

**Children and Young People Committee
School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Bill
SSO26 – Response from Carmarthenshire County Council**

School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Bill

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Schools causing concern

We welcome the clarity on LA powers, which can then be communicated to other stakeholders, e.g. schools, Governing Bodies, parents. However, we are still concerned about capacity issues within LAs in implementing the approaches available.

School improvement guidance

We welcome the power for the WG to develop guidance on school improvement with the aim of ensuring similar services to all schools across Wales. However, we would hope that the Minister and his officers engage with school improvement services/officers on the content of this advice in order that it appreciates local challenges and difficulties and the differences between LAs e.g. linguistic, geography.

Changes to the way schools are organised.

We welcome a simplified system, which is locally managed without removing the stakeholder's right to object. We welcome a speedier process, which will enable proposals, which are agreed, to progress to the next stage at a quicker pace.

Proposals for annual parents' meetings

Whilst we recognise that the current system is not effective take must be taken with developing and adopting an alternative approach. We agree that parents should have the right to request a meeting but we are concerned with how many meetings can be expected within one academic year and determination of which aspects of the school's remit satisfies the need for a meeting. 5% of parents could request a meeting to discuss an issue, which has nothing to do with standards of education or provision. Some guidelines on areas, which should not and could be considered, would be valuable.

Proposals for post-16 learners with special educational needs in schools?

We are concerned about this aspect in the sense that it treats pupils with ALN as different to other Post 16 students. Currently schools with Sixth Forms are funded by the WG via a dedicated grant. Similarly, pupils with ALN Post 16 are funded by the WG. If this approach is adopted some pupils will be funded by the LA whilst others by the WG- this does not support/promote the inclusion and equality agendas. We

are concerned that the funding will not reach the pupils and will not be sufficient to cover the costs of their placements.

Free school breakfasts?

As far as the Grant funding for Free Breakfasts in Primary Schools, our main concern is that it will become part of the RSG grant. This will mean that it will be up to the Corporate centre/Director to decide how much will be delegated to the Catering Service for running this service. We have 100 schools participating in the Breakfast Scheme the highest in Wales with nearly 500 employees involved. If the responsibility will be delegated to the Governing Body and Headteachers to decide how they want this service delivered – if at all, we could find ourselves losing this invaluable service all together or providing a substandard service.

Schools-based counselling?

Concern with the funding for this invaluable service being put into the RSG. Without the funding being ring fenced, there is a risk that it will not be honoured by LAs.

Flexible charging for school meals?

We would like to note our view that this will have huge implications possibly to the detriment of the catering service. Not only will it mean cost to the service if we have to charge a lower price for some meals, standards and quality of the meals will have to reduce if income is less and labour will have to be cut.

Families having a discount for more than one child would be seen as “discriminating” as they already have allowances for extra children. There are going to be challenges on defining a family especially with stepsiblings etc: Also can see major issues with the collection of dinner money to know accurately what tariff each family will need to be charged.