

Kirsty Williams AM
Cabinet Secretary for Education

21 February 2017

Dear Kirsty,

Follow up to evidence received: Wednesday, 15 February 2017

On Wednesday, 15 February the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee heard from Estyn for general scrutiny of their Annual Report 2015/16 and we continued receiving evidence as part of our inquiry into Teachers' Professional Learning and Education. It would be of great assistance to the work of the Committee if you would provide some further information on the following two areas:

KS4 Performance Measures

We understand that changes are being made to the performance measures used at Key Stage 4. The Committee would appreciate an explanation of how these will incentivise schools to support pupils in achieving the highest grades.

The issue of the relative attainment of A*–A and A*–C grades was highlighted in HM Chief Inspector's annual report and discussed in the session with Committee.

In a Ministerial statement in July 2014, the Welsh Government acknowledged that, in terms of school accountability, the emphasis placed on the Level 2 threshold (5 GCSEs grades A*–C) and the Level 2 threshold inclusive (including Maths and Welsh/English) attaches too much importance to C grades. This risks being at the expense of supporting more able pupils to maximise their potential if performance measures do not provide enough incentive to schools to help pupils get up to the highest grades.

In a written statement published on 3 July 2014, the Minister at the time said the Welsh Government would address this issue by using a revised capped points measure (which measures the value of each individual grade) as the main performance measure for Key Stage from summer 2017 onwards.



A Welsh Government statistical note in August 2016 confirmed that new arrangements would be in place for summer 2017. However your statement of 30 June 2016 said that although the revised capped points measure would be introduced, it would not be used as the main performance measure.

The Committee is keen to know whether the shift away from the Level 2 threshold measures towards one which takes into account attainment of the highest grades is still going ahead. This is particularly important as whilst progress has been made in GCSE A*-C attainment, achievement of A*-A grades has decreased slightly, or at least remained relatively static. This suggests more needs to be done stretch more able and talented pupils, with the potential to achieve the highest grades.

The Committee would be grateful for an update on your intentions for Key Stage 4 performance measures and how they will be used to incentivise attainment of the highest grades as well as C grades.


Teachers' Professional Learning and Education

The Committee heard from Trade Unions representing head teachers at our meeting on 15 February and the issue of incentives for prospective teachers was discussed.

The Committee is aware that in response to a recommendation contained in Professor Furlong's *Teaching Tomorrow Teachers* report, the Welsh Government committed to conducting an independent review of the financial incentives currently available to prospective teachers.

To assist with our inquiry and recommendations into Teachers' Professional Learning and Education, we would appreciate an update as to the progress and current timeline, as well as any interim findings, of that review.

Yours Sincerely,



Lynne Neagle AC / AM
Cadeirydd / Chair

