

Leighton Andrews AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-443
Ein cyf/Our ref LA/00205/13

William Powell AM

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February 2013

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 23 January writing on behalf of the Petitions Committee asking for my views on making Welsh History compulsory in schools in Wales and for an update on the work of the review group established to consider the teaching of Welsh history, the story of Wales and Curriculum Cymreig.

The 2008 curriculum, while recognising the importance of subject content, offers teachers more flexibility to determine the detailed content of the curriculum in their schools, allowing them to use their professional expertise and judgment to plan and deliver content that reflects their pupils' needs and the context of the school.

There is also a focus within the 2008 curriculum on developing skills. In History the skills of knowledge and understanding, interpretation, and enquiry, are central to the curriculum and regarded by most historians as integral to the study of history.

While skills and flexibility are central to the 2008 curriculum there are some constraints to flexibility which we think are appropriate and there are aspects of history that teachers are required to cover in their lessons. For example, at Key Stage 2, pupils should be given opportunities to study the daily life of people living in either the time of the Iron Age Celts or the Romans. At Key Stage 3, pupils should be given opportunities to explore how the coming of the Normans affected Wales and Britain between 1000 and 1500, the change and conflict in Wales and Britain between 1500 and 1760, and the changes that happened in Wales, Britain and the wider world between 1760 and 1914, and people's reactions to them. At both Key Stages, the importance of studying local history is emphasised, giving proper prominence to the study of Welsh History.

Through Curriculum Cymreig, it is a requirement across the curriculum that learners should be given opportunities to develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales. The History Curriculum contributes to this requirement by making local and Welsh history a focus of the study and helping learners to understand the factors that have shaped Wales and other countries today.

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On 1 October 2012, I announced a review of assessment and the National Curriculum in Wales. The review aims to streamline and simplify assessment arrangements and consider the National Curriculum core and other foundation subjects at each stage, to ensure that our expectations of content and skills developments are suitably robust, sufficiently demanding and in line with the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF).

The review of the Curriculum Cymreig, to which your letter refers, forms part of that wider review. The review group, chaired by Dr Elin Jones, is considering the teaching of Welsh history, the story of Wales and the Curriculum Cymreig. It met for the first time in November and will be meeting again in February. I have asked the group to consider, in particular:

- Whether the Curriculum Cymreig should be best delivered through the discipline of history and, if not, the best means of ensuring that the elements of Curriculum Cymreig are delivered across the curriculum;
- Whether there is sufficient emphasis on Welsh history and the stories of Wales in the teaching of history and the current programme of study; and,
- Whether the teaching of history, from the Foundation Phase through to the Welsh Bacc, GCSE and A level sufficiently take account of the latest research and the new resources available about the historical development of Wales to the present day.

The group will be providing recommendations to me in July this year, and any subsequent changes to the teaching of Welsh History and Curriculum Cymreig will then form part of the wider review of the National Curriculum in Wales.

Your sincerely


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