

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.

Abolition of the Right to Buy legislation receives Royal Assent

At an official Sealing Ceremony held today (January 24) in Cardiff, the Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill became an Act of the Assembly.

The Bill aims to protect the stock of social housing in Wales from further reduction, ensuring it is available to provide safe, secure and affordable housing for people who are unable to buy or rent a home of their own. It complements other actions being taken by the Welsh Government to increase the supply of housing.

Minister for Housing and Regeneration Rebecca Evans AM said:

“Between 1981 and 2016, over 139,000 local authority and housing association homes were sold off under the Right to Buy.

“We know this has led to many people, including many vulnerable people, waiting longer to access a home that they can afford. This legislation will give social landlords more confidence to invest in new housing, by removing the risk of these homes being sold after only a few years.

“We are committed to creating 20,000 more affordable homes by 2021, and we are supporting social landlords to help us to achieve this.

“We will shortly be publishing more information for tenants which will be circulated by their landlords, to better explain what this Act means for them.

“By protecting the stock of social housing in Wales, we are ensuring it is available for the long term to provide safe, secure and affordable homes for the people of Wales.”

This Bill was introduced last March, following a White Paper consultation in 2015, and now passed, abolishes all variations of the Right to Buy, including the Preserved Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire.

Right to Buy will finally be abolished on the 26 January 2019 for existing properties, one year after Royal Assent. But to encourage investment in new homes, the rights will end for homes that are new to the social housing stock, and therefore have no existing tenants, two months after Royal Assent, on the 24th of March 2018.

[Estyn Report shows Welsh education is uniting in a mission of self-improvement – Kirsty Williams](#)

The report found there is “enough excellence across Welsh education to support improvement and help reduce variability” and that there is a “spirit of cooperation” with the teaching profession in developing a new curriculum.

The report also welcomes:

- The establishment of a National Academy of Educational Leadership;
- A “more systematic approach” to how pupils learn, apply and practise

- their literacy and numeracy across the curriculum;
- Major changes in how professional learning is organised;
- Improvements in attendance and behaviour;
- Strengths in learner wellbeing, care, support and guidance, and learning environment; and
- Strengthened links between higher and further education.

Welcoming the report, Kirsty Williams said:

“Our national mission for education seeks to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and enjoys public confidence.

“It is clear from reading this report that there is sustained momentum in Welsh education; a culture of self-improvement that is embedded in the system and, most importantly, owned by those working in the profession.

“I am heartened to see the Chief Inspector welcoming the steps we have taken to drive up standards and support improvement in our schools – particularly our efforts to work with the teaching profession in developing the new curriculum.

“The report notes our efforts to reduce the attainment gap, but we know there is no room for complacency. That’s why we’re doubling the Pupil Development Grant for our youngest learners, so that every child has the opportunity to reach their potential.

“By continuing to work together, I am confident that we can achieve our national mission and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence.”

[All Wales Prevention Zone declared to protect poultry from Avian Flu](#)

The Prevention Zone will come into force from 00:01 on 25 January 2018.

In January, there have been three separate findings in England of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N6 in Wild Birds and in response Defra issued a Prevention Zone across England.

A veterinary risk assessment for England and Wales shows that the risk level for disease in wild birds has increased from Medium to High. The risk associated with direct and indirect transmission to poultry has also increased from Low to Medium. The risk to poultry, however, is dependent on

the level of biosecurity at individual sites.

Although there are currently no findings of Avian Influenza in Wales, as a precautionary measure in response to the increased risk level, an All Wales Avian Prevention Zone will be introduced.

The prevention zone will require all keepers of poultry and other captive birds, irrespective of how they are kept, to take appropriate and practicable steps, including:

- ensure the areas where birds are kept are unattractive to wild birds, for example by netting ponds, and by removing wild bird food sources
- feed and water your birds in enclosed areas to discourage wild birds
- minimise movement of people in and out of bird enclosures
- clean and disinfect footwear and keep areas where birds live clean and tidy
- reduce any existing contamination by cleansing and disinfecting concrete areas, and fencing off wet or boggy areas.

Keepers with more than 500 birds will also be required to take some extra biosecurity measures, including restricting access to non-essential people, changing clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures and cleaning and disinfecting vehicles.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“As a precautionary measure, in response to the increased risk level, and to mitigate the risk of infection, I am declaring an All Wales Avian Influenza Prevention Zone.

“Although we have had, as yet, no findings of Avian Influenza in 2018, I consider this Prevention Zone and the requirement for enhanced biosecurity to be proportionate to the risk level faced in Wales. It is essential we take steps to protect our poultry industry, international trade and the wider economy in Wales.”

Chief Veterinary Officer Christianne Glossop said:

“All keepers of poultry and other captive birds will need to comply with the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone.

Keepers must remain vigilant for signs of disease and practice the very highest levels of biosecurity.

“I strongly encourage all poultry keepers, even those with fewer than 50 birds, to provide their details to the Poultry Register. This will ensure they can be contacted immediately, via email or text update, in an avian disease outbreak, enabling them to protect their flock at the earliest opportunity and minimise the spread of infection.”

Avian influenza is a notifiable disease and any suspicion should be reported immediately to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)

Information on the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone, guidance and latest developments are all available on the [Welsh Government](#) website.

[Cabinet Secretary sets out aspiration for pan-Wales transport body](#)

Whilst updating Assembly Members on positive discussions with the UK Government regarding the transfer of powers and the Core Valley Lines railway asset, the Cabinet Secretary set out how this further devolution would give us more of the tools we need to develop the schemes which will provide much needed improvements across Wales.

Taking Wales Forward, Prosperity for All and the Economic Action Plan will be strengthened as we drive a step change in the way we understand, plan, use and invest in transport in Wales. For the first time the Welsh Government has committed to a five-year programme of transport capital funding through Transport for Wales for both transport maintenance and new projects.

Speaking to Assembly Members, Ken Skates said:

“I am mindful of the need to make sure that Transport for Wales can deliver effectively for the whole of Wales, and following my announcement last month of the intention to set up a Transport for Wales business unit in north Wales, I have instructed Transport for Wales to bring forward proposals for a North Wales office. I expect this to be delivered at pace.

“On our new Wales and Borders rail service – we have made significant progress with the UK Government since last summer, and the Secretary of State for Transport and I have now reached agreement on the way forward on a number of key issues. On other issues officials are continuing to make good progress. Further devolution would give us the tools we need to develop the schemes which will provide much needed improvements across Wales, as identified within Network Rail’s Welsh route study.

“Transport for Wales is now entering a new stage of mobilisation, working closely with Business Wales to make opportunities available to local SMEs and third-sector enterprises, through the new rail service and the different metro schemes. Indeed as result of their progress, and subject to the UK Government doing their bit, I look

forward to the award of the first made in Wales rail services contract – in May.

“Following the successful model of acquisition of Cardiff Airport, our aim is for the public transport network to be increasingly directly owned or operated by Transport for Wales. We need a transport body that prioritises people and businesses and finds innovative ways of building a truly resilient and modern transport system for the benefit of the people of Wales.”