

Headteachers of maintained schools in Wales

Local Education Authorities

WLGA

Teaching Unions 17 October 2003

Dear Colleague,

THE EDUCATION (SCHOOL DAY AND SCHOOL YEAR) (AMENDMENT) (WALES) REGULATIONS.

Purpose

To provide notice of regulations being brought forward by the Welsh Assembly Government to give maintained schools the opportunity to take one additional INSET day in the current school year (2003-04) and one additional INSET day in each of the following two school years, 2004-05 and 2005-06.

If agreed, the additional INSET day would be made available to support staff development linked to improving transition between Key Stages. This would build on the additional INSET day provided in 2002-03 and would be used to improve continuity and progression in the planning and delivery of the curriculum and continuity in pastoral care.

It is planned that the regulations will be made by January 2004. In the meantime schools and local authorities are asked to consider whether they would wish to take an additional INSET day for the purposes set out above in the latter half of the spring term or the summer term of the current school year and, if so, to begin to put the appropriate arrangements in place. I will write to you again to confirm the details following the passage of the regulations.

Background

I wrote to you on 26 March 2002 confirming that an additional INSET day was to be provided in the 2002-03 school year. The additional day was the result of a commitment in The Learning Country that INSET be provided for staff development linked to improving transition between Key Stages. Most schools took the additional day in the summer of 2003 and the feedback received has indicated that the provision was welcomed. It has also been suggested that similar provision in both the current and future school years would be of value.

Aiming for Excellence.

The Assembly Government is currently working with ACCAC, Estyn, the Basic Skills Agency and BBC Wales to develop a range of materials to support schools in transition planning as part of the "Aiming for Excellence" programme. The first two sets of materials, "Moving On" produced by Estyn and a good practice guide produced by ACCAC with BBC Wales will be available by March 2004. In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government plans to consult in the summer of 2004 on proposals for the establishment by secondary schools and their feeder primary schools of transition plans.

It has, therefore, been agreed that regulations be brought forward for one additional INSET day in both the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years. It is for schools to determine how to make best use of the additional days. However, it is expected that they will be taken, primarily, to make use of the materials being developed by ACCAC and Estyn and to prepare for any changes required in the production of transition plans.

However, it has also been suggested that some schools may wish to make use of the ACCAC and Estyn materials in the current school year. It is, therefore, proposed that an additional day be made available in the 2003-04 school year. It is recognised that school INSET plans for the current school year will have been agreed. In order to minimise any disruption, it is proposed that this facility to be optional rather than a requirement. It will be for schools to determine whether they wish to take advantage of this opportunity.

Regulations

The draft regulations will refer to the number of school sessions that must be taught in the school year and will adjust the number to allow for one additional INSET day to be taken in the 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years. It is our intention that this facility, in each case, will be optional ie it will not be a requirement that schools take additional INSET. The legislative process for the planned regulations is likely to be completed early in 2004.

If you require further information or wish to register any views on the above proposals please write to me at the Welsh Assembly Government, Standards and Performance Division, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ or e-mail tony.peters@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully,

Tony Peters

Standards and Performance Division