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




Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref ARD/00369/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
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Thank you for your letter of 23 May providing further evidence from the petitioner, NDCS Cymru, regarding their petition 'Close the Gap for Deaf Pupils in Wales' (ref: P-04-481). I have provided some further information below in response to the issues raised by NDCS Cymru.

Teacher training

As I previously explained, the accreditation criteria set out the high level requirements and expectations including the requirement to develop future teachers to meet the needs of **all** learners including those with ALN such as hearing impairment.

The professional standards for teaching and leadership, recently out for public consultation, also make clear the responsibility on all teachers and leaders to ensure the needs of **all** learners are met; this includes those with hearing impairment. These responsibilities are career-long and are intended to be an integral part of the evidence required for the award of Qualified Teacher Status.

ALNCo training

The specification for the ALNCo qualification is currently being considered. However it is not intended to be a qualification in ALN. The qualification is intended to focus on leadership and management skills, collaboration and partnership working, evidence based practice and of course creating an environment that is supportive of learners with ALN which includes those with a hearing impairment.

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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.

Workforce planning

Currently the WLGA Data Unit and Welsh Government are collating data on specialist services working in local authorities, including advisory and specialist teachers. A range of specialisms have been included in that data collection, including hearing impairment and multi-sensory impairment. The collection is also specifically collating information on skills in British Sign Language. The data collection is still on-going and once available these data will assist local government in planning their workforce and help identify training needs.

ALN Transformation programme funding

We recognise the importance of raising awareness among education professionals on a range of ALN. Much of the implementation funding will be targeted at workforce development, which is fundamental to the transformation. However, at this time, we do not intend to develop deaf specific training or other ALN specific training.

As part of the ALN implementation programme, we have commissioned rapid evidence assessments (REAs) for a range of SEN. We have commissioned the University of Birmingham to undertake REAs on the effectiveness of interventions to support young people with hearing impairment, sensory impairment and multi-sensory impairment. As part of this contract, the University of Birmingham will use the findings of the REAs to develop guidance written in a style which is accessible to practitioners and parents. I understand the NDCS Cymru have offered to engage with the University of Birmingham on the deafness component of this work.

Acoustics and 21st Century Schools Programme

NDCS Cymru approached Welsh Government recently with respect to the contractual clause for compliance with acoustic standards and we continue to welcome their input.

We strive to ensure that excellent facilities are available to pupils. Whilst Building Bulletin 93 applies only to schools we will explore the feasibility of its application to other sectors.

At present the Welsh Government does not intend to amend legislation in regard to acoustics in schools. However, our commitment to improvement of the educational estate continues with the second wave of investment in the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme, which begins in April 2019 and is anticipated to run over a five year period.

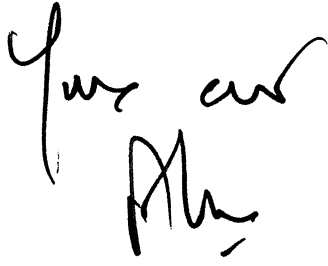
As always, we welcome discussions with NDCS with regard to raising awareness of potential improvements to acoustics within the existing schools estate.

Ongoing monitoring of attainment gap

We are currently in the process of a large scale education reform. As part of this, we are reviewing how we collect and use data. We are mindful of how any changes could impact on the data for specific groups of learners, and we will ensure that we continue to monitor all groups. In light of any changes, we will continue to review the impact of small groups of learners.

I would be happy to meet with NDCS to further discuss these issues and I would be grateful if you would contact my diary secretary at DS.MinLLandWL@gov.wales to arrange a suitable date.

My officials will continue to engage with NDCS Cymru, via a number of groups, including through their membership of the Third Sector Additional Needs Alliance (TSANA).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alun Davies'.

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