

Kirsty Williams AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg  
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-707  
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/05558/16

Mike Hedges AM  
Assembly Member for Swansea East  
Chair - Petitions Committee  
Ty Hywel  
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16 August 2016

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 4 August about a petition received by the Petitions Committee to make autism training mandatory in Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

The Welsh Government is committed to creating an inclusive education system for all learners, regardless of their needs and background, to ensure all learners are able to access a high standard of education and reach their full potential.

On 26 June, the First Minister announced this Government's intention to bring forward an Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill. The Bill will reform the current legal frameworks for supporting children and young people with SEN and Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD). The changes we intend to make will directly benefit Wales' most vulnerable learners and will also improve the operational landscape for practitioners. The legislation is a key milestone in our reform journey, but it is just one part of the picture. A Transformation Programme has been developed to take forward the wider policy developments needed to ensure implementation of the new legislation is a success. Some of this transformation is already underway.

We have recognised the need to improve the capacity of the education workforce to better support the needs of learners with SEN and in 2015 concluded a study to better understand the workforce development requirements of the general education workforce, including in relation to Autism. The final report has been published and can be accessed via the Welsh Government website:

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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.

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/reports/an-assessment-of-special-educational-needs-workforce-development-requirements/?lang=en>

We are reforming the way in which initial teacher education (ITE) is delivered in Wales and the reforms planned will require future accredited providers of ITE to design and deliver courses that support the four purposes of the new curriculum and address the six areas of learning and experience, which has inclusivity at its heart. In addition, planned changes to support the Education Workforce aim to offer practitioners, support staff, teachers, leaders and FE Lecturers in Wales an entitlement to access professional learning opportunities to develop their practice. This will include training to enable practitioners to deliver on the new curriculum.

Pioneer Schools have been appointed to support the development of a range of high quality professional learning to ensure that all practitioners in Wales have the skills in pedagogy and leadership to be able to successfully deliver the requirements of the new curriculum. Going forward the Pioneer Schools will have a key role in ensuring that professional learning needs in relation to SEN are met and they will work in partnership with schools from across Wales to ensure that this is achieved.

With regard to the professional learning that practitioners engage in after their initial training, teachers are required to demonstrate that they take account of the needs of learners with SEN/ALN as part of the requirements of the professional standards. The standards are currently under review but the revised standards will continue to require teachers to demonstrate their understanding of the diverse learning needs of all learners.

Meeting the diverse needs of learners may also be identified as a priority in the school's development plan (SDP) which all schools are required to have in place and review at least annually. The SDP will contain the school's improvement priorities and objectives, together with a plan for how they intend to achieve them, including the development needs of the school workforce. At an individual level, practitioners are required to reflect on their practice and identify areas for further development through the performance management cycle.

Yours sincerely



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