

**P-04-481 Close the Gap for Deaf Pupils in Wales – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Chair, 3.04.18**

Dear Chair,

I write with regard to the petition P-04-481, *Close the Gap for Deaf Pupils in Wales*.

Following the Committee's last consideration of the petition in July last year, we were able to secure a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Education. Due to a cancellation last year by the then-Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language and then a cabinet re-shuffle, this meeting took place at end of March.

We were pleased of the opportunity to meet with Kirsty Williams and she appeared open to make changes to improve the attainment gap for deaf pupils in Wales. In particular, we discussed:

- Including basic deaf awareness within the ITE and the training package being developed for the ALN transformation programme.
- Improving access to Communication Support Workers with an appropriate level of BSL by considering a regional approach.
- Improving access to opportunities to learn BSL.
- Ensuring that access to data on the attainment of deaf pupils as a discreet group continues following the proposed changes to school data collation.
- Raising awareness of the National Deaf Children's Society's free resources and of our guides to improve acoustics in school buildings.

We hope this will prove to be part of an ongoing dialogue with the Department and that we will see positive change in these areas. However, given that the pace of change to this point has been slow (the attainment gap at GCSE was still at 26.2% last year), we would welcome the opportunity to keep this petition open until these key and important actions have been undertaken.

We will endeavour to keep the Committee updated on developments. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries.

Kind Regards,

Debbie Thomas

Policy and Campaigns Officer for the National Deaf Children's Society Cymru