

# Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Hybrid – Committee room 2 Senedd  
and video conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 28 February 2024

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Naomi Stocks

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

[SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales)

## Hybrid

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### Private pre-meeting

(09.15 – 09.30)

### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

### 2 General scrutiny of the Minister for Education and Welsh Language

(09.30 – 11.00)

(Pages 1 – 23)

Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Owain Lloyd, Director of Education and the Welsh Language, Welsh  
Government

Jo-Anne Daniels, Director Tertiary Education, Welsh Government

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

Welsh Government



### **3 Papers to note**

(11.00)

#### **3.1 Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill**

(Pages 24 – 28)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Sam Rowlands MS

#### **3.2 Future of Welsh Steel**

(Pages 29 – 30)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Llywdd and Chair of the Business Committee from the Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

#### **3.3 Information from Stakeholders**

(Pages 31 – 33)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru UCAC

#### **3.4 Services for care experienced children: exploring radical reform**

(Page 34)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Andrew RT Davies MS

### **4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting and for the whole of the meeting on 7 and 14 March**

(11.00)

## **Break**

(11.00 – 11.10)

## **5 General scrutiny of the Minister for Education and Welsh Language – consideration of the evidence**

(11.10 – 11.30)

## **6 Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill – consideration of the draft report**

(11.30 – 12.15)

(Pages 35 – 143)

Attached Documents:

Draft Report

Document is Restricted

## **Evidence paper for the Children, Young People & Education Committee general scrutiny session of the Minister for Education & Welsh Language**

### **Background**

1. In March 2023 the Welsh Government published its new road map for education —[High Standards and Aspirations for All](#). This is a coherent and cohesive road map which covers the breadth of our priorities for education in this Senedd term, from early years to post-16 and beyond.
2. Our systemic reform of education in Wales has introduced a new curriculum and a new system to ensure those learners with additional learning needs (ALN) have their needs properly planned for and protected. Through this we will tackle the impact of poverty on educational attainment and will ensure that we support every learner.
3. We know however, that the education system is facing a shared challenge of improving educational performance and raising standards. On 31 January I met education partners and we discussed the need for clearer focus on national priorities with a clearer national role in leading improvement. We must improve performance through stretching our learners but also by continuing to reduce the equity gap. To do this we need a sharper focus on attendance, behaviour and well-being; excellent teaching; curriculum reform - with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy; and additional learning needs support.

### **Attendance**

4. Attendance rates remain lower than they were before the pandemic, providing a stark reminder of the continuing impact on our children and young people. While we are seeing some improvement in attendance rates, this is happening slowly, and we continue to see significantly lower attendance levels amongst pupils from lower income households and those with additional learning needs. We have established a National Attendance Taskforce to provide strategic direction, set priorities and identify further tangible actions to drive improvements in attendance and re-engage our learners. The Taskforce has met on two occasions and is considering a range of information and evidence and potential actions to address low attendance.

### **Children missing education**

5. We are [consulting](#) on regulations that will require local authorities to establish a database of children who are potentially missing education; that is, they are not on roll at school, provision other than at school (EOTAS), or known to be in receipt of a suitable education at home (EHE). The consultation will close on 25 April, and following evaluation and consideration of the responses, the database proposals will be piloted across six local authorities in Spring 2025.

### **Literacy and Numeracy**

6. We know that before the pandemic, Wales was making positive progress in numeracy and literacy. However, it is clear that the impacts of the pandemic have undone some of these gains.
7. Last March, we published our [oracy and reading toolkit](#), co-developed with practitioners, providing a package of support to schools to develop and embed their own whole school approach to achieving high standards of oracy and reading. This was followed in November with an update to the toolkit, reinforcing our commitment to the systematic and consistent teaching of phonics as set out in our High Standards and Aspirations for All Action Plan. We will continue to work with partners to inform how we can further support the teaching of literacy skills within the Curriculum for Wales and increase the package of support to help schools and settings achieve high standards.

### **Tackling the impact of poverty on attainment**

8. Tackling the impacts of poverty on attainment is at the heart of our national mission in education. Our Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards (RRRS) funding programme was launched in 2020 in response to the challenges created by the pandemic. It provides all schools and settings delivering funded nursery education with additional staffing capacity to ensure the impacts of the pandemic on the learning and well-being outcomes of children and young people could be identified early and appropriate mitigating actions put in place.
9. Since 2020 £165.5million of RRRS funding has been distributed to schools and early years settings - £59.1million in 2020-21, £68.9million in 2021-22 and £37.5million in 2022-23. In this financial year (2023-24) £37.5 million will be distributed to schools and settings delivering funded nursery education and in 2024-25 a further £28.5million will be made available.
10. Pupil Development Grant (PDG) funding aims to raise the attainment of children and young people from low-income households. It does this by reducing the barriers that they often face to achieving their full potential. Year on year we have extended the PDG to reflect any increase in eFSM learners. Funding of around £128m has been allocated to PDG in 2023-24.
11. We continue to work closely with PDG regional representatives to identify the areas where funding can have most impact, particularly in the context of the recommendations from the Review of School Spending in Wales report; prioritising additional funding for schools facing higher levels of deprivation, working with local authorities on ensuring more consistent and transparent school funding formulae.
12. [Updated PDG guidance](#) (published May 2023) emphasises schools spend on high quality learning and teaching and developing Community Focused Schools, in recognition of the crucial role parents and families play in their children's learning and development, and the impact of the home learning environment on outcomes.
13. Our developing partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation will play an important role in ensuring that our schools have access to powerful international evidence which points to the most effective learning and teaching strategies.

14. Working with the National Academy of Educational Leadership we have identified a group of Attainment Champions to work with partner schools to develop strategies and practices to reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment.
15. Our School Essentials Grant (formerly PDG Access) has made a significant difference to many lower income families across Wales, helping to reduce the worry surrounding the purchase of school uniform and equipment, enabling children to attend school and take part in activities at the same level as their peers. The grant was extended in 2021-22 to eligible learners in all compulsory school years. In 2023-24, funding of £13.6m has been made available for the grant
16. Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is available to eligible learners, aged 16-18 in sixth forms or further education institutions. Access to EMA is based on a means-test of household income. Since April 2023 eligible earners can receive the increased rate of EMA at £40 per week for attendance on courses to help with the costs of full-time further education such as transport, meals, books and equipment.
17. Eligible learners aged 19 and over at a further education institution or learning centre could qualify for the Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG). Access to WGLG (FE) is based on a means-test of household income. Full-time learners can be awarded up to £1,500, and part-time learners up to £750, to help with study costs per academic year of their course.
18. The Financial Contingency Fund can help eligible learners in a further education institution who are facing financial difficulties. FCF can help with costs such as fees, course related costs, transport meals and childcare costs.
19. All Young people living and studying in Wales aged between 16- 21 are eligible for a "MyTravelPass", which entitles them for up to 1/ 3 off fares on local bus services across Wales.

## **ALN**

20. The duties and responsibilities the ALN and Education Tribunal Act and ALN Code for Wales place on schools, local authorities, FE institutions (FEIs) and other agencies are intended to break down barriers so that learners with ALN receive the right additional learning provision at the right time and have their views, wishes and feelings taken into consideration as part of the process.
21. Over £62 million of revenue grant funding has been invested between 2020 and 2023 to support implementation, increase resources in schools to implement the ALN system and lead whole-school strategies to embed inclusive education.
22. Over £56.3 million is protected in the draft budget for 2024-25 to both support ALN reforms and boost support for ALN learners in pre and post 16 mainstream and specialist education. This is in addition to protecting the local authority budgets for education through the Revenue Support Grant.

23. The Welsh Government keeps the Committee [updated](#) on progress being made in relation to ALN reform as part of the Committee's ongoing scrutiny of the implementation of education reforms.

## **Pupil Wellbeing**

24. [The Renew and Reform Plan](#), published in June 2021, outlined our commitment to supporting learners' wellbeing and progression in response to the pandemic. The plan supported a revitalised, reform-focused and resilient educational system that puts learners' physical and mental health and wellbeing at the heart of its approach.

25. We are prioritising implementation of the whole-school framework with dedicated funding from Health and Education budgets. Funding includes dedicated practitioners to work with schools and partners to meet the requirements of the framework, supporting them to assess and address their wellbeing needs.

26. Over £5m has been made available to Health Boards to deliver the national CAMHS school in-reach service, which sees dedicated mental health professionals in schools providing consultation, liaison, advice and training.

27. As confirmed in the budget, we will continue to support learners and schools to deal with the impacts of the pandemic moving forward. Funding priorities for this year continue to be aligned to our priorities of supporting learners' well-being and progression.

28. We have also invested significantly in the FE sector to support mental health and wellbeing initiatives for both staff and learners, and to help combat the mental health and wellbeing impacts of the pandemic. Over £21m has been allocated since 2020/21. The investment has helped provide the additional support required to increase the size of wellbeing/welfare teams to respond to growing numbers of referrals, counselling provision for learners, and to fund activities for resilience building and to support learners social and emotional wellbeing.

## **Review of the Roles and Responsibilities of Education Partners in Wales & School Improvement arrangements.**

29. The "Review of the Roles and Responsibilities of Education Partners in Wales and School Improvement arrangements" was commissioned in July 2023, led by Professor Dylan Jones (UWTSD), supported by ISOS Partnership.

30. In December the review team provided a report on progress and the key emerging themes and findings. The next stage will focus on the detailed design and co-construction of revised school improvement arrangements. A Written Statement was published on 31 January. ([Written Statement: The next stage in the review of school improvement - the roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales \(31 January 2024\) | GOV.WALES](#)).

31. The interim findings of the review team highlighted consistent messages from school leaders and clear views from the majority of local authority partners. Those findings chime with the wider evidence base on the system in Wales from a range



of previous reports, (e.g. the leadership review, OECD's TPL report, the Sibieta Review of School Spending in Wales, Estyn).

32. The feedback was clear on the preferred direction of travel that school leaders and a majority of local authorities want based around the following key elements:

- an opportunity to lead on school improvement matters through a greater focus on local collaboration and partnership working between school leaders and their Local Authority
- partnerships between more than one LA with a move away from a wider regional model of support
- stronger national leadership with clearer national priorities for schools.

## **CTER**

33. In April 2024, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research will commence work on the development of its first strategic plan and start preparations for the introduction of a new tertiary education regulatory system. This essential preparatory work is designed to support a smooth transition towards the Commission becoming operational, ensuring there is no discernible disruption to either learners or providers. This work will continue alongside a phased approach to legislative implementation with the transfer of powers to the Commission now taking place on 1 August 2024.

34. CTER will take on the current responsibilities of HEFCW and corresponding responsibilities for the funding and oversight of further education, school sixth forms, adult learning and apprenticeships. The Commission will have statutory responsibilities to improve the participation, retention and attainment of under-represented groups.

35. CTER is a significant new public body in Wales, which will offer great potential and opportunities for driving improvement across the sector. The Welsh Government will work closely with the new body, providing support and expertise aimed at facilitating its success.

## **Higher Education**

36. We have provided substantial financial support in the past two years to help higher education institutions deal with the impact of the pandemic. This funding, together with our student support system, provides a good foundation for maintaining the sustainability of Welsh higher education. Whilst HEFCW has confirmed that there are currently no immediate financial concerns, institutions continue to face inflationary and cost of living pressures, increasing construction and maintenance costs and significant pressure from pay and pensions increases.

37. More than £121m additional funding was allocated in 2020-21, including £50m for Student Support Services and hardship funds. Further allocations totalling more than £54m were provided in 2021-22. The total 2022-23 allocation includes additional funding provided in year to support specific initiatives such as HE mentoring project, mental health and well-being measures to address cost of living impacts.

# Agenda Item 3.1

## Sam Rowlands

Member of the Welsh Parliament for  
North Wales

-  
Aelod Senedd dros  
Gogledd Cymru

**North Wales Office | Swyddfa Gogledd Cymru**  
North Wales Business Park, Abergele LL22 8LJ

**Cardiff Office | Swyddfa Caerdydd**  
Senedd Cymru, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF99 1SN

**Tel | Ffôn:** 0300 200 7267

**Email | E-bost:** sam.rowlands@senedd.wales

Jayne Bryant, MS  
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee  
Senedd Cymru,  
Cardiff Bay,  
CF99 1SN

19 February 2024

Dear Jayne,

### **Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill**

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you and other members of the Committee for the time you have taken to consider the detail of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill.

I am writing to follow up on one of the points I made during my evidence session on 1 February, relating to my expectations of the Bill's impact on child and adolescent mental health services.

My initial response to the specific question asked, highlighted that the Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill references where the Bill can provide opportunities to support young people with mental health. I said that I would follow up with a note, which is set out in the Annex to this letter. I would be happy to provide any further information that the Committee might find helpful.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, and the Chair of Finance Committee.

Yours Sincerely,



Sam Rowlands MS  
**Member of the Welsh Parliament for North Wales**

## **Annex: Note of how the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill can support young people with mental health**

The positive impact of the Bill on children's mental health has been highlighted throughout the scrutiny of the Bill in both oral and written evidence, by me as Member in Charge of the Bill, and by other stakeholders.

The information contained in this note highlights what is already set out in the Explanatory Memorandum for the Bill. It does not seek to pull out information that has been presented in evidence to the Committee.

### **Consideration of research**

Research shows that children living in low income households are more likely to experience mental health issues, and that problems are increasing amongst children and young people.<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government policy seeks to address this challenge by focusing on developing children and young people's emotional resilience and the skills to look after their own mental health.<sup>2</sup> The Welsh Government has consulted on a new mental health strategy, a core proposal being that people take action to promote their own wellbeing and that of the wider community.<sup>3</sup> (Para 52 of the Explanatory Memorandum).

A recent systematic literature review of the benefits of 'outdoor sports' for society concluded that they were linked to multiple outcomes representing a cost-effective investment.<sup>4</sup> Benefits include physical and mental health and wellbeing, active citizenship and contribution to bonding capital in families and communities. There is also strong evidence of intrapersonal development relating to physical, mental, cognitive, behavioural and social aspects of self, educational benefits, including improved self-motivation and willingness to face and overcome challenges.

During the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent return to school after lockdown, Welsh Government guidance documents contained specific mention of outdoor learning and the health and well-being benefits it brings. The most recent Active Lives survey results<sup>5</sup> demonstrate that whilst younger children are more active in team sports, as people get older they can remain active through activities such as walking, cycling, running and swimming. Although this survey refers to respondents in England as there is no comparative data available for Wales, it is reasonable to suggest that the findings would not be significantly different in Wales. Recent research presented through the British Education Research Association<sup>6</sup> suggests

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<sup>1</sup> Public Health Wales, [New analysis reveals trends in children and young people's mental health care in Wales](#) (July 2022)

<sup>2</sup> Senedd Research, [Children and young people: is there a mental health crisis?](#) (May 2022)

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Government, [Mental health strategy](#)

<sup>4</sup> Eigenschenk, B. et al. (2019) '[Benefits of Outdoor Sports for Society. A Systematic Literature Review and Reflections on Evidence.](#)', International Journal Of Environmental Research And Public Health, 16(6), p. 937.

<sup>5</sup> Sport England, [Active Lives Adult Survey November 2020-21 Report](#) (April 2022)

<sup>6</sup> British Educational Research Association, [Ageing in nature: Outdoor learning as lifelong learning](#) (June 2021)

significant connections between older people's health, activity levels and the experiences they had as young people in engaging in outdoor education. (Paras 79 & 80 of the EM)

### **Mental health benefits from the Bill**

In 2021-22, mental health alone accounted for 10.9% of total NHS expenditure in Wales (approximately £962 million).<sup>7</sup> Further, mental health annually is estimated to cost the Welsh economy £4.8 billion<sup>8</sup> and, although directly unquantifiable, outdoor education residential has significant potential to be much more than one-off experiences and can initiate lifelong participation in outdoor activity, with its attendant health and wellbeing benefits<sup>9</sup>, potentially reducing the impact on the NHS.

In turn this will have long-term impacts on the health and well-being of the population as they leave school and have a greater opportunity to become healthy adults (also in line with one of the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales). The mental health and well-being benefits of outdoor education residential programmes could reduce the demands on child and adolescent mental health services in the near future and could also reduce demands on the wider NHS and health care services in the longer term.

Children's mental health has featured prominently on the policy and scrutiny agenda in recent years. The Programme for Government includes commitments to prioritise investment in mental health, prioritise service redesign to improve prevention, tackle stigma and promote a no wrong door approach to mental health support. This includes the NEST framework<sup>10</sup> which aims to ensure a whole system approach for developing mental health, well-being and support services for babies, children, young people, parents, carers and their wider families across Wales.

In 2018, a Senedd Committee published "Mind over Matter", a report of its inquiry into the emotional and mental health of children and young people<sup>11</sup> and carried out follow-up scrutiny in 2020.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing have joint Ministerial oversight for a Whole School Approach to Wellbeing. The Welsh Government has issued statutory guidance to schools, pupil referral units and local authorities on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental

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<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government: [NHS expenditure programme budgets: April 2021 to March 2022](#)

<sup>8</sup> Mental Health Foundation report: [The economic case for investing in the prevention of mental health conditions in the UK](#)

<sup>9</sup> Takako Takano (2010) [A 20-year retrospective study of the impact of expeditions on Japanese participants](#), Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning, 10:2, 77-94

<sup>10</sup> Welsh Government, [NEST framework \(mental health and wellbeing\): introduction](#)

<sup>11</sup> Senedd Cymru, Children, Young People and Education Committee: [The Emotional and Mental Health of Children and Young People \("Mind over Matter"\)](#) (2018)

<sup>12</sup> Senedd Cymru, Fifth Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee: [The Emotional and Mental Health of Children and Young People \("Mind over Matter"\) – Follow-up](#) (2020)

wellbeing.<sup>13</sup> There is ongoing Senedd interest in and scrutiny of this policy area, including most recently from the Welsh Youth Parliament<sup>14</sup> as concerns persist about children’s mental health and their timely access to services<sup>15</sup>, not least due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bill has the potential to contribute substantially to tackling this agenda. (Paras 92 to 95 of the EM).

Mental health problems account for £962 million of total NHS Wales expenditure.<sup>16</sup> A central tenet of the Welsh Government’s Nurturing, Empowering, Safe and Trusted (NEST) framework is mental health wellbeing across education.<sup>17</sup>

Contact with nature through educational activities is positively associated with better mental health outcomes<sup>18</sup> in children and teenagers. The most consistent relationships reported between mental health outcomes and learning in natural environments were with resilience, stress and overall mental health.<sup>19</sup> Improvements in emotional well-being, self-esteem and depression have also been recorded. Contact with nature has been highlighted as an effective preventative action for common mental health problems.

Learning in natural environments has been associated<sup>20</sup> with building social capital, fostering pride, belonging, and community involvement. Immersive nature experiences<sup>21</sup>, including outdoor residential experiences and other education outside of classrooms have been linked to improved self-esteem and increased self-efficacy compared to controls. A study using data from Denmark has shown that flourishing mental health was associated with approx. \$1.2 billion (equivalent to £848 million) in potential lower expenses for health and social costs.<sup>22</sup> (Paras 222 to 224 of the EM).

## Consultation responses

The Explanatory Memorandum also builds on the responses received through the extensive consultation undertaken on the policy objectives of the Bill.

The consultations undertaken highlighted many benefits of an outdoor education residential, such as the personal attributes that can be acquired and developed, improved physical and mental health and well-being and general holistic personal

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<sup>13</sup> Welsh Government, [Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing](#) (2021)

<sup>14</sup> Welsh Youth Parliament, [Our mental health and well-being](#)

<sup>15</sup> The [Children’s Commissioner for Wales](#) has made the mental health of children and young people and pursuing the ‘[No Wrong Door](#)’ model a policy priority for 2023-26.

<sup>16</sup> [NHS expenditure programme budgets: April 2021 to March 2022](#)

<sup>17</sup> [NEST \(mental health and wellbeing\): summary report](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Davis et al, 2021.](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Tillman et al, 2018](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, Evidence Note, 2022](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Mygind et al, 2019](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Santini et al, 2021](#)

development. Children identified bonding with friends and having fun as the main benefits, followed by the chance to experience being away from home, learning new skills, learning about the environment and nature, and being outdoors. (Para 363 of the EM).

Participating in residential outdoor education has benefits for children's mental health and well-being. This was highlighted specifically as a main benefit by around 40% of respondents to the general consultation and by around 8% of respondents to the children and young people's consultation. (Para 368 of the EM).

# Agenda Item 3.2

## **Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion Gwledig**

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### **Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee**

## **Senedd Cymru**

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN  
SeneddEconomi@senedd.cymru  
senedd.cymru/SeneddEconomi  
0300 200 6565

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## **Welsh Parliament**

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN  
SeneddEconomy@senedd.wales  
senedd.wales/SeneddEconomy  
0300 200 6565

The Rt Hon. Elin Jones MS  
Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

20 February 2024

Dear Llywydd,

In line with Standing Order 11.19.2, I am writing to request permission from Business Committee to hold an extraordinary meeting of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> of March. I have included an indicative agenda below.

The Committee intends to use this meeting time to take evidence from the Secretary of State for Wales as part of our work on the Future of Welsh Steel. Due to the urgent nature of this work, Members would like to hear from the Secretary of State as soon as possible. After exploration of possible dates between the clerking team and the Minister's office, this is the closest appropriate time we could take this evidence.

The Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee and the Health and Social Care Committee have meetings scheduled on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March. Hefin David MS is a member of both our Committee and the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee. They are anticipating a finishing time of 13:30 for their meeting. I have made arrangements with Hefin and he is content with the short turn around between Committees on the day. We also share a Member with the Children, Young People and Education Committee who have a reserve slot on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March. They are considering using that reserve slot, however if they do they anticipate their meeting will finish at 11:00 so this should not pose any issues.

Indicative agenda:

13:35-13:45 – Private pre-meet

13:45-14:45 – Future of Welsh Steel: Secretary of State for Wales

14:45-14:55 – Private consideration of evidence

I have copied this letter to Delyth Jewell MS in her capacity as Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee; Jayne Bryant MS in her capacity as Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee and Russell George MS in his capacity as Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee for their information.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Davies". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and 'D'.

**Paul Davies MS**

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



# Agenda Item 3.3

*This document provides a translation of correspondence received from Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)*



[www.ucac.cymru](http://www.ucac.cymru)

Jayne Bryant MS  
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee  
Welsh Parliament

*Via e-mail.*

22 February 2024

Dear Jayne Bryant,

I am writing to you as the General Secretary of Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC; the National Union of Teachers of Wales), a union that represents and supports not only teachers and school leaders, but also school improvement service officers.

As you know, the statement published on 31 January by Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and the Welsh Language, refers to the new arrangements that will be implemented in relation to school improvement. As part of those arrangements, there is an expectation that local authorities will be expected to establish a partnership with at least one other authority, signifying a move away from the wider regional support model.

Those members who work for the consortia are extremely frustrated and disappointed, as there has been no formal consultation with them, as individuals, regarding any possible changes, any more than there has been with classroom teachers, which is also very surprising. Furthermore, our members were given no prior indication that such a far-reaching statement was going to be released publicly on the afternoon in question. Indeed, as many were working with schools that afternoon, they were informed of the intention to eliminate the consortia by teachers and school leaders. We feel that this is entirely unacceptable, and it has caused mental distress among several of our members.

Given that this is a fundamental change to the education system in Wales, we request that you call in and scrutinise the Ministerial Statement in order to:

- Establish that the review has complied with the requirements of the terms of reference.
- Understand the methodology and the accuracy of the evidence collected.
- Understand the rationale for changing the timelines of the review halfway through the process.
- Understand the implications of the recommendations.
- Establish how confident we can be that the proposed arrangements will provide better support for schools.
- Establish whether a change impact assessment process was undertaken to include areas such as the Welsh language, equality, workload, funding etc.
- Explore how much this significant change in policy will cost in a challenging budgetary period, as there is no financial information available. This should include costs associated with redundancies and shutting down existing local authority arrangements, and set-up costs related to any new arrangements. It should also include the financial cost of releasing school staff to address the first recommendation.
- Try to understand the difference between the opinions expressed in the findings of the Chief Inspector in this year's Annual Report, and those expressed in the findings of the Middle Tier Review, particularly regarding schools' ability to self-evaluate and plan effectively for improvement.
- Understand the available evidence base that could instil confidence in the committee that schools are in the best position to self-regulate their own improvement.
- Evaluate the additional workload on schools, and headteachers in particular, in terms of implementing the first recommendation regarding school-to-school collaboration and improvement;

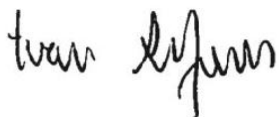
- Understand how local authorities will be able to fulfil their statutory responsibilities as the work of supporting school improvement is supported at a national level.

I'm sure that you realise that this is a difficult, uncertain and complicated time for our members who work within the regional services. It is therefore vital that we ensure fairness for them by considering all of the implications stemming from these changes.

As you can imagine, we are also keen for you to ensure that any new models that are established provide full support to all schools, whatever their language of education and wherever they are. And that support should be as good as, if not better than, what is being offered at the moment, especially in relation to the resilience and effectiveness of the support provided to schools, leaders and teachers, who provide services through the medium of Welsh.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,



Ioan Rhys Jones,

General Secretary.

Copied for information: Members of the  
Children, Young People and Education  
Committee; Committee Clerk

# Agenda Item 3.4

## Andrew RT Davies

Aelod o'r Senedd dros  
Ganol De Cymru

—  
Member of the Senedd for  
South Wales Central

## Senedd Cymru

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN  
AndrewRT.Davies@senedd.cymru

## Welsh Parliament

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN  
AndrewRT.Davies@senedd.wales

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0300 200 7233

@andrewrt.davies

@AndrewRTDavies

/AndrewRTDaviesAM

Jayne Bryant MS,  
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee,  
Via email - [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales)

Dyddiad | Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2024

Pwnc | Subject: CAF/CASS

Dear Jayne,

I recently met with a constituent regarding a difficult child-protection issue which had been through the family court system.

There was concern expressed by my constituent about the role of Cafcass in the proceedings and they felt that some of the actions of Cafcass were beyond the remit of the organisation. Whilst I understand that has been investigated, I am concerned my constituent's experience shows that Cafcass may be under-resourced.

Has the Children, Young People and Education Committee undertaken a review of Cafcass and would the committee be interested in undertaking an enquiry on the resources that Cafcass has available, whether these are adequate, and the impact on its service provision?

With kind regards,



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