

Kirsty Williams AM
Cabinet Secretary for Education
Welsh Government

03 May 2018

Dear Kirsty

Meetings with Professor Mel Ainscow

As you will be aware, as part of the Committee's inquiry into Targeted Funding to Improve Educational Outcomes, the Committee took evidence from Professor Mel Ainscow. Discussions during the inquiry had flagged concerns about the level of engagement the Government has had with Professor Mel Ainscow since March 2017.

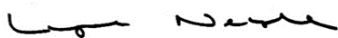
During your oral evidence session on 22 March, you were asked about the level of engagement between you/your officials and Professor Ainscow and refuted the suggestion that no meetings had taken place since March 2017. An extract from the meeting transcript is included as an Annex.

On 11 April, you provided additional information to the Committee on your engagement with Professor Ainscow, which confirmed that:

"Steve Davies and the former Director General of Education and Public Services Group, met with Professor Ainscow in March 2017. Subsequent to this, Professor Ainscow sent my officials an outline of lessons learned from SCC. There was a subsequent exchange of emails between my officials and Professor Ainscow in June 2017 about the SCC evaluation. Professor Ainscow then attended the SCC celebration event, which was held in July 2017 and attended by a number of my senior officials."

This additional information appears to indicate that no meetings have been held with Professor Ainscow since March 2017. The Committee would like to register its concern in relation to the disparity in the information provided on this matter and would welcome clarification of which account is correct.

Yours sincerely



Lynne Neagle AC / AM
Cadeirydd / Chair



Annex: Extract from Transcript of CYPE Meeting on 22 march

Darren Millar AM

Yes, I just wanted to ask you, you mentioned the figurehead there, I assume by 'the figurehead' you mean Professor Ainscow. And you've mentioned as well that you said you wanted to learn lessons from Schools Challenge Cymru, but he told us that nobody had been in touch with him since March of last year in order to have any sort of follow-up engagement, or to have a dialogue about his perspective on what worked, what didn't work, why there were failures in some areas and why there were successes in others. Why haven't you sought that level of engagement with the person who was responsible for running the programme?

Kirsty Williams AM

I've had that conversation with Mr Ainscow. We had the evaluation of the programme. We've spoken to the people who were actually involved in running the programme on a daily basis in individual schools. We've spoken to the regional consortia. We've spoken to local education authorities. We've spoken to a wide variety of people to get their insight into the lessons learned, what was valuable and what was not valuable. So, a wide variety of people have been involved in those conversations.

Darren Millar AM

But you've hardly engaged with Mr Ainscow—with Professor Ainscow himself.

Steve Davies

I would actually say that I have had meetings—

Darren Millar AM

Since March of last year.

Steve Davies

Yes, since March of last year. I haven't got the exact dates for you. I've had discussions with Mel Ainscow, and my line manager at the time, Owen Evans, also had meetings and discussions.

Darren Millar AM

So, when he told us, 'Since last March, I literally have had no contact at all with anybody from Welsh Government', he was telling porcky pies, was he?



Steve Davies

That's not my recollection. I'll go back and check for you.

Kirsty Williams

As I said, I met with him, Steve has met with him, Owen Evans has met with him, my special policy adviser has met with him and had discussions. So, there has been an ongoing dialogue.

