

Funding of Ysgol Pendalar and Ysgol Hafod Lon

In October 2010, at the Welsh Assembly's request, the Wales Audit Office published a report on "The Use of Resources at Special Schools". The report contained several recommendations for councils in Wales; including:

"Councils and their maintained special schools should undertake basic reviews of the funding arrangements for pupils who attend special schools - utilizing an up-date of current requirements and comparative costs for pupils both within and outside the authority."

The report mentioned the only available guidelines on funding special schools that were presented by the Welsh Office in a Circular in 1990 but drawing attention to the changes introduced since then:

"Over the last 20 years, the requirements of pupils who attend special schools have increased in both intensity and complexity. As a consequence of the combined impact of these changes, in many councils, the basis used to determine resource allocation for special schools, is no longer appropriate."

Using this report as a basis, what action should Gwynedd Council take?

Draw comparisons with other councils

The report recommends that Gwynedd should draw comparisons with the other councils in Wales. A significant number of tables for this purpose are published annually. If we were to start off through looking at one, namely the table listing the capitation funding allocated to special schools in Welsh councils, then Gwynedd would occupy the 15th position out of 22. This comparison and the fact that Gwynedd occupies 3rd position out of 22 in the allocation for primary schools, provides a reason to argue that special schools in Gwynedd receive less generous funding than the primary schools. I believe that others would put forward an equally strong argument namely that it is wholly unfair to compare special schools with primary schools due to there being so many very small primary schools in Gwynedd, etc, etc...

This raises a fundamental question: **What is the value of a comparison unless we are wholly persuaded that we are comparing like with like?**

I hold the view that drawing a comparison is exceptionally dangerous without first analyzing **every element** so as to ensure that a real like for like comparison is being made.

This can be best explained by example - compare two neighbouring schools namely Ysgol y Bont, Isle of Anglesey and Ysgol Pendalar, Gwynedd, at first sight, this may appear to be a quite fair comparison as both schools are of about the same size and both have links with the same Special Education Joint Committee.

Here are a few facts on 2011 statistics:

Ysgol y Bont receives more capitation funding than Ysgol Pendalar. Does this imply that Isle of Anglesey provides more generous funding for special education than Gwynedd does?

Pupils at Ysgol Pendalar are funded on a 5 band basis: 1,1,2,4,5. All pupils are placed on the 3 middle bands.*

Pupils at Ysgol y Bont are funded on a 3 band basis: D,D,C. All pupils are placed on the 2 higher bands.*

*As the highest bands attract more funding, the **placement of** Ysgol y Bont pupils attracts more funding than the **placement** of Ysgol Pendalar pupils.*

If we were to place the pupils of Ysgol Pendalar as those of Ysgol y Bont, then Ysgol Pendalar pupils would receive more capitation funding than Ysgol y Bont pupils.

*Therefore, it is not **generosity of funding** that accounts for the difference between the two schools but **band placement**.*

Considering that both schools come under the umbrella of the same Joint-committee, there would not appear to be a substantial difference in the pupil banding method and it would not be apparent that the difference in funding is solely due to this. Although both schools are superficially similar, when it comes to funding, there is no like with like comparison.

Drawing comparisons with schools in distant and unfamiliar authorities poses a greater problem. In the report, there is a recommendation that Caerphilly Council implements good practice in their funding of Trinity Fields special school. But if one were to delve underneath that funding method, it becomes apparent that the new funding method has been established to produce the same amount as the former method. At Caerphilly, the

amount of money and not the pupils' requirements have produced the resources.

Consequently, no amount can be transferred in absolute terms to another school in another authority.

If there is no real value in drawing a comparison with other authorities – and the Wales Audit Office report is very critical of the quality of the information provided by local councils to the National Assembly - **on what grounds can the conclusion be reached that Gwynedd Council funds the county's special schools fairly or unfairly?**

Funding Model

In 1990, the Welsh Office published Circular 58/90 entitled "Staffing for Pupils with Special Educational Needs". As has already been mentioned, this is the only staffing guidance in existence and many changes have occurred since then - the advent of Local Management of Schools and the National Curriculum to name two of them. However, this is the only objective national basis at our disposal to try and meet the needs of pupils at special schools. Therefore, it can be fairly asked: Does Ysgol Pendalar receive the staffing resources in 2011 that were recommended by the Welsh Office in 1990?

The table below indicates how many teachers and how many assistants (CCD) that a 1990 basic model would have produced for Ysgol Pendalar **based on 76 places**.

Pendalar						
Difficulties		Pupils	Ratio. Teacher	Teachers	Ratio. CCD	CCD
Multiple Serious	C	24.74	0.2	4.948	0.3	7.422
	U	16.79	0.2	3.358	0.3	5.037
Intense Communication	C	8.84	0.18	1.5912	0.18	1.5912
	U	12.37	0.18	2.2266	0.1	1.237
Intense Developmental	C	2.65	0.13	0.3445	0.13	0.3445
	U	10.61	0.13	1.3793	0.13	1.3793
		76		13.8476		17.011
Current Staff (2011)				11		27.5
Adjusted (on 2:1)				13.85		21.8

Given that the cost of 2 Assistants equates approximately to 1 Teacher, the current staffing can be adjusted to 13.85 teachers and 21.8 Assistants. The table indicates that the current staffing at Ysgol Pendalar is approximately 4.8 Assistants above the staffing recommended in 1990.

This funding model follows the pattern:

Number of pupils → Number of Teachers + Assistants → Funding

Currently, Gwynedd special schools are funded on the pattern:

Number of pupils → Funding

(It is quite likely that this pattern was established a long time ago based on teacher numbers and number of assistants but the link is no longer obvious.)

I believe that every funding scheme should refer to the **provision** on which that scheme is based. Without ensuring that, it is very difficult to maintain a meaningful dialogue between a council and school when funding is discussed.

Additions to the basic model proposed in 1990

Circular 58/90 also recommends that the above-mentioned staffing model should be added to when:

1. the pupil has a combination of difficulties
2. a pupil is under 6 years
3. a pupil is between 14 and 16 years
4. a pupil is over 16 years for the purposes of outside school activities
5. teachers must be released to perform outside-school responsibilities

The question is how does somebody evaluate the additions that are merited in 2012? This would certainly involve a detailed and very complicated task. Perhaps at this juncture it would be more practical to accept rough additions based on experience in other sectors e.g. primary and secondary.

Addition 1: This can be met by using the existing ratio between Band 1 and Band 1*, namely 125%, to establish an Exceptionally Intense band as a new band in the model. Staffing at Ysgol Hafod Lon (**42 places**) would be based on a 58/90 model as follows:

Hafod Lon						
Difficulties		Pupils	Ratio Teacher	Teachers	Ratio. CCD	CCD
Exceptionally Intense	C	0	0.25	0	0.375	0
	U	3	0.25	0.75	0.375	1.125
Multiple Intense	C	4	0.2	0.8	0.3	1.2
	U	8	0.2	1.6	0.3	2.4
Intense Communication	C	6	0.18	1.08	0.18	1.08
	U	4	0.18	0.72	0.1	0.4
Intense Developmental	C	7	0.13	0.91	0.13	0.91
	U	10	0.13	1.3	0.13	1.3
		42		7.16		8.42
Current Staff (2011)				6.00		13.00
Adjusted (on 2:1)				7.16		10.68

It can be seen that staffing at Ysgol Hafod Lon in September 2012 is 2.27 assistant above the 1990 recommendation.

Additions 2,3 and 4. In the primary sector, approximately 10% more is allocated to funding “nursery and reception class” pupils in comparison with KS1 and KS2 pupils. This factor can be included in the staffing model. A similar percentage can also be added to KS5 pupils compared to KS3 and KS4. This would meet “addition 2 and 4”. There are no grounds for justifying “addition 3” as there is no longer much difference in the provision between KS3 pupils and KS4 pupils at special schools 3 – 19.

When accepting these additions, staffing at both schools would be as follows:

Pendalar						
Difficulties		Pupils	Ratio. Teacher	Teachers	Ratio CD	CCD
Multiple Intense	C	24.74	0.20625	5.10	0.309375	7.66
	U	16.79	0.20625	3.46	0.309375	5.19
Intense Communication	C	8.84	0.185625	1.64	0.185625	1.64
	U	12.37	0.185625	2.30	0.103125	1.28
Intense Developmental	C	2.65	0.1340625	0.36	0.1340625	0.36
	U	10.60	0.1340625	1.42	0.1340625	1.42
		76.00		14.28		17.54
Current Staff (2011)				11.00		27.50
Adjusted (on 2:1)				14.28		20.94

Hafod Lon						
Difficulties		Pupils	Ratio Teacher	Teachers	Ratio. CCD	CCD
Exceptionally Intense	C	0	0.2578125	0.00	0.38671875	0.00
	U	3	0.2578125	0.77	0.38671875	1.16
Multiple Intense	C	4	0.20625	0.83	0.309375	1.24
	U	8	0.20625	1.65	0.309375	2.48
Intense Communication	C	6	0.185625	1.11	0.185625	1.11
	U	4	0.185625	0.74	0.103125	0.41
Intense Developmental	C	7	0.1340625	0.94	0.1340625	0.94
	U	10	0.1340625	1.34	0.1340625	1.34
		42		7.38		8.68
Current Staff (2011)				6.00		13.00
Adjusted (on 2:1)				7.38		10.24

Ysgol Pendalar 3.40 assistants is better off than Ysgol Hafod Lon 1.56 assistants.

Addition 5 and staff training

Since 1990, several training grants have been established and consequently “addition 5” is not as relevant today as it was when Circular 58/90 was published.

However, the demand for specialized training for special schools staff has increased and by now several of the courses are held outside the county and incur costly charges

These courses have no established pattern and can vary from year to year with some courses amounting to a 5 day course with a fee of £2000.

Funding is not usually included for training in the schools allocated funding but it is instead included in the council’s centrally kept funding. Currently, Pendalar and Hafod Lon schools pay for several training courses out of independent funds at the schools.

This requires review and a clear policy established.

Other additions between 1990 and 2011

At the outset, this quotation from the Wales Audit Office report was cited:

“Over the last 20 years, the needs of pupils who attend special schools have increased both in intensity and complexity. As a consequence of the combined

impact of these changes, in many Councils the basis used to determine resource allocation for special schools is no longer appropriate.”

How can this be included? I believe that it could be argued that this change is recognized in the current freedom to move pupils on the bands. When adding the band “**Exceptionally Intense**” to the bands, I am of the view that it would be fair to say that the above quotation would not apply to Gwynedd Council.

When referring to Circular 58/90, the Wales Audit Office report mentions the changes that have been introduced since 1990. Two changes have already been mentioned, namely Local Management of Schools and the National Curriculum. In the primary sector, both these changes have led to two arrangements at the schools, namely recognize that the following additions should be made to primary school staffing:

Management: add 10% (releasing the Headteacher etc.)

Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA): add 10%

I believe that it is fair that this be transferred to the special schools namely **addition 10% Management and 10% PPA to the funding model.**

Currently, Gwynedd special schools are not funded on the basis of the school’s average salary. The county’s primary schools are funded using this method. I believe that this should be adopted in the special schools, namely **funding based on the school’s average salary.**

If this was approved, **a staffing model would need to be created for both schools i.e. how many assistant headteachers, a range of allowances for teachers, and how many assistants at levels 1, 2, 3 and 4.** If an average salary is used as a basis for the funding, then it must be accepted **that schools will need to scrutinize the staffing model in detail when making decisions on staff salaries.**

Factor relating to small school

Circular 58/90 draws attention to this: “Staffing should take into consideration the problems of the smallest special schools.” In the primary sector, there would be a substantial difference (approximately 10%) between a staffing finance for a school with 42 pupils and a school with 76 pupils. I hold the view that it would be unfair to transfer a similar ratio from the primary to the special sector as class sizes at special schools are so

much smaller. However, the funding should take the size factor into account. May I suggest that the Ysgol Hafod Lon staffing model should show a **5%** addition on the staffing model.

Financial implications of all the additions

All the additions are included in the following tables. The costs are based on the average teacher cost of £45,000 and average assistant cost of £21,200.

**Note. If a school currently employs staff on allowances/scales that are on average higher than that recommended in the model, then the totals below will be slightly lower. On the other hand, if the school's allowances/scales are lower than those listed in the model, the totals will be slightly higher.*

Pendalar						
Difficulties		Pupils	Ratio Teacher	Teachers	Ratio CCD	CCD
Multiple Intense	C	24.74	0.20625	5.10	0.309375	7.66
	U	16.79	0.20625	3.46	0.309375	5.19
Intense Communication	C	8.84	0.185625	1.64	0.185625	1.64
	U	12.37	0.185625	2.30	0.103125	1.28
Intense Developmental	C	2.65	0.1340625	0.36	0.1340625	0.36
	U	10.60	0.1340625	1.42	0.1340625	1.42
		76.00		14.28		17.54
20% Management and PPA				17.14		17.54
Current Staff (2011)				11.00		27.50
Additions				6.14		-9.96
Additional Cost				£276,137		-£211,152

The additional cost of adopting the model to Ysgol Pendalar would be **approximately £64,985** (see *Note above).

Hafod Lon						
Difficulties		Pupils	Ratio Teacher	Teachers	Ratio. CCD	CCD
Exceptionally Intense	C	0	0.2578125	0.00	0.3867188	0.00
	U	3	0.2578125	0.77	0.3867188	1.16
Multiple Intense	C	4	0.20625	0.83	0.309375	1.24
	U	8	0.20625	1.65	0.309375	2.48
Intense Communication	C	6	0.185625	1.11	0.185625	1.11
	U	4	0.185625	0.74	0.103125	0.41
Intense Developmental	C	7	0.1340625	0.94	0.1340625	0.94
	U	10	0.1340625	1.34	0.1340625	1.34
		42		7.38		8.68
5% size factor				7.75		9.11
20% Management and PPA				9.30		9.11
Current Staff (2011)				6.00		13.00
Additions				3.30		-3.89
Additional Cost				£148,659		-£82,468

The additional cost to adopt the model for Ysgol Hafod Lon would be **approximately £66,191**

Basis of the Model

The model is based on funding several **places** at the schools. The current funding is also based on this and although this is annually reviewed, the arrangement of indicating the link between number of **pupils at a specific time** and the number of **places** does not appear consistent or clear.

The future

Circular 58/90 states that the staffing model is only a “starting point”.

Despite the attempt made to up-date and add to the model, it must be acknowledged that in this report only “another starting point” has been established.

In essence, the 1990 model recommends that a special school should employ around 25% more assistants than teachers. Gwynedd special schools in 2011-12 employed twice as many assistants and teachers and they are free to maintain that pattern in future. There is no consistency in the teacher/assistant ratio throughout the country. Some schools favour teachers, others favour assistants. This is a very interesting field for future discussion.