



Lynne Neagle MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

30 September 2020

Dear Lynne

Thank you for your letter dated 23 September and for the additional questions. Our response is detailed in the annex below.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Meilyr Rowlands'.

Meilyr Rowlands
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales

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Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth. | Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

Annex

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT BILL: WELSH LANGUAGE

Are you able to share any further detail on your suggestion? For example, can you confirm whether you suggest that English not be a mandatory element before age 7 and that the school or the local authority be able to choose whether to teach it or not before this age? Would you suggest that Welsh be a mandatory element from age 3? Could there be any unintended consequences arising from this alternative solution?

There is a general consensus around the importance of early years' Welsh immersion, particularly if national Welsh language policy aspirations are to be achieved. There is a widespread sense that the proposed legislation may inadvertently discourage some schools from opting out of mandatory English. In the evidence session, I suggested that both languages could be mandatory from the age of 7 and that schools or authorities could have a choice between Welsh or English prior to this age. This alternative was intended to promote discussion and show that different legislative solutions are conceivable, and subsequently further alternative proposals have been made. What the alternatives have in common is that English is not mandatory for children under 7 in schools where Welsh is used for immersion. We do not foresee unintended consequences with this approach, which has an equivalent effect to the proposed opt-out. We do not have a preference from the options of this type, and feel that they should be explored further.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT BILL: FUNDING

Are you able to reassure the Committee that, in light of the above statement, you are confident that the Bill's provisions are affordable from Estyn's perspective?

Estyn is confident that the Bill's provision is affordable from our perspective. We have worked with officials and have contributed to the regulatory impact assessment. During the evidence session, I explained why it is difficult to calculate exactly the cost of such work. However, statutory inspection and thematic work, identified through the annual remit letter, provides sufficient opportunity for us to monitor curriculum developments, and Welsh Ministers must have regard to the funding Estyn needs to discharge these functions effectively. One of the recommendations in the 'A learning inspectorate' independent report (2018) was that Estyn's funding arrangements should be reviewed to allow longer-term planning and to recognise the resource implications of additional activities associated with education reform.