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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref AW / Scrutiny
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/00537/24

Councillor Alex Williams
Chair of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Bridgend County Borough Council

scrutiny@bridgend.gov.uk

28 March 2024

Dear Councillor Alex Williams,

Thank you for your letter of 11 March 2024 in which you outline the concerns of your Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 on school support staff leaving to work in jobs outside the sector due to the competitive job market, salaries offered in other sectors and a more blended working environment.

First and foremost, I would like to assure you that the Welsh Government recognises and appreciates the hard work and dedication school support staff put in each and every day to improve the lives of our young people in Wales. They are a valued and integral part of the school workforce and have an important role as part of a high-quality education profession. The Welsh Government has reiterated its commitment to continuing to enable support staff to improve their skills and help them to commit to professional learning by facilitating clearer learning pathways, including pathways to achieve the status of Higher Level Teaching Assistant.

However, school support staff pay and conditions are a matter for individual employers, whether this is the school or the local authority. Local authority employed school support staff pay and conditions, along with all other local government staff, is part of the wider pay and conditions negotiations for local authorities. These are negotiated directly between unions and local authorities in Wales and on an all Wales and England basis by agreement through the National Joint Council (NJC). The Welsh Government has no role in these negotiations.

A subgroup of the School Social Partnership Forum (SSPF) (a tripartite group comprising Welsh Government, local authority employers and education workforce unions) is looking into a variety of issues relating to teaching assistants. This includes standardisation of roles; consistency in deployment; a move towards common pay scales across Wales; and better access to professional learning. Recent discussions in the SSPF have focussed on a move to common pay scales and this was also recently discussed by the Association of Directors of Education Wales.

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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.

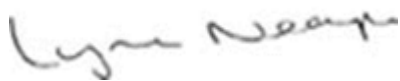
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

On a national level, we are working closely with stakeholders to ensure that professional learning is available to support staff. We have made it clear in our in-service training (INSET) and professional learning grant guidance that support staff should be given time and support to develop in line with the [National Professional Learning Entitlement](#). This includes advice on how best teaching assistants can engage with professional learning offer to ensure that they are able to effectively carry out their roles and support teaching and learning.

In addition, to help us further develop the professional learning offer for support staff, the Welsh Government has established a Teaching Assistants Professional Learning Steering Group which continues to consider issues of equality of access, high quality and consistent professional learning for 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.

I would like to reiterate that the Welsh Government recognises the issues facing support staff and we will continue to support the work being undertaken through the SSPF to progress improvements in terms of their pay and conditions.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle AS/MS

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