

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Buffy Williams MS
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee

13 March 2026

Dear Buffy

Thank you for your letter dated 30 January following my appearance before Committee on 6 November as part of your focussed work looking at school improvement and learner attainment.

Across Wales, our collective focus is on driving sector-wide improvement so that every learner can thrive. At the heart of this work are our priorities to strengthen attendance and raise attainment in literacy and numeracy, with the Curriculum for Wales and ALN reform providing the foundations for long-term progress.

We are taking this forward through genuine collaboration across the education system. By working together to address the shared challenges facing our schools, we are able to learn from one another, spread effective practice, and support sustained improvement in standards for learners across Wales.

Please find below detailed responses to each recommendation and request made.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynne Neagle".

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

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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.

Recommendation 1

We recommend the Welsh Government closely monitors the ability and capacity of local authorities to lead the necessary school improvement and raising of standards, continually reviewing the impact of these latest changes to the way school improvement functions and services are structured and delivered.

We also recommend that elements of good practice that have emerged and being built up through regional working over the past decade are incorporated into the new arrangements.

Response: Accept

The Education Improvement Team has been established within the Welsh Government to engage more directly and proactively with Local Authorities and their schools - strengthening the connection between local needs and national priorities.

Each Spring term, the Education Improvement Team will visit every Local Authority to support the development of local improvement models and to enable purposeful professional dialogue around priority improvement areas reflecting the Cabinet Secretary's national priorities. This approach will support the identification and sharing of effective practice across Wales.

The Education Improvement Team has also brought together Local Authority inclusion and improvement officers at a national level to promote the sharing of learning and intelligence, with the aim of building a more consistent and agile education system across Wales. This will provide an ongoing forum to build intelligence across the system at Local Authority / Government level. Connecting this to the examples of effective practice shared by Estyn as part of their thematic studies will also be an important step. This system-wide approach will enable the education sector to share best practices and challenges, and respond appropriately in discussion with partners including Dysgu, Estyn and Local Authority improvement teams.

Estyn also inspects Local Authorities. All inspection reports are published to ensure openness and public transparency.

Financial implications: None - within existing budgets

Recommendation 2

We urge the Welsh Government to ensure that new school improvement guidance can support the raising of standards and promote a common, consistent understanding of what is meant by effective school improvement. This consolidated guidance should be available in one accessible location and be aligned with Estyn's inspection framework.

Response: Accept

In January 2026, we published our new school improvement policy, setting out clear roles and responsibilities for improvement and accountability across the Welsh education system. This guidance is aligned with Estyn's inspection framework; it has been widely circulated to stakeholders and published on Hwb, as a central and accessible location for all.

The Education Improvement Team will engage directly with Local Authorities and schools to consider how school improvement support is being delivered on the ground.

These changes are taking place within a strengthened system of independent oversight. Since September 2024, Estyn visits every school twice within a six-year cycle: once for a core inspection and once for an interim visit. This provides a robust and independent assessment of how well schools are performing and, by extension, the effectiveness of the support provided to them locally. Estyn also inspects Local Authorities, and all inspection reports are published to ensure transparency for the public.

Financial implications: None - within existing budgets

Request 1

We also ask for a clear plan setting out Dysgu's professional learning offer and confirm mechanisms to prevent inconsistent local models including how specialist capacity will be safeguarded. Noting what has already been provided in the Cabinet Secretary's letter dated 26 November, we request further detail on how exactly Dysgu is operating during its transitional year, the role of the Welsh Government during this period and the process for Dysgu fully taking up its functions in September 2026.

Response: Accept

The 2026-27 funding letter for Dysgu is being prepared and will be issued and published by the end of March 2026. This will set out the areas of activity where Dysgu will be expected to provide professional learning and leadership support during 2026-27. Welsh Government officials are working closely with Dysgu to transfer knowledge and make arrangements for delivery in these areas.

Dysgu will produce an operational plan in response to the funding letter, setting out the steps it will take to deliver during the year.

As confirmed in my letter of 26 November 2025, Dysgu is delivering the NPQH pilot programme for its first two cohorts and reviewing and planning further leadership provision for middle and senior leaders. Recruitment is ongoing for a third cohort of over 70 participants, to begin the NPQH in September 2026. Dysgu is also supporting delivery of the Calm Classrooms, Thriving Minds professional learning pilot, which promotes inclusion and wellbeing by deepening practitioners' knowledge of child development, neurodiversity, and mental health. It is collaborating with Estyn on roadshows for schools to support the teaching of mathematics.

Areas where Dysgu is intended to take on responsibility during 2026-27 include:

- Eight Curriculum for Wales Support Programme grants to support literacy and numeracy
- Seconded professional advisors supporting literacy and numeracy support
- Continued funding and grant management of the Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning (DARPL) programme
- Curriculum design national support programmes from September 2026
- Continued funding and grant management of the National MA Education (Wales) and National EdD (Wales) Doctor of Education programmes
- Supporting the development and delivery of the Teaching Assistant Learning Pathway (delivered by local authorities) and Induction for Newly Qualified Teachers (delivered by local authorities and funded via the EWC)
- Supporting the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools and settings, and effective pedagogy in teaching through the medium of Welsh or bilingually
- Professional learning and practical support for teaching assistants, teachers and leaders in the effective and appropriate use of AI and digital technology to support teaching and learning and to reduce workload
- Professional learning based on School Improvement Guidance to develop the approaches of school leaders and system leaders
- Development and quality assurance of professional development and professional learning resources and pages on Hwb, working with Welsh Government officials to review and update priority areas

- Professional learning and support for leaders, ALNCoS and teaching and support staff, to develop the understanding and leadership of supporting learners with ALN.

Dysgu is intended to take on responsibility in these areas from April 2026, and will be working closely with Welsh Government officials, and engaging with practitioners, Local Authorities and other partners, to scope, develop and commission the provision over the following months.

Dysgu is establishing its internal procedures, to ensure it has appropriate financial management and governance arrangements in place, including to award and manage grants and contracts. Officials are engaging with Dysgu to ensure this is in place before the transfer of programmes and funding from April 2026. Dysgu has also conducted external recruitment for leads to augment its current team of staff, in key areas such as ALN, Cymraeg Craidd, Career Pathways, Leadership and Curriculum Priorities, and has appointed specialist, experienced individuals who will be leading the development and delivery of professional learning and support.

Dysgu is already engaging widely with Local Authorities and other partners and will continue to do so as its provision develops. This will be essential in ensuring there is a shared understanding of the national provision, and how this should be complemented by local activity. Dysgu will also be seeking to identify and build upon existing good practice to ensure this can be shared on a national level.

Financial implications: None - within existing Dysgu budget

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Welsh Government set out a staged progression approach aligned to the Curriculum for Wales, with clear age-related expectations to enable earlier identification of learners requiring intervention, alongside national standards for literacy and numeracy and a concise nationally agreed data minimum for the 3-16 journey.

Response: Accept

On [3 March I updated Members](#) on the work of our Literacy Expert Panel and our support for literacy attainment. The Literacy Expert Panel has informed our thinking on future guidance, professional learning, and wider priorities for strengthening literacy across Wales. I shared their newly published [Principles for Language and Literacy in Wales](#) and the [Statement of Intent for Early Reading](#).

We are already putting these principles into action. Central to this is the £8.2 million CAL:ON Cymru project, which is establishing a centre of excellence for literacy teaching. It is building on the best international evidence including, for example, elements of programmes from Mississippi and New Zealand. It will provide bilingual, national support, including support to develop learners' spoken language skills, and more targeted support for learners who need additional help to learn to read in upper primary and secondary school. CAL:ON Cymru will publish guidance on effective phonics teaching including support on using systematic synthetic phonics programmes, and how to select an appropriate phonics package. It also offers internationally recognised assessment tools to help schools understand learners' specific needs.

Dysgu, our recently established professional learning body, will be taking forward this national professional learning, ensuring support reaches all schools. We continue to work closely with Local Authorities to ensure schools have access to a coherent offer that builds on this national support.

I am also grateful to Estyn for developing resources that set out more detailed expectations related to learners' age to help practitioners understand literacy progression, and similar work undertaken by Swansea University in relation to numeracy professional learning. These will be tested with the profession to inform future guidance.

The expectations will inform the development of our Personalised Assessments, which will provide more detailed age-related information and reporting. This will support practitioners to better understand their learners' progress as well as providing a common and shared reference point to focus improvement-related conversations between schools. This will actively support the transition between primary and secondary schools, providing a single shared lexicon across Wales and supporting collaboration and improvement. The initial focus is on creating a new report for Numeracy (Procedural), English Reading, and Welsh Reading, which will be tested later this academic year with Year 6 learners as a priority cohort before development and roll out across other year groups.

Alongside this, I have also set up a new Attainment Board to ensure that all of these priorities are aligned and to focus on delivery and impact. This will include Estyn, Dysgu and representatives from Local Authorities.

Financial implications: None within existing budgets

Recommendation 4

We further recommend that our successor committee monitors the Welsh Government's commitment to participate in PIRLS (2026) and TIMSS (2027) and ensures that findings from these studies inform targeted interventions in literacy and numeracy from early years onwards.

Response:

We welcome the Committee's interest in Wales's participation in PIRLS 2026 and TIMSS 2027. These studies are an important part of our commitment to benchmarking learner progress internationally and strengthening our evidence base across literacy, numeracy and science.

Wales remains fully committed to participating in both PIRLS and TIMSS. Preparations are well underway, and we are on track for the PIRLS main study in May-June 2026, the TIMSS field trial in March this year, and main study in May-June 2027.

These assessments will provide robust, internationally comparable data on reading, mathematics and science at Year 5 — areas fundamental to learner progression under the Curriculum for Wales.

We share the Committee's view that findings from these studies must inform targeted interventions from the early years onwards. PIRLS and TIMSS will complement Personalised Assessments and support the design of Professional Learning resources focused on literacy and numeracy.

The insights gained from both studies will help us identify strengths, highlight areas requiring further support, and guide resource allocation and school improvement activity. This evidence will support practitioners, schools, and policymakers in strengthening learner outcomes.

To support learners and teachers, we are working with Children in Wales to develop an age-appropriate resource that explains what these assessments involve. Its purpose is to reassure pupils, reduce any anxieties, and help teachers feel confident in supporting their classes.

We will also publish articles on Hwb, Dysg and social media ahead of the assessments to raise awareness and to ensure parents, carers and the wider sector understand the purpose of these studies and feel reassured.

Participation is voluntary, and we are taking a supportive, low-burden approach for schools. A £200 administration fee is provided to each participating school, and Pearson — appointed by Welsh Government to administer the assessments — is working closely with schools to manage logistics and ensure smooth delivery.

Approximately 150 schools will participate in PIRLS and a further 150 in TIMSS, based on a random sample designed to reflect the diversity of schools across Wales, with around 4,500 pupils expected to take part in each study.

Financial implications: None - within existing budgets

Request 2

Additionally, the Welsh Government should remain vigilant in monitoring trends in learner outcomes, such as those evident from personalised assessment data, and our successor committee should prioritise scrutiny to ensure continued recovery and improvement across all domains.

Response: Accept

We draw from a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence to monitor and understand trends and variation in learner outcomes and engage regularly with our partners and use available data and statistics to provide oversight of our system progress.

We use annually available data and statistics such as that relating to qualifications, attendance and personalised assessments, as well as results from PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, Schools Health Research Network surveys, Estyn's annual and thematic reports as well as insight offered through research.

We also work closely with the OECD and other international partners and have regular discussions with UK counterparts on shared challenges.

We continue to reform our information ecosystem and our focus on the effective use of evidence at a national level. We are further strengthening the breadth of national information available to us and improving how it is used to understand the landscape, inform policy development and support our partners to improve learning and achieving the best outcomes for every learner.

We also continue to support our partners to use data effectively to drive improvement, and to improve transparency of school data through the development the 14 to 16 Learner Entitlement Indicators Framework, which will provide a balanced view of learners' experiences and outcomes from across the components of their 14 to 16 learning under the Curriculum for Wales.

Financial implications: None - within existing budgets

Request 3

Finally, the Welsh Government should develop user-friendly, interactive data tools aligned with the Curriculum for Wales and integrate with existing Local Authority systems, to support effective school improvement planning, early identification of risk, and targeted interventions.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government has provided digital tools to support understanding of school data for over ten years, both on a public platform (My Local School) and for use by schools and local authorities (All Wales Core Datasets) to support self-evaluation and improvement planning.

As part of our efforts to reform and improve the effective use of data and information to support learning and improving we have commissioned a comprehensive systems and digital tools discovery exercise. This exercise will inform decisions and next steps in developing successor systems that will offer dynamic, sophisticated and accessible tools for data use by different stakeholder groups, having identified the varying needs across these groups.

This discovery exercise will ensure that the tools we develop are fit for purpose and sustainable, enabling data use to support our learners across the education system. The exercise will also consider end-to-end user journeys and data flows between systems and stakeholders to fully support a collaborative approach to learning and improvement

The discovery exercise is expected to be completed in Spring 2026, and provide recommendations on the way forward, with elements of our new successor systems to be in place in Autumn 2027, when we implement new reporting arrangements for 14 to 16 learning as the first Year 11 cohort completes their 14-16 learning under Curriculum for Wales.

Financial implications: The discovery phase is within existing budgets with costs of future system development yet to be established.

Recommendation 5

We share the Cabinet Secretary's frustration at the lack of progress and urge that addressing the negative correlation between deprivation and attainment remains a high priority for the Welsh Government.

Response: Accept

Tackling the impact of poverty on educational outcomes remains central to our ambitions for education in Wales. We are committed to raising standards and improving attainment for every learner. Closing the poverty related attainment gap and effectively measuring progress have been priorities for this government.

We have also sought to ensure we enable our children and young people to access a wide range of experiences and outcomes to fully support their achievement and success. The Pupil Development Grant, the School Essentials Grant and our work to tackle the costs of the school day are central to this approach.

If we are to tackle the systemic and societal barriers to learning that contribute to the poverty-related attainment gap, we must take an evidence-based approach. Our work to develop a meaningful Theory of Change is synthesising Welsh and international evidence, outlining the complex issues behind the attainment gap and what works to tackle it. Based on this evidence and our priorities, action to reduce the poverty attainment gap in Wales will include improving existing programmes and policies and new opportunities to help learners experiencing poverty achieve their potential.

There are no additional costs associated with this recommendation at this stage. Related policy and programme changes required by a new government could incur additional costs which would need to be considered by a future administration.

Financial implications: None – within existing budgets

Recommendation 6

We also recommend that the review of the Pupil Development Grant prioritises demonstrable impact on reducing attainment gaps, not merely improving access to funding, and ensures that resources are targeted where they can make the greatest difference.

Response: Accept

As highlighted in the Written Statement issued on 18 December 2025, the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) is central to our ambition to tackle the impact of poverty on educational outcomes and to ensure the funding delivers the greatest possible benefit for our most vulnerable learners. The review will prioritise improving the PDG so that it will have a demonstrable impact on reducing attainment gaps.

Changing social circumstances, rising living costs, and increasing pressures on schools and families mean that more children now require additional support to achieve their potential. As a result, there are growing concerns that, despite our substantial investment, the PDG is not yet delivering the full impact we expect.

To address this, I instructed officials to undertake a comprehensive policy review of the PDG, with a specific focus on:

- Improving how the grant is allocated and funded,
- Strengthening monitoring of its use and impact, and
- Enhancing evaluation of the effectiveness of funded interventions.

These actions directly support the recommendation's intent that resources be targeted where they make the greatest difference. Central to that is ensuring that we use all the available data to identify and support those learners that need help to overcome barriers to their education.

The review will cover all PDG funding streams—including Early Years PDG, PDG for Children Looked After, and PDG for learners in Education Other Than at School—and aims to enable schools and settings to deliver high standards and aspirations for all learners, regardless of socioeconomic background.

We therefore accept this recommendation and will ensure that the review maintains a clear and explicit focus on evidence of impact in reducing attainment gaps. There are no direct additional costs associated with this recommendation. However, any policy or programme changes arising from a future government's priorities or from the outcomes of the review may result in additional financial implications. These would need to be assessed and considered by a future administration.

Financial implications: None - within existing budgets

Request 4

We welcome the Government's commitment to continue promoting attendance nationally and to provide more targeted support for schools and local authorities and ask that the Government outlines how it plans to assess whether national messaging is supporting awareness, strengthening local interventions, and ultimately whether the approach is working.

Response: Accept

We are clear in all messages from Government that attendance is vital, and this is a common thread in our communications. This also includes highlighting the improvements in school attendance.

In addition to reviewing the broader evidence base, we have undertaken focus groups with learners who have experienced issues with attendance and looked at the attendance campaigns run by local authorities. It was clear from those focus groups that young people do understand the potential impact of non-attendance on attainment. However, as there are a number of issues affecting non-attendance, the young people were also clear that they did not respond well to generic messaging that did not recognise the range of barriers they face.

What emerged from the groups is the importance of schools and wider community support in re-engagement of learners, and engaging parents, and the approaches they use. This underlines the importance of the role of Family Engagement Officers, who are critical in supporting our children and young people and their families and helping them overcome the barriers to attendance at school. This can include signposting to other services that can help families and putting in place practical assistance.

We recognise that messages are most effective when they are reinforced at national, local and school level, creating a consistent narrative that resonates with families. We will continue to emphasise the importance of attendance nationally and are developing a toolkit for schools and LAs to use to re-engage learners. Before publishing the toolkit it will be tested to ensure that messages resonate and are engaging.

We recognise the growing evidence demonstrating a clear relationship between school attendance and children and young people's mental health. Professor Ann John provided an overview of her research findings to us, [Policy Briefing: School Attendance in Wales](#) highlighting clear links between mental health, neurodevelopmental conditions and increased likelihood of absence and the current evidence on effective interventions. More information is also available in this [report](#) in the Lancet.

The evidence shows that the most effective interventions for improving school attendance are those that are responsive and targeted; parental engagement programmes perform strongly, with most studies showing measurable improvements when parents are actively involved. Social and emotional learning programmes generally contribute to better attendance by supporting pupils' emotional regulation and well-being. In addition, most extracurricular programmes, such as tutoring and structured enrichment schemes, show positive impacts, especially for disadvantaged learners or those with low attendance.

This work remains in progress with no confirmed publication date, but we continue to engage closely with Professor John as the analysis develops. The insights from this

ongoing research will help inform future policy and support, ensuring our approach to improving attendance keeps learner well-being at its core.

Financial implications: None - within existing communications budget

Recommendation 7

We urge the Welsh Government to investigate what lies behind the near doubling of fixed short-term exclusions of secondary pupils since before the pandemic and consider if this is appropriate and justified.

Response: Accept

The national exclusions data release published on 11 November, reported on permanent and fixed-term exclusions from maintained schools and EOTAS provision in Wales from September 2023 to August 2024.

The significant increase in both short-term and permanent exclusions in recent years is concerning and unacceptable. We are determined to reverse this trend to ensure that every child has access to an inclusive and supportive education.

We have seen exclusions rising year on year post pandemic, and we know how devastating exclusion can be for learners. It is not just about their loss of education. We know from work led by the Children, Young People and Education Committee on children on the margins that exclusion places children at greater risk of exploitation and criminality.

The rise in short-term exclusions in Wales is driven by a combination of persistent, disruptive behaviour, post-COVID mental health and behavioural challenges, neurodiversity-related distress, inconsistencies in early intervention, local policy variability and improved data recording practices.

Exclusions remain one of the tools available to schools to manage serious behavioural incidents. In light of the increasing reports of poor behaviour and violence in some settings, a rise in exclusions may reflect the challenging circumstances schools are currently facing.

Welsh Government guidance is very clear that exclusions should only be used when there are no other options and are used alongside wider support measures to address underlying issues and promote positive behaviour, including restorative and relational approaches.

Our 2025 Behaviour Summit set a clear direction for a comprehensive programme of action to tackle behaviour. Immediately after the Summit, I launched a dedicated exclusions and detentions forum, comprising a broad range of practitioners, headteachers, local authorities, unions and third sector experts.

The Forum has been integral to conducting a full review of current guidance and advising on best practice and preventative approaches. Members have also considered national data, to actively identify ways to reduce overall exclusion rates.

This group met monthly from September 2025 to February 2026. The last meeting of the Forum focused on finalising the revised guidance. The updated guidance will issue in readiness for the 2026-27 school year.

Earlier this term, I launched a programme of specific, targeted interventions with schools, Local Authorities, and key partners, across Wales, aimed at reducing exclusions and improving learner engagement.

This is part of our long-term commitment to inclusive, supportive learning environments. While it will take time to embed and review these measures and the full impact, particularly on exclusions, will only become clear in the longer term, due to data reporting a year in arrears, I am confident we will start to see early improvements to ensure meaningful progress for learners and schools.

Financial implications: None - within existing programme budgets

Recommendation 8

Alongside all of this, we urge investment in multi-agency support structures that bring together education, health, and social services to provide coordinated support for mental health, safeguarding, and behavioural challenges.

Response: Accept

Effective coordinated multi-agency working is essential to supporting learners' mental health, safeguarding needs and behavioural challenges, and to enabling children and young people to thrive in education. This is underpinned by the national NEST / NYTH framework and its six core principles for improving mental health and wellbeing services: Trusted adults; Wellbeing across education; Co-produced innovations; Easy access to expertise; Safe and supportive communities; and "No wrong door".

We are strengthening multi-agency support and tackling the wider societal factors that influence behaviour in schools. This work is maximising the impact of existing programmes to reduce pressure on schools, while also ensuring that new opportunities for joined up working are identified early, fully supported and implemented effectively.

We are enhancing our collaboration with the four Police and Crime Commissioners and their Forces to strengthen partnerships between police, local authorities, and schools. We will take this joint approach forward through the ethos of the Community Focused Schools Programme, ensuring that support is rooted in the needs of each community. I have recently announced a partnership with the four Police Forces in Wales that will see them working with schools to tackle these issues. This is supported by £1.5 million of funding across 2025-26 and 2026-27.

In addition, we recently announced immediate plans to develop new all-Wales resources to strengthen school safety. Cardiff Council will lead work with local authorities and partners to develop a consistent approach for schools to manage incidents where children take weapons onto school premises. This national approach will be supported by a £300,000 funding investment, with a view to making the resources fully available across Wales as soon as possible.

We are proud of our Community Focused Schools approach, our final piece of guidance on developing multi-agency engagement was published in March 2025. We are supporting our Community Focused Schools approach with over £31m in funding this financial year.

Welsh Government funds Regional Safeguarding Boards to develop and deliver multi-agency safeguarding training in their regions, ensuring that professionals across education, health and social services have a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and best practice in protecting children and young people.

As I noted in my recent letter in relation to your inquiry on Educational Reform, a strong multi-agency approach is essential to supporting the healthcare needs of children and young people. Education settings, local authorities and health boards have responsibilities to support children and young people's health and well-being while they are in attendance. Improving multi-agency collaboration with increased integration between health and education is a priority for this government.

As an outcome of the trilateral meetings, we have established a shared commitment to strengthening multi-agency integration across health, social care and education, and I am repeating here the joint actions we are progressing given their relevance to your work on these matters. These include:

- Embedding ALN and health needs into Regional Partnership Board planning, supported by joint communication across sectors and building on the spotlight event that took place in December 2025.
- Strengthening area-based planning through improved population-level data sharing between schools, local authorities, and health boards.
- Appointing an NHS-based professional advisor to lead on multi-agency collaboration, system integration, shared expectations and performance indicators.
- Developing a clear health policy statement to inform co-produced, multi-agency ALNET guidance and ensure consistent practice across sectors.
- Strengthening how health and education services work together so that oversight, training and responsibilities for supporting children and young people with complex healthcare needs are clearly defined, through the development of joint guidance for schools and health boards.
- Exploring further policy alignment around needs-led, inclusive approaches, especially relating to neurodivergence.

Financial implications: None - within existing programme budgets

Recommendation 9

We ask that the Welsh Government provides clear confirmation that the professional learning offer from Dysgu will include trauma informed practice, behaviour management and leadership.

Response: Accept

Dysgu is supporting delivery and evaluation of the Calm Classrooms, Thriving Minds professional learning pilot during 2025-26, and will be developing and rolling out the programme in 2026-27, informed by the findings of the evaluation. The programme promotes inclusion and wellbeing, and enables effective behaviour management, by deepening practitioners' knowledge of child development, neurodiversity, and mental health.

This includes awareness of trauma-informed practice and ACEs, although the programme does not attempt to duplicate the existing support for these matters; this includes support available through Ace Hub Wales, Trauma Informed Schools & Communities Wales, and Children in Wales.

This work aligns with the principles and requirements of the statutory Whole-School Approach for Emotional and Mental Wellbeing Framework which requires all schools, settings, local authorities and others to develop and embed policies and practices which support learner and school staff wellbeing and mental health.

We are also making positive progress to develop more bespoke professional learning opportunities focused on behaviour management. At the start of the school year, we published a new behaviour toolkit, for school practitioners, bringing together the latest research and practical resources to help schools develop and sustain positive behaviour. The toolkit will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains relevant and up to date.

Building on this work, innovative school-led projects on behaviour, supported by universities across Wales are generating valuable insights that will directly shape proposals for more structured professional learning for teachers and leaders. This next phase will be taken forward with Dysgu to ensure staff can access high-quality, evidence-based training that meets the needs identified by practitioners themselves.

We will consider during 2026-27 what further, dedicated support could be useful for Dysgu to provide in relation to trauma-informed practice and behaviour management, which could include signposting the existing support.

As outlined in response to Request 1, Dysgu's current provision includes the NPQH, and it is developing its wider offer for aspiring, new and experienced middle and senior leaders.

Financial implications: None within existing Dysgu budget for Calm Classrooms, Thriving Minds rollout.

Request 5

We would be grateful for your observations on how much of a priority raising standards of education is within the Welsh Government at Cabinet-level, rather than just within your department and your own focus. Further, how this is reflected by decisions made by the First Minister, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language and the Welsh Government Cabinet about allocation of funding (with reference to the allocation of education-related Barnett consequentials, as discussed in our report on the Draft Budget 2026-27

Response:

Education and in particular raising attainment remains a priority for the Government, and we are starting to see improvements at younger ages through our personalised assessment national report. Our qualification results in the summer were also encouraging.

I have taken papers to Cabinet on additional learning needs, the role of the school and the education workforce, which have generated positive support for the role of the Department and considered implications and actions across other portfolios.

That is why following discussions across the Government, the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government wrote to local authorities on 20 January stressing that investment in education remains a key priority for the Government and that the Welsh Government supports local authorities in ensuring that schools across Wales are fully funded to address the pressures they are facing with the settlement, offering a valuable opportunity for local authorities to allocate significant resources to their schools to focus on the key pressures that they have highlighted of additional learning needs, school transport, workforce and workload.

As well as the money allocated in the final budget for next year that I mentioned at Committee on 4th February, we have seen additional funding for the portfolio in the 2nd Supplementary Budget for this year