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Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/00102/22

Arwyn Thomas
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GwE

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31 Ionawr 2022

Annwyl Gyd-bwyllgor GwE,

Diolch am eich llythyr dyddiedig 12 Ionawr yn crynhoi eich gohebiaeth flaenorol ynghylch y mater hwn ac yn mynegi eich pryderon ynghylch tegwch a chydraddoldeb mewn perthynas ag arholiadau.

Rwy'n cydnabod bod dysgwyr, a'r sector addysg cyfan, yn parhau i wynebu heriau sylweddol a tharfu pellach ar addysgu a dysgu y tymor hwn.

Fel y gwyddoch, mae'r sefyllfa o ran iechyd y cyhoedd yn cael ei monitro'n glos. Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth reolaidd am ganlyniadau'r adolygiadau diweddaraf ar ddata presenoldeb. Rydw i hefyd wedi gofyn i fy swyddogion barhau i fonitro a dadansoddi'r data er mwyn cael gwell dealltwriaeth o effaith yr absenoldebau hyn, yn enwedig ar garfanau blynyddoedd arholiadau a sut y gellid lliniaru'r rhain. Mae'r data wythnosol mwyaf diweddar ar bresenoldeb yn dangos cynnydd yn y niferoedd sydd wedi bod yn bresennol a gostyngiad yn yr absenoldebau sy'n gysylltiedig â Covid. Mae'r rhain yn arwyddion calonogol a gobeithiaf y byddant yn parhau.

Rydw i o'r farn mai asesu drwy arholiadau yw'r dull tecaf i bob dysgwr yn gyffredinol ac roeddwn yn falch o weld y canlyniadau cadarnhaol diweddar o gyfres arholiadau mis Tachwedd. Gan eu bod wedi cael eu cynnal tua diwedd y flwyddyn, mae'r dysgwyr wedi elwa ar gyfnod hirach ar gyfer addysgu a dysgu. Fodd bynnag, rwy'n llwyr gydnabod yr holl darfu sydd wedi wynebu dysgwyr dros y 18 mis diwethaf ac rwy'n deall y pryder a'r gofid y mae rhai'n ei deimlo wrth feddwl am sefyll arholiadau ffurfiol am y tro cyntaf yr haf nesaf. Wrth gadarnhau'r penderfyniad i asesu dysgwyr drwy arholiadau yn 2022, ystyriwyd ystod

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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.

eang o ffactorau ac mae'r dystiolaeth o effaith defnyddio arholiadau neu raddau a bennwyd gan ganolfannau wedi'i hasesu a'i gwerthuso.

Fel y gwyddoch, addaswyd manylebau pynciau i leihau'r cynnwys i'w asesu er mwyn adlewyrchu'r tarfu ar addysgu a dysgu. Mae CBAC wedi parhau i fonitro'r tarfu ar ysgolion a cholegau, gan wneud diwygiadau pellach fel llacio amodau asesiadau nad ydynt yn arholiadau, a chyhoeddi ychydig cyn y Nadolig y byddai gwybodaeth yn cael ei darparu ymlaen llaw mewn amrywiaeth o bynciau ychwanegol. Gyda'i gilydd, bwriedir i'r camau hyn helpu i leihau swmp y cynnwys y mae angen i athrawon a darlithwyr ei addysgu cyn yr arholiadau a dylent helpu dysgwyr i ganolbwyntio wrth baratoi.

Er eu bod yn angenrheidiol, daeth y graddau a bennwyd gan ganolfannau y llynedd â'u hannhegwch eu hunain yn eu sgil ac nid ydynt yn cynnig ateb perffaith i'r tarfu sy'n digwydd ar hyn o bryd – oni bai bod sefyllfa iechyd y cyhoedd yn golygu bod rhaid inni weithredu trefniadau wrth gefn. Teimlaf mai'r ffordd ymlaen yw cefnogi'r dysgwyr hyn â'r cymorth ychwanegol sydd ei angen arnynt i symud ymlaen i'w pennod nesaf.

Mae rhan o'r cyllid ychwanegol ar gyfer blynyddoedd arholiadau a gyhoeddwyd ym mis Rhagfyr 2021 yn canolbwyntio ar gefnogi ein dysgwyr mwyaf difreintiedig i ennill eu cymwysterau. Dyrannwyd £7.5 miliwn i ysgolion i gefnogi dysgwyr i ddatblygu eu sgiliau, eu gwybodaeth a'u hyder, yn enwedig mewn cymwysterau craidd fel Mathemateg a Saesneg yn ogystal â chefnogi'r rhai sy'n teimlo'n bryderus am arholiadau. Caiff ei bwysoli tuag at ysgolion sydd â mwy o ddysgwyr sy'n gymwys i gael prydau ysgol am ddim er mwyn sicrhau y gall y disgyblion difreintiedig hynny gael gafael ar y cymorth sydd ei angen arnynt. Bydd gan ysgolion hyblygrwydd eang o ran sut y defnyddir hyn, er mwyn ystyried eu hamgylchiadau lleol ac anghenion eu dysgwyr. Y bwriad yw y bydd yn darparu addysgu a dysgu ychwanegol, gan gynnwys drwy diwtora, ynghyd â chymorth ac adnoddau i adolygu.

Bydd dros £7 miliwn hefyd yn mynd tuag at gefnogi dysgwyr sydd wedi bod yn absennol yn amlach yn ystod y pandemig. Ariennir swyddog presenoldeb ym mhob awdurdod lleol i ail-ymgysylltu â'r dysgwyr hyn a'u helpu i ddod o hyd i'r trywydd iawn ar gyfer eu dyfodol.

Bydd £9.5 miliwn arall yn ariannu cymorth i ddysgwyr mewn ysgolion, Addysg Bellach a Chweched Dosbarth i bontio i gam nesaf eu haddysg neu eu gyrfa. Bydd hyn yn sicrhau bod pob dysgwr blwyddyn 11, 12 a 13 a dysgwyr cyfatebol mewn colegau yn cael cyfle i ystyried yr holl opsiynau sydd ar gael iddynt. Mae cyllid yn cael ei ddarparu i roi mynediad at adnoddau a darparu cefnogaeth bersonol o ran ysgrifennu ceisiadau a chael cymorth dysgu wrth bontio i Addysg Bellach ac Addysg Uwch.

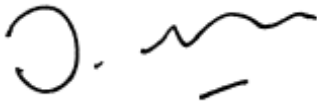
Fel y byddwch yn gwerthfawrogi, rhaid i'r dull gweithredu ar gyfer 2022 sicrhau cydbwysedd rhwng anghenion dysgwyr sy'n ennill cymwysterau yn 2022 a thegwch i ddysgwyr a oedd yn ennill cymwysterau cyn y pandemig ac a fydd yn ennill cymwysterau yn y dyfodol. Mae'n bwysig na ddylai dysgwyr o Gymru fod o dan anfantais o ran eu camau nesaf, yn enwedig o ran cael lle mewn prifysgol.

Deallaf y cynhelir cyfarfod pellach o'r Grŵp Rhanddeiliaid Dysgu a Dilyniant yn ystod yr wythnosau nesaf. Bydd hwn yn gyfle da i rannu unrhyw syniadau eraill ar gyfer sut y gallwn gefnogi'r dysgwyr hyn drwy'r arholiadau a rhoi'r hyder sydd ei angen i ddysgwyr, staff a rhieni deimlo eu bod yn cael eu cefnogi a'u paratoi wrth gychwyn ar y cyfnod asesu. Rydw i hefyd yn ymwybodol bod CLILC yn dymuno trefnu cyfarfod i ni, gan gynnwys Cymwysterau Cymru a CBAC, a fydd yn rhoi cyfle i drafod hyn ymhellach.

Ein cyfrifoldeb ar y cyd fel sector addysg yw cefnogi ein dysgwyr yn y ffordd orau bosibl a chaniatáu iddynt symud ymlaen i'r bennod nesaf yn eu bywydau, boed hynny'n golygu addysg, hyfforddiant neu fyd gwaith.

Rydw i'n sylweddoli ei fod yn parhau i fod yn gyfnod heriol i ysgolion a cholegau a byddaf yn sicrhau bod y sefyllfa o ran iechyd y cyhoedd ac amharu ar addysgu a dysgu yn cael ei hadolygu'n gyson. Gallaf eich sicrhau fy mod yn arbennig o ymwybodol o unrhyw faterion sy'n effeithio ar les dysgwyr.

Yn gywir,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a circular mark followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/00102/22

Arwyn Thomas
Managing Director
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31 January 2022

Dear GwE Joint Committee,

Thank you for your letter of 12 January summarising your previous communications on this issue and raising your concern as to the equity and fairness of exams.

I recognise that learners, and the education sector as a whole, are currently still facing significant challenges and further disruption to teaching and learning this term.

As you will be aware, the public health situation is being monitored closely and I am being kept informed of the findings from the latest attendance data review. I have also asked my officials to continue to closely monitor and analyse the data to better understand the impact of these absences, particularly on the examination cohorts and how these might be mitigated. The latest weekly absence data shows a rise in attendance and a reduction in Covid related absences which are encouraging signs that I hope to see continue.

I believe assessment through exams is generally the fairest method for all learners and was pleased to see the recent positive results from the November exam series, being held towards the end of the year they also maximise the time available for teaching and learning. However, I fully recognise the disruption that learners have faced over the last 18 months and I understand the concern and anxiety some feel at the prospect of sitting formal exams for the first time next summer. In confirming the decision to assess learners via exams in 2022, a wide range of factors have been taken into account and the evidence of the impact of using exams or centre determined grades (CDGs) has been assessed and evaluated.

As you will be aware adaptations have been made to subject specifications to reduce assessment content to reflect disruption to teaching and learning. WJEC has continued to monitor the disruption in schools and colleges, making further amendments such as relaxing non-examination assessment conditions and just before Christmas announcing that advance information would be provided in a range of additional subjects. Together, these are intended to help reduce the amount of content that teachers and lecturers need to cover ahead of the exams and should help learners to focus in their preparations.

The centre determined grades of the previous year, although necessary, came with their own inequities and are not a panacea to the current disruption – unless the public health situation is such that we must enact contingency arrangements. I feel that the way forward is to support these learners with the additional support they need to progress to their next chapter.

Part of the additional funding for exam years announced in December 2021 is focused on supporting our most disadvantaged learners to achieve their qualifications. £7.5m has been allocated to schools to support learners to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence, particularly in core qualifications such as Maths and English as well as supporting those who feel anxious about exams. It will be weighted towards schools with a greater number of learners eligible for free school meals to ensure those disadvantage pupils are able to access the support they need. Schools will have broad flexibility in how this is used, to take account of their local circumstances and need of their learners, the intention is that it will provide for additional teaching and learning, including through tutoring, and revision support and resources.

Over £7m will also go towards supporting learners whose attendance has dropped during the pandemic. An attendance officer will be funded in each local authority to re-engage these learners and to help them find the right path for their future.

A further £9.5m will fund support for school, FE and Sixth Form learners with the transition to the next stage of their education or career. This will ensure that all year 11, 12 and 13 and equivalent college learners are given the opportunity to consider the full suite of options available to them, funding is being provided to access resources and provide personalised support in terms of applications and learning support as they transition to both FE and HE.

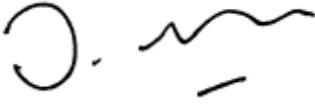
As you will appreciate, the approach for 2022, must strike a balance between the needs of learners sitting qualifications in 2022 and fairness to learners who sat qualifications before the pandemic and who will sit qualifications in the future. Importantly, learners from Wales must not be disadvantaged in terms of their next steps, particularly university admission.

I understand that a further meeting of the Learning and Progression Stakeholder Group will be held in the coming weeks. This will be a good opportunity to share any other ideas for how we can support these learners through the exam series and give them the confidence needed for learners, staff and parents to feel supported and prepared going into the assessment period. I am also aware that the WLGA is looking to arrange a meeting for us, including Qualifications Wales and WJEC that will provide an opportunity to discuss this further.

It is our collective responsibility as an education sector to support our learners in the best way possible and allowing them to continue onto the next chapter in their life be that education, training or work.

I recognise that it continues to be a challenging period for schools and colleges and will ensure that the public health situation and disruption to teaching and learning is kept under review. Please be assured that I am particularly aware of impacts on learner wellbeing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a series of connected loops and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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