



Ein cyf/Our ref: WQ89758

Andrew R.T. Davies MS
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19 December 2023

Dear Andrew,

Please find below a substantive reply to your Written Question about the dependency of special schools on support staff.

Special schools are an important part of an inclusive education system, providing education and care for our most vulnerable learners. Welsh Government recognise the work that support staff do to support all learners in the education system, with those in Special Schools often having specialist roles.

Teaching assistants are essential to support access to education, however they are often utilised in different ways across the school sector. Within the special school sector support staff are also often required to administer medication and support learners on a one-to-one basis, their role is vital to many learners ensure that they can develop.

We have taken a number of measures to improve and develop support staff across the education sector, this includes developing a Teaching Assistant Professional Learning Steering Group. The TA Steering Group continues to consider issues of equality of access to high quality and consistent professional learning for all our teaching assistants. A key aim for the Steering Group is to map the current professional learning offer for teaching assistants and identify any gaps in provision. We have worked with the regional consortia to enhance the Teaching Assistant Learning Pathway which is available to all TAs from new to experienced TAs, including access to the HLTA status assessment. We have also ensured that Teaching Assistant are central to the new National Professional Learning Entitlement. .

Our published guidance, *Creating time and space for professional learning*, sets out how schools should use INSET days and the professional learning grant to ensure all practitioners can engage in professional learning, in line with the National Professional Learning Entitlement. The guidance includes advice and expectations around providing opportunities for teaching assistants to engage with career long professional learning to ensure their continued professional development.

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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.

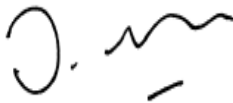
Although unable to directly change the pay and conditions of teaching assistants in Wales, the Welsh Government has taken a number of steps to ensure that the role and value of all teaching assistants across Wales is fully recognised. Working closely with a subgroup of the WLGA, Schools Social Partnership Forum, we have considered a variety of issues relating to teaching assistants, including standardisation of roles; consistency in deployment; and a move towards common pay scales across Wales. We are expecting the Social Partnership Forum to report on standardisation of roles later this term.

In addition to the above we are also looking at workload issues relating to Teaching Assistants across the sector.

To specifically understand the nuances of Support staff in Special schools we have worked with the Special Schools Network and are working with the National Academy of Educational Leadership Headteacher Advisory Group to help inform and challenge policy decisions for all support staff.

We will continue to work with the sector to ensure that all support staff are fully recognised for the vital work that they do in supporting all learners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Miles', with a stylized flourish.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language