



Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref TO/KW/02776/18

Mairead Canavan
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NEU

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11/01/19

Dear Ms Canavan,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 13 December, addressed to Kirsty Williams AM, Minister for Education regarding mental health in school in Wales. I have been asked to reply as the School Effectiveness Division has policy responsibility for education workforce issues.

There is no doubt that this is a challenging time for the education system in Wales and the Welsh Government wants to support teachers in their work and to raise the esteem in which they are held. Teachers have a pivotal role in raising standards in the classroom and it is important that they are not overburdened and are fully supported in their core role to enable positive teaching and learning. We have already put in place a number of measures to ensure that practitioner views and experiences are fed in to this process - not only with regard to new policies but in relation to existing practices as well.

In September 2017, the Welsh Government published our Action Plan for Education in Wales for 2017-21 – *'Education in Wales – Our National Mission'*. It sets out how the school system will move forward over the period, securing implementation of the new curriculum with a focus on leadership, professional learning and excellence and equity within a self-improving system.

Our national mission reinforces the commitment to reduce unnecessary workload and bureaucracy by providing greater clarity of what is and isn't required in the classroom; and improving the use of business managers to support school leaders. It also sets our aim of having strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity, and addressing well-being and good mental health. Our national mission is available to download at:

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynir 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 responding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Welsh Government recognises that there is not one single solution to reducing unnecessary teacher workload and it will require a range of different approaches depending on local circumstances. Different issues and priorities have been raised by teachers depending on a variety of factors, including: school phase, locality and rural isolation, deprivation, subject area, individuals' teaching role, etc., as well as the specific management practices adopted by particular schools and/or local authorities. Consequently, the Welsh Government has adopted a multiple stream approach to address these matters and to engage much more closely with the profession. Teacher wellbeing and mental health is important and we will continue to look for improvement in the education system by working with practitioners, schools, Estyn, regional consortia and local authorities.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Wales is currently undergoing significant reform to improve the quality and consistency of provision and to ensure all programmes of ITE meet our high expectations. Our new ITE Partnerships will develop approaches to assist aspiring teachers to manage their own wellbeing, as well as their ability to contribute to the wellbeing of the pupils in their care.

I would like to assure you that the Welsh Government fully recognises the role that teachers in Wales have, and is fully committed to supporting our entire education workforce. I understand that local authorities in Wales provide a confidential occupational health and counselling service that is open to all employees, including teachers. Those experiencing mental health issues may find it helpful to approach their local authority directly to discuss the provision of these services in their local area.

Additionally, the Education Support Partnership, the UK's only charity provides mental health and wellbeing support services to education staff and organisations. They provide a 24/7 confidential Employee Assistance Programme that is completely confidential, providing support by telephone (Free Helpline 08000 562 561) or online from specialist advisers and counsellors who understand the demands of working in education (www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk).

I hope that you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Durston
School Effectiveness Division
Education Directorate
Welsh Government