

Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill gains Royal Assent

To mark this significant milestone, First Minister Carwyn Jones and Education Secretary Kirsty Williams visited Ysgol Penmaes in Brecon on Monday.

This forward-looking school provides high quality specialist education for pupils aged 3-19 with a wide range of learning difficulties.

During the visit the First Minister and Education Secretary were given a tour of the school by Head Teacher, Julie Kay and they also spoke with staff and pupils to hear their views on how they feel this Bill will help them.

The wide-ranging legislation contains eleven main aims and will be backed up by an ambitious wider programme of reforms, measures, subordinate legislation and an Additional Learning Needs Code, which will sit alongside the Bill.

Speaking ahead of the Bill gaining Royal Assent and highlighting why this legislation is so important, the First Minister said:

“Nearly a quarter of learners in Wales will experience some form of additional learning need (ALN) during their early years or education and this Bill places them at the very heart of our new system.

“Ysgol Penmaes is a great example of a school that puts children and young people’s needs first and it is only right that the legislative system which underpins the school’s approach continues to be fit for purpose.

“This new Bill will pave the way for a radical new approach, driving improvements in standards to ensure all learners are supported to meet their full potential. Essentially it brings the entire legislative framework into a 21st Century enabling us to effectively support learners with ALN through their education journey.”

Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams added:

“It was brilliant to meet with staff and pupils at Ysgol Penmaes on Monday and see how this school is supporting young people with additional learning needs to get the very best from their education.

“We have engaged heavily with a wide range of people and groups on the development of this legislation to make sure we got it right and today is an historic day for education in Wales.

“This Bill includes a range of aims to strengthen the ALN system and focusses on identifying those with ALN needs as early as possible and working with them and their families to plan the right support.”

Outlining how the legislation will help to support Ysgol Penmaes and its pupils, Head Teacher, Julie Kay said:

“I welcome the fact this new system supports 0-25 year olds and places children and young people at the very heart of that support.

“For learners to have their own individual plan that they have been involved in producing and that is based around what is important to them is very positive; it will especially help our learners in ensuring the process is more seamless and supportive of their needs when they reach the point of transition and move to their post-school provision.”

The Welsh Government has already outlined a challenging but realistic timeframe for implementing the new system, which is due to commence in September 2020, should last three years, with completion expected by the end of 2023. It has also committed £20m of funding to the transformation programme over the course of this Assembly.