

## Formal Council Questions and Responses

---

Date of publication: 6 March 2020

---

1 **Question to the Leader: 2020/09 - Addressing Concerns of the Newport Association of Primary Headteachers**

**Councillor M. Evans asked:**

The recent strike action at Caerleon and Llanwern High School shows the teachers and staff have lost confidence in the Council to deal with their understandable concerns.

Your Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Gail Giles did not even meet them when they came to the Civic Centre. The Conservative Group believe, this is the last straw and her position has become untenable and you need somebody to get a grip of the situation.

The Newport Association of Primary Head teachers have written to the Cabinet saying; “We are now facing the real prospect of failing to deliver our pupils’ full educational entitlement, we are likely to be operating our schools with safety inadequately addressed and we will be teaching in buildings that are falling apart around us in classrooms that are crying out for decoration”.

When was the last time the Cabinet Member met with them or indeed those taking strike action?

Only two of our nine secondary schools are rated green, while St. Julian’s and Newport High School have been in special measures since July and November 2017 respectively, do you agree this is completely unacceptable?

Councillor Giles has been in position since May 2016 and must take responsibility, so does she still have your full support?

**The Leader responded:**

It is extremely disappointing that the opposition group are using schools to try to make political capital. Through the years of austerity, the council has tried to protect primary and secondary schools as much as possible and they have been spared some of the drastic reductions in funding seen in other areas.

In next year’s budget, ratified by full council on 27 February 2020, an investment of £10.4 million was agreed. This includes the full additional £4.6 million from the Welsh Government settlement – even though that was not ring-fenced for schools – plus an extra £1.4 million.

Councils must distribute amounts from their individual school budget (ISB) among their maintained schools according to a formula that accords with regulations made by the Welsh Government and enables the calculation of a budget share for each maintained school. The council delegates funding on an equitable basis using the school funding formula agreed by the school budget forum – a consultative group consisting of head teachers, governors and school business managers.

The funding formula can be broken down into four main elements:

- Special educational needs
- Site specific
- School specific
- Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU)

The first three provide funding to a school based on a range of variable elements unique to that school such as pupil numbers, building condition, floor space, type of energy used, no. of teachers on Upper Pay Scale (UPS), pupils with Special Educational Needs, Learning resource bases etc.

The main element of a schools funding is the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU). A fixed amount for each pupil, per year group, per sector. The AWPU has the same value for every secondary school in Newport and funds a number of components:

- Teachers
- TLR (Teaching and Learning Responsibility) Allowances
- Supply Short Term Cover
- Supply Cover Performance Management
- Supply Cover Long Term
- Leadership
- Non-Contact
- Teacher AWPU
- Classroom Support
- Administration
- Lunchtime Duty
- Capitation / ICT
- Examination Fees
- External Courses
- Water
- Refuse
- Miscellaneous Premises
- Building Maintenance
- Interview / Advertising
- Central Services

As all councillors will be aware that Head teachers and governing bodies still have a responsibility to manage and balance their budgets and staffing and sometimes have to make difficult decisions.

As a council, we have expressed our concern at the impact the strike action may be having on pupils and their education as well as on their families.

The council holds a regular employee partnership panel where trade union representatives can directly raise issues with the council. Additionally, there was constructive dialogue with TU representatives in a meeting on 5 March, attended by senior officers, the Cabinet Members and the Leader.

Members and officers meet regularly with head teachers of primary and secondary schools, and many also sit on governing bodies, so are well aware of the issues they face and try to help wherever possible given the financial backdrop we all face.

Those schools in an Estyn category have continued on an upward trajectory since the time of their core inspections. Only Estyn can determine when a school can be removed from a category of requiring special measures. The council continues to ensure that the most

appropriate support is provided to each of these schools so that they can achieve sustained success in the future.

Our primary schools have an excellent record of performance and attendance at both primary and secondary levels has significantly improved.

I'm proud of all of our schools and governing bodies. Whether our schools are ranked among the best in Wales or whether they need extra help and support at difficult times – and we all share the same aim, to help all pupils achieve their potential.

As members will be aware, the Leader appoints individual elected members to Cabinet member positions; this is the sole responsibility of the Leader. This decision is based upon the knowledge, skills and experience of individual members. I am content with all of my Cabinet member appointments and am satisfied that my executive members are appropriately held to account for the performance of their portfolios by fellow elected members through the scrutiny mechanisms that the local authority has in place.