



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-628
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/01266/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

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14 July 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 3 July seeking further comments regarding the petition: *P-04-628 - To Improve Access to Education and Services in British Sign Language (BSL)*.

In your letter you sought my views on the petitioners' correspondence, specifically that DEFFO's views are considered as part of the Great Debate and that they will be included in the next stage of the consultation. As you and Committee members will be aware, on the 30 June I announced my support for the development of a new curriculum by accepting, in full, the recommendations of the Successful Futures report by Professor Graham Donaldson. The Welsh Government is now in the process of developing a high level realisation framework which is due to be published in the autumn.

I am clear that we must build our new curriculum together to ensure that all our children and young people can become: ambitious and capable learners; enterprising, creative contributors; ethical, informed citizens; and healthy, confident individuals. Engagement with all stakeholders is going to be essential and we very much welcome DEFFO's expression of interest in this regard. Further information of how stakeholders can be involved will be communicated in due course and I will ensure that DEFFO is added to our stakeholder list so that we can keep them up to date with developments. Further information on curriculum reform can be found at the link below:

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/reform/?lang=en>

DEFFO have suggested that the needs of those seeking or needing BSL training are often unmet or unidentified due to BSL sometimes being a choice rather than a medical need. As I set out in my previous responses, under the Education Act 1996 the responsibility to provide suitable educational provision for all children rests with local authorities. This includes the identification and provision of any language support required, such as BSL, to assist them in achieving their educational potential.

Furthermore, in delivering the Families First Programme, local authorities should use a Team Around the Family (TAF) model that oversees the interventions families receive. This pulls together the right people from the right agencies to ensure that a family receives the right advice, help and support in a timely manner. If it is determined that support for BSL provision for the family is required, the local authority should put the appropriate arrangements in place.

We acknowledge that the current system for SEN can sometimes be challenging for learners and their families and we also appreciate there is pressure on mainstream services to deliver educational provision across a range of learning needs. To address these challenges, we are reforming the current legislative framework for supporting learners with SEN. On 6 July I published our draft Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill. The consultation document, draft Bill and supporting documents can be accessed at the link below:

<http://gov.wales/consultations/education/draft-aln-and-education-tribunal-wales-bill/?lang=en>

The draft Bill sets out our vision for improving the planning and delivery of additional learning provision and ensure it is much more focused on a child's or young person's individual needs. The consultation will run until 18 December and I would encourage DEFFO to feed in their views.

You also sought clarification on my previous statement that 'the National Assembly for Wales does not have the power to legislate about any language other than Welsh'. To clarify, this statement was made with reference to the specific Welsh Language subject heading in GOWA. I also agree with the points made at (1) - (6) of your letter of 3 July. As noted, for example, we legislate in relation to other languages within the curriculum.

Yours sincerely



Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills