primary), schools maintained by the local authority with fewer than 90 pupils.

A maximum of **£144, 599** is available to Flintshire County Council in the **2017/18** financial year.

What can the funding be used for?

This funding is to be used to facilitate and encourage innovation and change which is beneficial to small and rural schools, their pupils and to the communities they serve.

The key purposes of the grant funding are from a WG perspective are as follows:

1. To encourage innovation

This purpose is intentionally wide to encourage the development of innovative practices to raise standards and contribute to the sustainability of small and rural schools. An

example might include the use of new digital technologies to combat the issue of professional isolation by harnessing the power of IT, including virtual classrooms.

2. To support greater school to school working

This purpose includes informal association, formal collaboration or federation to raise standards. Federation has been shown to be particularly beneficial in allowing rural schools to remain open and viable in their communities.

3. To provide additional administrative support in schools where the head teacher has a significant timetabled teaching commitment of at least 10% of the timetable.

The intention of this key purpose is to improve the capacity of these head teachers to provide leadership and management, and to raise standards in their schools.

Consideration should be given to innovative ways of working with other schools for example to share backroom functions and/or through the use of a shared business manager. The funding should not be used to fund general administrative support in the school.

4. To increase the community use of school buildings whether for education or non-education purposes

Where opportunities exist, and where there is local demand, school facilities might be used by pre-school groups or for after school activities, adult education and sport or as ICT centres and libraries, as well as a wide range of non-educational community purposes. Funding may be used to assist with the associated costs for establishing such arrangements, whether these are administrative or associated with equipment or adaptations of the facilities.

The funding cannot be used for reoccurring teaching commitment and spending (subject to agreement) will be aligned to the WG criteria and activities below.

Deadline for Submission & Confirmation of Grant

The Deadline for submission of the Grant for 17/18 was 1st May 2017, the Council have submitted the application based on the following:

Project/Schools	Description of Proposed Activity:	Estimated Expenditure (£)
<u>Federation of Small Schools</u> Trelogan CP & Gronant CP Gwernymynydd CP & Gwernaffield CP	To support small schools with additional funding to facilitate consultation with stakeholders on a federated model. To provide additional	£35,000

Project/Schools	Description of Proposed Activity:	Estimated Expenditure (£)
	<p>administration and clerking time to support the development and consultation process.</p> <p>To release the head teacher and other key staff from teaching commitment to give them capacity to develop a sustainable federated model.</p>	
<p><u>Reduction in Head Teacher Teaching Time</u></p> <p>Ysgol Gymraeg Mornant Nercwys VA Gronant C.P. Treuddyn, Ysgol Terrig Cilcain, Ysgol y Foel Lixwm C.P. Gwernymynydd C.P. Nannerch VC Caerwys, Ysgol yr Esgob VA Trelogan C.P. Brynford C.P. Mold, St.David's R.C. Ffynnongroyw Ysgol Bryn Garth Trelawnyd Aided Shotton St.Ethelwold's Aided</p>	<p>Funding for teacher supply will be made available to small schools to release head teacher's from their teaching commitment. This will give them extra capacity to attend meetings and professional groups, to develop teaching practice, to observe and assess teaching practice.</p> <p>For 2016/17 an allocation of £4,080 per school will be made.</p>	<p>£63,260</p>
<p><u>Business Management Support</u></p> <p>Across the network of small schools above</p>	<p>To implement a study into the feasibility of establishing a business management role to support small schools. The purpose of this study would be to review the skillset which would be desirable and to identify the main areas of support which would assist schools and to consider how such a model could operate given the geographical location of our rural schools.</p> <p>The study would need to identify the cost of implementation and to identify sources of funding in addition to the grant.</p>	<p>£12,500</p>

Project/Schools	Description of Proposed Activity:	Estimated Expenditure (£)
<p><u>Additional Needs in Small Schools</u></p> <p>To support the network as above</p>	<p>To consider new and innovative ways of working collaboratively across schools to support small schools with the increasing demands of meeting the requirements of pupils with additional learning needs, particularly around emotional well-being.</p> <p>A review of current practice, demands and impacts on small schools.</p> <p>To identify training needs for staff to assist in catering for children with issues related to emotional wellbeing and challenging behaviours.</p>	<p>£10,899</p>
<p><u>Curriculum Development and Sharing Best Practise</u></p> <p>As above</p>	<p>To develop a teacher network to increase collaboration between teachers in small and rural schools by providing release time for joint working around curriculum planning, improvement and sharing best practise</p>	<p>£22, 950</p>
<p>Total</p>		<p>£144,599</p>

Grant Award

We hope to receive a formal award letter confirming the sum of grant and attaching the terms and conditions of grant prior to the end of Summer Term 2017.

How will the grant be administered?

We are awaiting the T&C's from WG, however WG have stipulated that end of year report covering activity and a claim for costs incurred (paid in arrears), will be required by 31 January 2018. The final performance report should to be submitted to Welsh Government by end of May 2018.

The Finance team will provide a further communication in respect of how we proposed to administer, however, it would not be our wish to create a bureaucratic process for all concerned.