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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: PO297
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Dear Natasha

I'm writing to follow up on your question in the Senedd on 2 October about swimming for learners with additional learning needs (ALN), following the publication of the report by Disability Sport Wales and the charity, Sparkle.

As I mentioned in the Senedd, I recently met with Dr Sabine Maguire in my role as the Senedd Member for Torfaen, and I am aware of the excellent work in the community undertaken by Sparkle South Wales. I set out below the Welsh Government's position on the issues you raised.

Swimming in the Curriculum for Wales

Firstly, in terms of your comment that 'swimming and water competence is part of the national curriculum for all at key stage 2'; I wanted to confirm that the Curriculum for Wales has now replaced the previous National Curriculum for all primary schools in Wales.

The mandatory Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience aims to ensure that schools build learning and support for physical activity for all children and young people. The curriculum's statutory guidance, which all schools must consider, includes clear progression in physical literacy and activity and makes clear the expectation that learners have ongoing daily opportunities to be physically active. This statutory guidance emphasises that physical activity in water is key to this, and so swimming is a clear and obvious choice for schools to consider for learners as an important life skill.

Schools have the flexibility to design their curriculum and select a range of sports and activities to teach which meet the needs of their learners in their specific context; and to choose the sporting activities and make judgements about how those are implemented. For some with specific needs, this might not be swimming, but the guidance nevertheless expects them to have experience of physical activity in water.

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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.

The decisions around water safety and school swimming, and how learners are taught to swim, lies with the school in conjunction with their local authority leisure services.

The Curriculum for Wales national framework has been developed to be inclusive of all learners. It is also intended to support schools to design inclusive school curricula. In developing the new curriculum, including the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience, Welsh Government considered the UNCRC in accordance with our duties under the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. This will have included the need to ensure equity of access for all children in Wales and we have reflected this in our curriculum guidance to Local Authorities.

Water safety education

The Drowning Prevention Strategy and the work of Water Safety Wales are other Welsh Government initiatives in support of a coherent education and water safety programme in schools and communities, delivered from a young age. In May, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) were appointed as the delivery partner to support this work. Officials in Curriculum division are collaborating with RoSPA, other key stakeholders and practitioners to develop resources for schools on water safety, focussing on young people's understanding of the risks presented by water and how to stay safe or respond in an accident.

The member groups of Water Safety Wales encourage representations from organisations and groups looking after the interests of those with disabilities or learning difficulties.

Support for access to swimming for learners with ALN

In terms of funding schools to facilitate swimming, the Welsh Government provides funding to local authorities for pre-16 provision in schools in Wales mainly through the Local Government Revenue Settlement in the form of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). How this funding is then used is left to individual schools to decide based on their context and learner needs.

The issues identified within the report for community and leisure providers are matters for local authorities or leisure trusts. Community sport, including recreational swimming, is a discretionary service provided by local authorities or leisure providers (trusts etc). In view of the importance of the equity of access for our ALN learners, I will be discussing this matter further with Jayne Bryant MS, the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government.

My officials will also engage with Disability Sport Wales and Swim Wales over this issue and I will keep you updated.

Yours sincerely



Lynne Neagle AS/MS

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