

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/00829/17

Mike Hedges AM  
Chair - Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

2 June 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 23 May about the submission received from the National Autistic Society. I have noted the comments. You also ask if it is our intention for autism to be included as a requirement within the new programme of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) from 2019.

The reconceptualised Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales: Teaching Tomorrows' Teachers: was published 15 March and makes clear the requirements for ITE in Wales:

- An increased role for schools
- A clearer role for universities
- Joint ownership of the ITE programme
- Structured opportunities to link school and university learning
- The centrality of research

<http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/initial-teacher-education-accreditation-criteria/?lang=en>

The ITE reforms will require future accredited providers of ITE to design and deliver courses supporting the new curriculum for Wales in joint ownership with schools; to develop future teachers who will meet the needs of **all** learners.

ITE courses which will be accredited under new arrangements from 2018 will be required to have carefully planned and integrated core studies, professional and pedagogical studies, school experience and subject studies. Core studies will draw explicitly on a range of theories, research and other intellectual resources to develop student teachers' knowledge and understanding of a wide range of pedagogical practice. The Welsh Government's newly developed ALN Transformation Programme which aims to transform expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with additional learning needs is one element of core studies.

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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/schoolshome/additional-learning-special-educational-needs/transformation-programme/?lang=en>

Wales was the first country in the UK to publish an autism strategy in 2008. In November 2016, the Welsh Government published a new ASD-Strategic Action Plan and delivery plan. The new action plan has three main priority areas: assessment and diagnosis; meeting support needs; and awareness raising, information and training. Many of the improvements we are seeking will be delivered through our new £13m all age Integrated Autism Service which will be available across Wales by 2018.

We are continuing work to improve knowledge and awareness of autism amongst professional groups, including those working in education. As part of the ASD Strategy a bilingual package of resources was developed for primary schools called 'Learning with Autism' which raises awareness across the whole school community. The package includes awareness raising and training modules for teachers, learning support assistants, other support staff including governors, and pupils. It is our intention to continue to develop and roll out this programme, in collaboration with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), to improve support available to children and young people across early years, primary, secondary and further education sectors from 2017.

The WLGA is also working collaboratively with Cardiff University on the SIGNS schools project which is part of the Learning with Autism suite of resources. The SIGNS posters set out the key behaviours which could indicate autism and the research is investigating whether the SIGNS are having an impact on teachers and or parents in recognising the signs of autism in children.

Understanding ALN and SEN issues is a career-long development need for teachers, which starts in ITE and continues throughout their career. The Welsh Government has expectations for all teachers to undertake ongoing development, reflective practice and on-the-job research throughout their teaching careers. New professional standards for teaching and leadership, (recently consulted on) make clear the responsibility on teachers and leaders to ensure the needs of all learners are met. These responsibilities are career-long and are intended to be an integral part of the evidence required for the award of Qualified Teacher Status.

The scope of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Special Educational Needs (SEN) is wide and we do not want to exclude any groups by inadvertently omitting a specific form of ALN. However, we agree that teachers need to develop an understanding of these specific needs and an ability to recognise them in individual pupils. Providing each individual pupil with practical support strategies, in order for them to reach their potential, whatever their personal circumstances, is essential.

Yours sincerely



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