

Minutes



Formal Council Questions and Responses

Date: 20 March 2023

1 **Question to the Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years : 2023/9 - Education Inequality**

Councillor B Davies asked:

As a region we have committed to working with the Institute of Health Equity to become a Marmot region. Evidence clearly shows that there remains a gap between the progress which is made by children and young people living in deprived areas. What are we doing in Newport to achieve the best outcomes, raise attainment and reduce education inequality?

Councillor D Davies responded:

Within education, we have developed a tiered approach to tackling all aspects of poverty, this includes both the internal work of the education department and supporting schools and settings.

Early Years services in Newport provide a range of support services for parents and carers who have children aged 0 – 7 years to enable young children to have the best start to their lives. This support includes support for the family, supporting children with speech, language, and communication; supporting children to learn and develop and support with childcare costs.

Newport City Council offers every three-year-old child in Newport a free part time place in an educational establishment. Children attending these settings are entitled to 2 free hours early education for a maximum of 5 day per week.

Newport has accelerated the roll out of WG universal free school meals offer, to all children aged 5 to 7. Almost all schools offer a breakfast clubs and most secondary schools offer a breakfast club for pupils in Year 7. Children and Young people eligible for FSM who are 8 years to 16 also have access to a Pupil Development Access Grant. This helps families cover the cost of school uniforms and sports kits, as well as equipment for activities outside of the school, including sports clubs and trips for outdoor learning. It is funding that goes directly to the families who need it most to help with some of the costs of the school day.

All schools across the city have a Pupil Development Grant, the purpose of this grant is to improve outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and Looked After Children (LAC). It is intended to overcome the additional barriers that prevent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential. Nearly all schools use this grant to enhance their provision to support learners who are experiencing poverty. Some examples are:

- Purchasing the 'Accelerated Reading Programme' as it is having a positive impact on improving children's reading ages, particularly those from deprived areas.

- Financing 'Nurture Groups' to provide a 'home environment' to support families living in poverty.
- Financing a 'Family and Engagement Officer' to focus on supporting children who are entitled to Free School Meals.

Primary aged children also have access to playschemes which run during holiday times. They provide creative play opportunities run by play workers for children in a safe and stimulating environment. Playschemes are child-led and give children the opportunity to control their play and challenge themselves to take emotional and physical risks in a safe environment.

For secondary aged students, a programme called 'One Million Mentors' has been piloted in Newport, providing mentoring to students who may be adversely affected by poverty. Older students and their families are also offered opportunities to gain career advice by attending a 'Moving on Week'. All secondary students in year 11 have access to careers advice from a qualified career advisor from Careers Wales. Aligning to MARMOT second principle, to enable all children, young people, and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives

We recognise the success of the above provision depends on those families living in the most deprived areas of Newport attend school well. All schools have regular visits from an attendance welfare officer to support families where children are not attending school on a regular basis.

Many schools across the city have a named member of staff responsible for 'Family and Community Engagement', these are very often the 'go to' member of staff to sign post families to support from partner agencies and charities, making a difference by improving well-being now and for future generations.

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified