



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-481
Ein cyf/Our ref ARD/05560/16

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

11 January 2017

Thank you for your letter of 13 December to the Cabinet Secretary for Education seeking her views on the petition '*Close the Gap for Deaf Pupils in Wales*', in particular relating to the areas of improving classroom acoustics and raising deaf awareness among teachers and pupils. I am responding as this matter falls within my portfolio.

The Welsh Government is committed to creating an inclusive education system for all learners, regardless of their needs and background, to ensure all learners are able to access a high standard of education and reach their full potential. For those with special educational needs (SEN) such as hearing impairments, we recognise the need to ensure appropriate interventions are in place to support their access to education.

The importance of ensuring that all learning environments have good acoustic standards is highlighted within the current terms and conditions of the 21st Century Schools Programme. All agreement letters require a closing report which includes a provision of compliance under Building Bulletin 93, including acoustics. Please be assured that there is no intention of weakening this condition of funding in relation to future 21st Century Schools investment.

With regard to raising deaf awareness among teachers and pupils, a key element of our overall reform agenda is to introduce a new, more rigorous approach to the accreditation of programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), and that these should be governed by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) so enabling the profession to set its own entry requirements.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

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

Gohebiaeth.Alun.Davies@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Alun.Davies@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.

As you are aware, we have undertaken a formal consultation on proposals for draft criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales. These proposals aim to enable education professionals to take a much more central role in leading, shaping and delivering change in the profession and in creating a stable and high quality system to enable institutions and individuals to flourish.

We have now analysed all of the consultation responses received and are considering the Accreditation Criteria in light of those responses. We will publish the consultation summary report in early January 2017.

We have been considering the capacity of the education workforce to support the needs of learners with SEN. We have concluded two studies to better understand the development requirements of the general education workforce; and assess the capacity of specialist support services in supporting learners with SEN. The final reports for these two workforce studies have been published and can be accessed via the Welsh Government website at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/reports/an-assessment-of-special-educational-needs-workforce-development-requirements/?lang=en>; and <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/reports/workforce-planning-sen-specialist-services/?lang=en>

I introduced the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill (“ALNET”) on 12 December 2016 which will deliver a new legislative system for supporting children and young people aged 0–25 who have additional learning needs (ALN). The new system will replace the existing legislation surrounding SEN and the assessment of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in post-16 education and training.

The proposed changes to the legislative structure are just one part of a much wider Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme (ALN-TP). The ALN-TP aims to transform expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with ALN. It is about transforming the whole system to ensure that all learners with ALN are supported to overcome barriers to learning and can achieve their full potential.

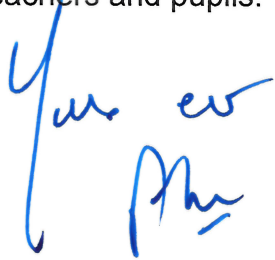
The ALN-TP consists of five interdependent themes designed to support the smooth transition and effective delivery of the new system with the aim of ensuring improved outcomes for children and young people with ALN. One of the themes is workforce development which includes a programme of skills development for education practitioners focussed at three levels; core skills development, advanced skills development for Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCos) and specialist skills development.

We are consulting with stakeholders about the ALNCO qualification, both in terms of scope and the content. We are also reviewing the support that may be provided to both teachers and support staff; in supporting learners with ALN to achieve their potential. Also, as you know Local Authorities provide specialist services, such as teachers of the deaf, who are an important part of service provision, guidance and expertise. Work is underway with the WLGA to develop a national workforce planning system for these staff, intended to inform training and recruitment.

Another theme of the ALN-TP is awareness-raising. As part of this theme the Welsh Government will be producing a range of evidence-based information about specific forms of ALN, including hearing impairments. This information will support professionals to better understand early indications of specific forms of ALN, examples of effective interventions and information on where to access further specialist advice.

The development of the awareness-raising information will include discussion with organisations with expertise in specific forms of ALN. One of the purposes of the discussions is to identify resources and advice which is currently available to practitioners, children, young people and parents.

I would welcome the input of NDCS Cymru in this area of work. My officials will be in contact with you in due course to discuss the awareness-raising materials and the ways we can encourage the use of these and other information that help raise awareness among teachers and pupils.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yus. es' with a stylized flourish below it.

Alun Davies AC/AM

Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language