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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/00241/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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Amwy Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 20 March following my previous response to you with regard to the petition 'Close the Gap for deaf pupils in Wales' (P-04-481).

Funding of the 21st Century Programme has not been reduced and we are currently developing the next five year wave of investment for the Programme, commencing in April 2019. I can assure you that compliance of good acoustic standards as a condition of funding will continue under this second 21st Century Schools investment.

I am aware of the evidence that the petitioners have submitted to the Children, Young People and Education Committee. The Committee will consider this, along with all evidence submitted, as part of the scrutiny process for the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Bill (ALNET Bill). The matters raised within the evidence are being considered by my officials as we continue to work towards a new system for supporting learners with additional learning needs (ALN).

With regard to the skills of the education workforce, teachers in Wales are required to understand and be aware of the well being, personal, emotional and social development of all learners. For learners with disabilities in particular, they should improve access to the curriculum, make physical improvements to increase participation in education and provide information in appropriate formats.

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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.

This requirement is embedded very early on in the profession as the current Qualified Teacher Standards (QTS) require student teachers to demonstrate they understand the diverse learning needs of all learners. In doing so, they should endeavour to provide the best possible education for the learner to reach their potential, whatever their personal circumstances.

The QTS standards are underpinned by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – that all children and young people are entitled to an education that develops their potential and widens their opportunities having regard to the well being, additional learning needs and disabilities of all learners.

The new accreditation criteria for initial teacher education (ITE) in Wales require future accredited providers of ITE to develop future teachers to meet the needs of all learners including those with ALN such as hearing impairment. The Criteria for the accreditation of ITE programmes in Wales can be found at <http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/initial-teacher-education-accreditation-criteria/?lang=en>.

We are continuing to consult with stakeholders about scope and content of the ALNCO qualification. The new ALNCo role will be a strategic one, with a focus on leadership and management. It is not yet decided at what level the content could include an emphasis on specialisms. This will emerge as the development of the qualification moves forward. However, as I referred in my letter of 11 January, the national workforce planning system will help to ensure that training and recruitment of staff delivering specialist learning provision, including for learners who are deaf, will be in place. Working with the WLGA, we are currently undertaking a survey of local authority specialisms. The data gathered will provide us and the WLGA with the intelligence needed to understand the issues and action required. We expect the findings of the survey to be available in the autumn.

We will be working across education sectors to develop the skills of the education workforce. This will help to ensure that we plan and deliver for the training needs of those working in early years, schools, and post 16 providers.

We recognise the importance of ensuring we have an education workforce that is skilled and confident in meeting a wide range of additional learning needs. I have recently announced a £20m package of funding to support implementation of the ALNET Bill and delivery of the wider Transformation Programme. This funding builds on investment we have already made, for example, a £2m Innovation Fund aimed at developing multi-agency practices; and the roll out of person centred practice. A substantial amount of the £20m will be targeted at workforce development, to ensure practitioners are fully equipped to deliver the new ALN system.

I hope this response use useful to you and the Petitioner.



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