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**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru**  
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

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**National Assembly for Wales**  
Children, Young People and Education Committee

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Kirsty Williams AM  
Cabinet Secretary for Education

11 December 2018

Dear Kirsty,

### **Scrutiny of Estyn's Annual Report 2017-18: follow-up**

On 6 December 2018 the Children, Young People and Education Committee scrutinised the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector ("HMCI") of Education and Training in Wales 2017-18. A **full transcript of our discussions** is available.

Three particular areas on which we would welcome further information from the Welsh Government arose during our discussions:

#### **1. Standards in secondary schools**

##### *Standards*

HMCI's annual report 2017-18 states that, of the 27 secondary schools inspected in 2017-18, 48 per cent were found to be either 'adequate and needing improvement', or 'unsatisfactory and needing urgent improvement'.

The annual report also states that in approximately half of the secondary schools inspected, a majority of pupils across the age and ability range do not develop their knowledge and skills well enough or make enough progress. Similarly, the majority of pupils do not achieve in line with their abilities at the end of compulsory schooling. We are deeply concerned at this waste of potential.

##### *Interventions*

We are also concerned about the extent to which interventions are made effectively and early enough in schools causing the most concern. HMCI has reported:



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*“Despite various initiatives, including banding and categorisation, it remains the case that these schools are not identified early enough and not enough is done to support them to develop sustainable strategies for improvement.”*

In our report, *On the money? Targeted funding to improve educational outcomes*, we highlighted the importance of ensuring that the regional consortia provide the necessary challenge and support to the most underperforming schools, following the closure of the Schools Challenge Cymru programme. We recommended that the Welsh Government should closely monitor and evaluate this.

HMCI, Meilyr Rowlands, told the Committee there is a need “to do something urgently” about schools, particularly in the secondary sector, currently unable to lift themselves out of the statutory categories of intervention. He noted a need to identify schools more quickly, ensure that they have better support, and better “harmonise” their current support. He explained that the Welsh Government had established a working group to look at this in more detail.

#### *Requested information*

We would welcome:

- further information from the Welsh Government about the make-up, programme, timescales, and intended aims for the working group, and an outline of any other steps you intend to take to improve the situation;
- an updated response, in light of HMCI’s latest annual report, to our *On the money?* recommendation that the Welsh Government should closely monitor and evaluate the support being provided by regional consortia to the most underperforming schools.

## **2. ‘A Learning Inspectorate’ Report**

In his report, *A Learning Inspectorate*, Professor Graham Donaldson recommended a one-year pause of Estyn’s routine cyclical inspections of schools, as part of a three-phase move to a self-evaluation model. Professor Donaldson recommended the pause in order to:

- enable Estyn to focus resources on developing its role in supporting improvement and preparation for reforms such as the new curriculum;
- free schools from the potential distraction caused by inspections, enabling them to concentrate on improvement and change (although interventions in schools in need of ‘significant improvement’ or in ‘special measures’ would continue).



In his evidence on 6 December, HM Chief Inspector Meilyr Rowlands stated that there would be 'advantages' to such a pause but that this was a matter for the Welsh Government as changes to legislation and inspection regulations would be required.

*Requested information*

We would welcome confirmation of:

- when the Welsh Government intends to provide a formal response to *A Learning Inspectorate*?
- whether the Welsh Government intends to take the necessary steps to initiate the recommended one-year pause in routine cyclical inspections and, if so, when?
- the latest position on the development of a new Welsh Government Assessment and Evaluation framework.

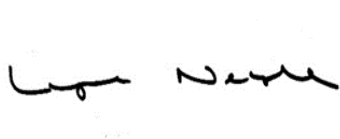
### **3. Emotional and mental health**

We welcome Estyn's intention to undertake a piece of thematic work on support for emotional and mental health in schools in Wales. However, we are concerned that a third of secondary schools in Wales were reported in 2017-18 as being judged either 'unsatisfactory and needing urgent improvement' or 'adequate and needing improvement' for wellbeing and attitudes to learning.

*Requested information*

We would welcome an update from the Welsh Government on the steps being taken to ensure that training in relation to emotional and mental wellbeing of pupils forms part of initial teacher education and ongoing support for professional development.

Yours sincerely,



**Lynne Neagle AM**  
**Chair**

