



**Prifysgol Cymru**  
Y Drindod Dewi Sant  
**University of Wales**  
Trinity Saint David

**Yr Athrofa**  
Institute of Education  
Addysg i Gymru Education for Wales



Janet Finch-Saunders AM  
Chair, Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales

10 September 2019

Dear Janet,

I write on behalf of Yr Athrofa: Professional Learning Partnership (University of Wales Trinity Saint David) in response to your letter of 13 June 2019, regarding the following petition:

**Petition P-05-879 Add Mental Health Education to the mandatory teaching curriculum for all schools in Wales**

We note that the points raised in the petition relate largely to the school sector in Wales, and as a university, we are not necessarily best placed to respond to these individually. We are, however, very happy to outline, at the Committee's request, more specific information regarding our initial teacher education (ITE) programmes and how they relate to the mental health of children and young people.

Yr Athrofa: Professional Learning Partnership, involving Yr Athrofa: Institute of Education at University of Wales Trinity Saint David and partner schools, was one of four providers of ITE accredited by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) in June 2018. The commendation ensured that new programmes of ITE, the product of more than three years' co-construction between school and university-based staff, were launched in line with EWC expectations for first teaching earlier this month.<sup>1</sup>

Yr Athrofa: Professional Learning Partnership wholeheartedly supports the Welsh Government's commitment to 'strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and wellbeing' and therefore strives to develop student-teachers who are well equipped to deliver high-quality education for all.<sup>2</sup> This in turn requires strong reference to and grounding in theory relating to the mental health and wellbeing of children and young

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<sup>1</sup> Education Workforce Council. 2019 *Accredited providers of Initial Teacher Education in Wales from 2019* [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/ite-accreditation/providers-of-initial-teacher-education-in-wales-from-2019.html> [Accessed: September 2019].

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government. 2017 *Education in Wales: Our National Mission*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

people, as well as the many practical solutions and strategies student-teachers can exercise to best support learners as they progress through compulsory education.

In each of its ITE programmes, Yr Athrofa: Professional Learning Partnership draws upon four, high-level beginner competencies as its principles of teaching and learning: namely that learning about teaching is about:

- Embracing complexity;
- Understanding that there is a relationship between knowledge and experience;
- Forming meaningful relationships; and
- Researching, practising, modelling and reflecting.

A common core content has been devised for delivery across the Partnership's entire portfolio of ITE programmes, and ensures that our high-level beginner competencies can be achieved. This core content includes four inter-related and compulsory modules, which underpin both postgraduate (PGCE) and undergraduate (BA) routes into teaching. The most pertinent in the context of this petition, relates to the module entitled '*The learner – who am I teaching?*'.

This module places the child/pupil at the centre of each ITE programme. It recognises that child and youth development, including theories of learning, practice-related evidence and the place of health and wellbeing, is fundamental to effective teaching and learning. The module challenges assumptions and beliefs related to cultural diversity and the expectations of a normative model of child development. Children's rights, voices and contributions are explored and the view of the child as an individual as opposed to a 'group' or 'class' is promoted. In addition, the module positions the teacher as a professional by considering safeguarding, child protection, contractual, pastoral and legal responsibilities.

Upon successful completion of the module, student-teachers are able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Evidence a critical understanding of theories and research that impact on wellbeing, child development and learning from 0-19 years and apply this to personal practice;
- Present personal stance on the role of the professional teacher in relation to meeting the needs of a diverse range of children and young people – including challenging assumptions, beliefs that lead to prejudice and stereotyping;
- Critically reflect and evaluate a range of different approaches for meeting the diverse needs of all learners in a range of settings, and justify choices made in personal practice.

In order to do this, within the module student-teachers:

- Critically evaluate research and key theories and research that underpin the holistic development of children and young people, in relation to ensuring pupil progress – including a critical understanding of physical literacy and other contemporary issues;
- Evaluate and apply evidence-based theory and research to personal practice, justifying pedagogical choices made and share findings in a professional setting;

- Are provided with a deep understanding of how contractual, pastoral, and legal responsibilities (including additional learning needs (ALN), safeguarding and child protection, children’s wellbeing, rights and voices) interact in a range of situations;
- Are equipped with a deep understanding of the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and other needs that impact on learning and development, and identify pedagogies which mitigate negative effects;
- Critically evaluate strategies and approaches to best support equality and diversity, including challenging beliefs and assumptions about the norm.

The module content relates explicitly to the four purposes of the new Donaldson-inspired national curriculum in the following ways:<sup>3</sup>

<b>To develop children and young people as:</b>	<b>Student-teachers will be able to:</b>
Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives.	Meet the diverse needs of all learners to ensure pupil progress.
Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.	Engage in a range of creative learning opportunities that will inspire active learners.
Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.	Adopt the role of a professional teacher in understanding and respecting the needs and rights of pupils as members of diverse societies, and challenge assumptions and beliefs that lead to stereotyping.
Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.	Show a deep understanding of theories and research that impact on promoting the mental and emotional wellbeing of pupils by developing confidence, resilience and empathy in their practice.

In addition, student-teachers are given an introduction to the new Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience; an overview of relevant ALN documentation and statutory obligations; an understanding of physical literacy and the holistic development of the child; a critical evaluation of social media, both positive and negative; information and strategies relating to exclusion, bullying and challenging behaviour; and a detailed assessment of the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Finally, Yr Athrofa: Professional Learning Partnership is cognisant of the fact that positive mental health and wellbeing is not only an aspiration for pupils, but also student-teachers and practising, experienced teachers as they progress through their careers in education. Indeed, the Partnership considers wellbeing integral to an inclusive and healthy education system which considers the physical, social and mental states of all practitioners, as well as the learners in their care. As such, the Partnership advocates a ‘team around the student-teacher’ approach to professional, academic and pastoral wellbeing. This approach recognises that studying to be a teacher is challenging and that different levels of support are needed for different aspects of the programme and for different individuals.

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<sup>3</sup> Donaldson, G. 2015 *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

The 'team around the student-teacher' provides every student-teacher enrolled with Yr Athrofa: Professional Learning Partnership access to several named individuals with responsibility for certain elements of ITE programmes. The team includes a named University Tutor (Curriculum), who supports student-teachers with subject-specific expertise and research; a University Tutor (Professional) leading on pastoral matters; and a Senior Mentor, responsible for co-ordinating a student-teacher's professional teaching experience in school. Together, this team ensures that all student-teachers are professionally and pastorally supported for the duration of their teacher education.

We hope that the outline presented in this letter satisfies the Committee's needs. If not, we would be happy to provide further information on request.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gareth Evans', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gareth Evans

Director of Education Policy, Yr Athrofa: Institute of Education  
University of Wales Trinity Saint David