

CYPE(6)-20-23 - Paper to note 2

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jayne Bryant MS
Chair
CYPE Committee

13 June 2023

Dear Jayne,

I welcomed the opportunity to provide evidence at the CYPE Committee session on the Curriculum for Wales (CfW) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reforms on 10 May.

Following our previous session in July 2022, I committed to provide you with bi-annual figures on the number of pupils with SEN or ALN, either based on the annual Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) or weekly attendance records. On 25 May, the Welsh Government published the [schools' census results \(headline statistics\) as at January 2023](#). This includes a snapshot on the number of children with SEN/ALN and changes over the last year.

As I anticipated at our session on 10 May, the PLASC headline data shows a continuing downward trend in the number of learners with SEN/ALN. I want to reassure you that our policy intent remains that all children and young people with ALN should have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) (in the case of a young person, if they consent to having an IDP). However, for a couple of reasons, our expectations of how many learners will be determined to have ALN has changed.

Firstly, as previously highlighted, the introduction of the statutory role of the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo), provided the opportunity for schools to review and update their SEN registers. This led to the removal of learners who should have previously been removed, or who should not have been on the register in the first place.

Secondly, the ALN legislation was conceived 10 years ago, and we could not have fully anticipated the opportunities of implementing the dual curriculum and ALN reforms concurrently, and the combined focus on improving equity in education. Feedback received from senior leaders through curriculum early insight research, has referred to the CfW providing more of an opportunity to promote and focus on inclusivity for all learners, including those with Additional Learning Needs. This is encouraging to see, and we expect more learners who were previously at the SEN school action level to be supported as part of differentiated teaching and inclusive education practice.

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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.

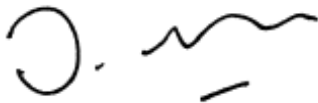
I wanted to reiterate, as I highlighted in my last letter, that any pupil recently removed from the SEN register has the right to talk to their school to request an IDP if their needs cannot be met without additional learning provision (ALP). Schools and local authorities are under a duty to decide whether a learner has ALN when the matter is brought to their attention.

As we move into the third year of implementation, we will continue to seek feedback from the sector, families and stakeholders. My officials are continuing to work with Estyn to seek further assurances that the needs of learners with ALN are being met. As part of these efforts, Estyn will publish a report of their ongoing thematic review in September 2023.

We have also commissioned a 4-year evaluation of the ALN system. This evaluation will provide key insights and evidence to enable us to monitor and identify emerging impacts of the reformed ALN system on learners with ALN/SEN, and about the impact of curriculum reform upon it. An emphasis on an inclusive education system lies at the core of both the CfW and the ALN act. Through close alignment of our evaluation plans and activities for both the curriculum and ALN reforms we will further enhance our ability to monitor the impact of these parallel reforms on learners with ALN/SEN. The evaluations will ensure we can identify what's working well and share that with the wider system to support learners; it will also be an additional evidence source for when things are not progressing as we would expect, so that we can work with system partners to focus support in the right places.

I look forward to keeping you appraised of evidence, research and insights as they emerge.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

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Minister for Education and Welsh Language