

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)



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Jayne Bryant MS
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament

Via e-mail.

22 February 2024

Dear Jayne Bryant,

I am writing to you as the General Secretary of Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC; the National Union of Teachers of Wales), a union that represents and supports not only teachers and school leaders, but also school improvement service officers.

As you know, the statement published on 31 January by Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and the Welsh Language, refers to the new arrangements that will be implemented in relation to school improvement. As part of those arrangements, there is an expectation that local authorities will be expected to establish a partnership with at least one other authority, signifying a move away from the wider regional support model.

Those members who work for the consortia are extremely frustrated and disappointed, as there has been no formal consultation with them, as individuals, regarding any possible changes, any more than there has been with classroom teachers, which is also very surprising. Furthermore, our members were given no prior indication that such a far-reaching statement was going to be released publicly on the afternoon in question. Indeed, as many were working with schools that afternoon, they were informed of the intention to eliminate the consortia by teachers and school leaders. We feel that this is entirely unacceptable, and it has caused mental distress among several of our members.

Given that this is a fundamental change to the education system in Wales, we request that you call in and scrutinise the Ministerial Statement in order to:

- Establish that the review has complied with the requirements of the terms of reference.
- Understand the methodology and the accuracy of the evidence collected.
- Understand the rationale for changing the timelines of the review halfway through the process.
- Understand the implications of the recommendations.
- Establish how confident we can be that the proposed arrangements will provide better support for schools.
- Establish whether a change impact assessment process was undertaken to include areas such as the Welsh language, equality, workload, funding etc.
- Explore how much this significant change in policy will cost in a challenging budgetary period, as there is no financial information available. This should include costs associated with redundancies and shutting down existing local authority arrangements, and set-up costs related to any new arrangements. It should also include the financial cost of releasing school staff to address the first recommendation.
- Try to understand the difference between the opinions expressed in the findings of the Chief Inspector in this year's Annual Report, and those expressed in the findings of the Middle Tier Review, particularly regarding schools' ability to self-evaluate and plan effectively for improvement.
- Understand the available evidence base that could instil confidence in the committee that schools are in the best position to self-regulate their own improvement.
- Evaluate the additional workload on schools, and headteachers in particular, in terms of implementing the first recommendation regarding school-to-school collaboration and improvement;

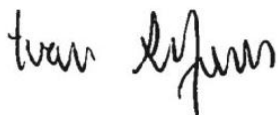
- Understand how local authorities will be able to fulfil their statutory responsibilities as the work of supporting school improvement is supported at a national level.

I'm sure that you realise that this is a difficult, uncertain and complicated time for our members who work within the regional services. It is therefore vital that we ensure fairness for them by considering all of the implications stemming from these changes.

As you can imagine, we are also keen for you to ensure that any new models that are established provide full support to all schools, whatever their language of education and wherever they are. And that support should be as good as, if not better than, what is being offered at the moment, especially in relation to the resilience and effectiveness of the support provided to schools, leaders and teachers, who provide services through the medium of Welsh.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ioan Rhys Jones'.

Ioan Rhys Jones,

General Secretary.

Copied for information: Members of the
Children, Young People and Education
Committee; Committee Clerk