

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: OAQ51127

David Melding AM
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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19th October 2017

Dear David,

In plenary on 4th October you raised an important point about schools and foster carers working together to ensure looked after children are supported in education.

I am sure that, in your capacity as Chair of the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group, you will be aware of the Welsh Government's looked after children education plan: *Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales (January 2016)*. This joint education/social services plan recognises the intrinsic relationship between the social context of the child and their educational attainment. The key message throughout the plan reaffirms the need for all those who have a role in supporting children who are looked after to work better and more effectively together.

I have reaffirmed my commitment to the education of disadvantaged learners in my national education plan *Education in Wales: Our national mission* published last month. This recognises the need to build on our commitment to equity in education and to strengthen partnership working to deliver better outcomes for looked after children.

The important role of foster carers cannot be underestimated in supporting and motivating children to value, access and attend school or educational/training placements. It is essential that schools build constructive relationships with carers to ensure the educational and well-being needs of our looked after learners are met fully.

During the development of our looked after children education plan, we consulted foster carers through The Fostering Network. Foster carers told us in [*What is needed to enable looked after children to achieve in education?*](#) that they should be equipped with the skills to understand better the language of education and to have the confidence to work in partnership with schools to help improve the educational attainment of looked after children in their care.

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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.

To address this, we worked with The Fostering Network to publish [A foster carer's guide to education in Wales](#) which explains how foster carers can help work more effectively with schools and education services by demystifying some of the language used in education.

We have since supported The Fostering Network in delivering a tailored core training package for foster carers based on the published guide.

You will I am sure be familiar with the work with The Fostering Network to deliver a two-year Fostering Well-being pilot project that aims to test and evaluate social pedagogy principles (focused on the education and upbringing of children) in a foster care environment. The programme features five core master classes which will bring health, social care and education professionals together with foster carers for shared learning and development. The key principle is to create equality of status in the team around the child and to improve relationships and communication.

All maintained schools in Wales are required to have a designated member of staff ("the designated person") who has lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked after children in the school. Working with education stakeholders, we identified a need to provide advice on the role and responsibilities of the designated person in schools, and on governing bodies in supporting that function.

Our new guide: *Making a difference - A guide for the designated person for looked after children in schools* - will be published shortly. This has been developed with educational practitioners who undertake the role of the designated person, local authorities and regional education consortia. The guide is designed to raise the profile of the role in schools and to ensure a consistent national approach across all schools in Wales. We will ensure that the guide is promoted and will work with education services and schools to make sure that effective practice is central to supporting looked after learners.

Finally, we will continue to capture the views of carers and the children in their care on the progress we have made to deliver the commitments in the looked after children education plan, this will include finding out where we may need to take further action to help improve the liaison between schools and carers.

I trust that you are reassured that we recognise the important role that foster carers play in educational attainment, and the critical need to ensure that they and schools enjoy a constructive and collaborative relationship to ensure the very best outcomes for our looked after learners.

Yours sincerely



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