
Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education

23 March 2021

Education otherwise than at School (EOTAS)

Dear Minister,

You will be aware from [previous correspondence](#) that our inquiry on EOTAS was unfortunately paused due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we approach the Senedd election, our work as a Committee – including our inquiry into EOTAS – must draw to a close.

While our programme of policy scrutiny was disrupted by COVID-19, EOTAS has remained a key priority for us over the last year. Given its importance, we have ensured that it has featured clearly in our scrutiny of the [impact of COVID-19 on children and young people](#), and in our consideration of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#).

Details of the written and oral evidence we collected as part of our EOTAS inquiry, and the engagement activity we undertook, is [published on our website](#). We urge both our successor Committee and the next Welsh Government, as they embark on their respective work programmes, to draw on the rich body of information submitted to us, and to prioritise consideration of arrangements for those educated otherwise than at school during the Sixth Senedd.

We would like to highlight the following **key principles** which arose in the evidence we gathered. We believe these will provide an important foundation for the improvement of provision for some of our most vulnerable children and young people, and will help guide the next steps for the Welsh Government, particularly in relation to its [EOTAS Framework for Action](#) and anticipated [EOTAS Referral and Commissioning Guidance](#):

- Ensure the **early identification of needs**, with a view to supporting children and young people to remain in mainstream education where possible and appropriate;
- Adopt a **coordinated and timely approach across public services** to address needs, once identified, in the most appropriate setting;
- Embed the **whole-school approach to mental health and well-being** in all education settings, including EOTAS;



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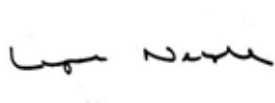
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- Provide resource and time for the **professional development of staff** in EOTAS settings, with a view to ensuring clear career pathways, progression and recognition;
- Secure appropriate arrangements for the **commissioning** of regulated EOTAS provision;
- **Engage parents** throughout their child's EOTAS journey, providing information and support that seeks to minimise disruption and with a view to **supporting the family as a whole**;
- Work with local government to ensure **sufficient funding** is available for EOTAS, within the context of addressing wider school funding pressures as recommended in our School Funding inquiry;
- Work with Estyn, local consortia and the profession to ensure that meaningful consideration of a child/young person's journey through EOTAS, to include a focus on well-being and outcomes, forms a key part of **accountability arrangements** for providers;
- Encourage an approach which is built around a presumption that the majority of learners, where safe and appropriate, will be **supported to return to mainstream education** – this should include ensuring that there are high aspirations and expectations for EOTAS provision, and that the implementation of the new curriculum is ambitious about the learning and life-chances of learners who are educated otherwise than at school;
- Ensure that the additional learning needs (ALN) transformation programme includes explicit focus on training, capacity and funding for **ALN within EOTAS**;
- Develop **Welsh language** EOTAS provision, to enable improved support in the language of a learner's choice;
- Commission further research on other issues closely linked to EOTAS, to better understand their impact, including **managed moves**, the '**off-rolling**' of pupils, and involvement with **crime and the criminal justice system** (including the impact of county lines).

I would like to take this opportunity to put on record our thanks as a Committee to all stakeholders who participated in our inquiry. We are particularly grateful to the children and young people who we met during the course of our work, and who spoke so openly and willingly about their experiences.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.