Comparing schools spending per pupil in Wales and England

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Comparing school spending across England and Wales is important, but challenging

Latest empirical evidence suggests higher levels of school resources/spending can improve later life outcomes

Interest in comparing how policymakers across the UK have prioritised school spending in times of overall public spending cuts

Previous Welsh government statistics suggest spending per pupil was about £600 lower in Wales than in England in 2009-10

Fast pace of Academies programme in England makes updating these statistics hard

• Over two thirds of secondary schools in England are now Academies
• Academies missing from local authority outturns

New school funding arrangements in England from 2013-14 mean that Academies are now included within local authority plans...
Outline

Data/methods for calculating comparable measures of spending per pupil in Wales and England over time

Overall trends in spending per pupil since 2008-09

Driving factors and implications

Plans for further work
Constructing a consistent measure of spending per pupil across England and Wales is not easy

Different statistics and definitions

Greater role for local authorities in Wales

Different funding structure for early years and post-16

Academies often missing from LA data in England

Our approach:

- Total spending on schools from age 3-18 by schools or local authorities
- Consistent FTE pupil counts from ages 3-18 (spending data includes private nurseries for England; excluded for Wales)
- Add back in Academies for England before 2012-13
- Make use of England plans data from 2013-14, which includes Academies
Spending per pupil in Wales about £300 lower than in England in 2009

Lower than previous estimated gap of £600

Spending per pupil (2018 prices)

England

Wales

£6,090

£6,380
### Accounting for difference between £600 & £300 gap

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School spending in England

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Accounting for difference between £600 & £300 gap

Gap goes up due to higher level of spend per pupil in Wales
Accounting for difference between £600 & £300 gap

Old Estimates | Exclude adult/youth spend | Change Eng. Spending data source | Add Academies | New Estimates

Difference between England & Wales (2018-19 prices)

£0

Lower levels of recorded spending in Section 251 data in England (same level of difference not seen in other years)
**Accounting for difference between £600 & £300 gap**

- **Old Estimates**
- **Exclude adult/youth spend**
- **Change Eng. Spending data source**
- **Add Academies**
- **New Estimates**

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Extra 230,000 FTE pupils in England in private, voluntary, independent early years settings

Adding Academies makes little difference
Not clear we can fully trust Academies data from 2010-11 to 2012-13 in England
Gap falls to just over £100 or about 2% by 2017

Data for England fully consistent from 2013-14

Spending per pupil (2018 prices)

England

Wales

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Driven by faster cuts to spend per pupil in England between 2009-10 and 2017-18

Data for England fully consistent from 2013-14

Spending per pupil (2018 prices)

- England: 8% Cut
- Wales: 5.3% Cut

School spending in England © Institute for Fiscal Studies
**Summary of changes in spending per pupil**

**Gap in spending per pupil down from £300 in 2009-10 to about £100 in 2017-18**

- Smaller estimated gap in 2009 due to different data sources and inclusion of additional early years pupils in England
- If we could exclude London, gap would probably be closer to zero.

**Faster cuts in spending per pupil in England (8%) than in Wales (5%)**

- Actual cut probably smaller for Wales as includes effect of moving Flying Start out of education budget in 2015-16

**What accounts for faster pace of cuts in England?**

- Spending allocated directly to schools
- Wider local authority services
- School Sixth Forms
What has driven faster cuts in England?
Greater protection for funds delegated to schools in Wales

Notes: Figure are per pupil aged 3-19
What has driven faster cuts in England?  
Both have cut school sixth form spending, slightly more in England

Notes: Figure are per pupil aged 3-19

School spending in England
What has driven faster cuts in England?
Faster reductions in LA spending in England

Notes: Figure are per pupil aged 3-19
Spending per pupil cuts in Wales driven by falling total spending and static pupil numbers

Graph showing relative to level in 2009-10 for total spend, total pupils, and spend per pupil.
Falls in England driven by static total spending and nearly 10% rise in pupil population
Summary and future research questions

£100 difference in spending per pupil between England & Wales in 2017

- Lower than in 2009, when it was £300
- Lower than previous estimates of £600 due to refined pupil number estimates and different data sources

Faster pace of cuts in England (8%) than in Wales (5%)

- Both countries have protected spending per pupil directly allocated to schools
- Faster cuts in sixth forms and wider local authority services in England
- 10% rise in pupil numbers in England, steady in Wales

Large differences in role of local authorities across England and Wales

- Trading off additional choice for schools against economies of scale and coordination from local authorities
- What has this translated to in terms of actual inputs / spending patterns?

What are the differences across ‘similar’ schools in England and Wales?