

22 August 2023

Dear

Request for information

Thank you for your letters to Mr Owen Evans received on 25 July. These are:

- A letter to Mr Evans dated 23 August 2023, addressed to Data Officer, Canolfan yr Egin, Carmarthenshire
- A letter to Mr Evans dated 23 July 2023, addressed to Steve Jones, Welsh Government
- An undated covering note to Mr Evans
- A separate letter to

Mr Owen Evans has forwarded these to me in my capacity as Freedom of Information officer. I respond to the three letters with the salutation 'Dear Owen Evans'.

We note your concerns in relation to the Welsh for Adults service and the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). In relation to Freedom of Information, I note the following requests that you have made:

- Confirmation under the Freedom of Information Act that unregistered Welsh for Adults inspectors and tutors of the National Centre for Learning Welsh are required to conform to practice and conduct that is commensurate with an Estyn inspected service.
- Confirmation under the Freedom of Information Act that tutors use proven and researched teaching methods.
- Confirmation under the Freedom of Information Act that secondary as well as primary research sources are valuable and reliable teaching resources, especially for trainee teachers.
- Confirmation under the Freedom of Information Act that the Welsh for Adults service is not a Welsh-speaking service and that there is a responsibility for

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Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth. | Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

tutors to support the needs of all learners and to undertake appropriate professional learning in English if unavailable in Welsh.

- Confirmation under the Freedom of Information Act that Wales does not have its own official PISA ranking or estimated average score and that the only ranking is the United Kingdom ranking.
- Confirmation under the Freedom of Information Act whether Welsh Government agrees with the view that it would be more meaningful to express PISA scores as a percentage rather than as a points system.
- Confirmation under the Freedom of Information Act whether Welsh Government agrees that it is impossible to differentiate between the standards of pupils that do or don't receive private tuition across the world, and that there are mental health issues related to binge learning in the Far East.
- Confirmation under the Freedom of Information Act that PISA is a statistic and that it is possible for countries to have world-class teaching standards but not necessarily world-class PISA results.
- Confirmation under the Freedom of Information Act whether Welsh Government agrees that PISA could be described as an intelligence test, differs from summative GCSE assessments, and that consideration should be given to both as well as the quality of teaching to determine the quality of different countries' school systems and pupils' attainment.

When dealing with requests for information made under the FOIA, Estyn's obligations include:

- confirming or denying whether it holds information of the description specified in the request; and
- communicating the information requested to the applicant.

Response to Welsh for Adults queries

In relation to your first question, as previously disclosed to you, we do not have a view on the qualifications status of Welsh for Adults tutors, this includes tutors of the National Centre for Learning Welsh – our findings are based on the evidence accumulated as part of inspection, in accordance with our guidance. All our inspections of Welsh for Adults provision are led by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) of education and training and are supported in their work by a team of HMI and peer inspectors. Peer inspectors are current practitioners, registered and trained by Estyn to participate in inspection activity.

In relation to your second, third and fourth questions, Estyn does not inspect with any view regarding the validity of any particular methodology but does always consider the impact of any chosen teaching approaches on the progress learners make in each setting.

For your reference, I attach a copy of our latest guidance for the inspection of Welsh for Adults, which is also available on our website. The guidance has been developed in tandem with the inspection guidance designed for other education sectors, and the same standards are applied in relation to our inspection activity.

Response to PISA related queries

In relation to your requests regarding information on PISA:

Request 1: 'Please can you kindly inform me under the Freedom Information Act that officially, Wales does not have an official Pisa ranking or estimated average score, which means technically, Wales has two different Pisa results and only one ranking, which is the United Kingdom one, because the Welsh Pisa score does not change any other countries ranking.'

Response: We do not hold this information. When the PISA results were last published in 2019, Estyn's access was to information already in the public domain. This document, published by the Welsh Government, may contain the information you are seeking.

Achievement of 15 year olds (Program for International Student Assessment) PISA national report: 2018 | GOV.WALES

Request 2: 'Please can you kindly inform me under the Freedom Information Act whether the Welsh Government accords the view that Pisa is based on estimated averages scores and that it is impossible to differentiate between countries' attainment of a few thousands of Pisa points and it accepts that it would be more meaningful to the public if they were either expressed as 49.1 or 49.1% because expressing the scores in thousands appears to misleadingly exaggerate the differences between countries. We would be able to differentiate millimetre differences in height, for instance.'

Response: As Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government, we cannot comment on their view on this matter. We have passed on your request to Welsh Government, who may be able to respond.

Request 3: 'Please can you kindly inform me under the Freedom Information Act whether the Welsh Government accords with the view expressed by Professor Dylan William that there is explicit evidence that children in the far East are spending binge hours of learning up to fourteen hours a day attending private lessons after school and even having individual private lessons and that it is impossible to differentiate between the standards created by schools and private tuition across the world and that there a mental health issues about children binge learning in the Far East.'

Response: As Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government, we cannot comment on their view on this matter. As we mentioned above, we have passed on your request to Welsh Government, who may be able to respond.

Request 4: 'Please can you kindly inform me under the Freedom Information Act that PISA is a stastic and that is possible for a country to have world class teaching standards but not necessarily world-class PISA attainment results, especially as the spread of socio-economic disadvantage is not necessarily equal in different countries and that Pisa does investigate the standard of teaching in schools?'

Response: Unfortunately, we do not have more information than what is contained

within the document referred to above. On page 20 of this document, it states that 'PISA assesses the knowledge and skills of pupils aged 15, who are assessed on their competence to address real-life challenges involving reading, mathematics and science. PISA is carried out on a 3-year cycle.'

PISA is therefore a source of data relating to the standards of pupils' skills in reading, mathematics and science.

Request 5: 'Please can you kindly inform me under the Freedom Information Act whether the Welsh Government respects that PISA could be described as being like an intelligence test, which assesses higher-order applied problem-solving capabilities, but it differs from summative G.C.S.E. assessments which assess the curriculum that has been taught to children and that their acquisition of it, each refers to different qualities, and that consideration needs to be given to both the quality of teaching to determine the quality of countries school systems and attainment levels of children of all learning potential.'

Response: As Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government, we cannot comment on their view on this matter. As we mentioned above, we have passed on your request to Welsh Government, who may be able to respond.

In your covering note, you ask that we refer your comments to Welsh Government. I can confirm that we have done so.

If you are not satisfied with the decision Estyn has taken regarding your request for information, you are entitled to request that we review the matter. Your request for a review should be addressed to the Feedback and Complaints Manager, and received no later than 20 working days after the date of this communication.

If you are still not satisfied, you also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745
Fax: 01624 524510
Email: enquiries@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Robert Gairey
Freedom of Information Officer