

**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**  
**Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg**  
**Minister for Education and Welsh Language**



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: JMEWL1135421

Jack Sargeant MS  
Chair, Petitions Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay. CF99 1SN.

15 October 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 7 October regarding petition P-05-1160 (Require local Welsh exam centres to accept home-educated students for public exams) seeking information on the Welsh Government's long-term policy work around home learners.

As you indicate, work in this field was paused due to Covid19, though as we transition out of the pandemic we are now in a position to reprioritise activity. The best interests of the child remain at the heart of our decision making and progressing work in this area remains a key priority for the Welsh Government.

The most recent figures from Data Cymru show that to January 2021, 3,952 children were home educated, up from 2,899 as at January 2020, an increase of 36%. Numbers have been trending upward for several years, though the rise in the last year was a result of the pandemic. Covid19 was cited as the reason for choosing home education by 30% of parents/carers of those who became home educated between January 2020 and January 2021, though overall lifestyle/ideological and philosophical reasons remain the main reason for choosing home education (33%). Parents who have made the decision to remove their children from school due to Covid19 may choose to return them to mainstream education as the pandemic recedes and we encourage schools and local authorities (LAs) to work with families in a supportive way to enable a return to school.

Currently each LA has its own home education policy in place, which will take into account Welsh Government non-statutory guidance on Elective Home Education (EHE) (January 2017) and will observe the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Welsh Government recognises the need for reform in the policy and legislative framework for EHE and previously consulted on proposals. These were placed on hold as a result of the pandemic. I have instructed officials to resume and progress at pace. The first priority is to conclude the analysis of the previous consultation.

These proposals aim to provide new statutory guidance that will strengthen the framework in relation to a LA's duties under Section 436a of the Education Act 1996 and clarify what is considered a 'suitable' and 'efficient' education. This includes an expectation that a suitable education would incorporate provision in numeracy, literacy and language skills, appropriate to the child's age, ability and aptitude and any additional learning needs (ALN) they may

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

[Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

have. To assist LAs to discharge their duty to identify children not on a school roll or not already known by the LA to be EHE or in EOTAS, it is proposed that there be a database of children of compulsory school age in their LA area. The guidance will strengthen the existing framework for LAs to take action where a child is not receiving a suitable education and clarify that where this appears likely to impair a child's development, the LA should fully exercise their safeguarding powers and duties to protect the child's wellbeing.

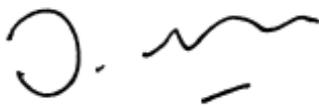
Identification will support planning for the needs of these learners and those who provide their education. In this respect I am keen that there needs to be a wider package of support for EHE children and young people to enhance their learning experience and development opportunities. As a start we will produce a Home Educator's Handbook that contains detailed advice and information to support home educators should they require it. My officials are working with stakeholders to understand what further support home educators would and should expect to enable fulfilling and appropriate learning experiences to occur for these children and young people and I will make further announcements on this in due course.

The above builds on current activity, supporting both the administration costs of LAs in relation to home education and funding education resources and activity for home educated learners. We have made £1.7m of funding available to support this, this year. Wales is the only country in the UK that has a fund of this nature and LAs use the funding to provide a range of practical support to home educators. This includes; access to learning resources and facilities, help with the costs of educational visits and exams fees, ALN support, wellbeing services, pedagogical advice and promoting access to other learning opportunities. Anecdotally LAs inform us that the availability of this support has already prompted some previously unknown home educating families to come forward and engage with their LA to access this help and support.

I believe that our proposals, building on current available support, will help ensure home educated children and young people receive a suitable education, whilst also respecting the wish of parents/carers to home educate their children.

I hope that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a circular mark followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke.

**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

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