

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-634
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/01549/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
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7 September 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 6 August on behalf of the Petitions Committee seeking my further views on petition P-04-634 Exclusion in Schools for Children with No Religion.

As my previous correspondence, stated The Education Reform Act 1988, the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Welsh Office circular 10/94 sets out the legal requirements for collective worship in schools in Wales, currently there are no plans for this legislative position to change.

Religious Education (RE) in the current curriculum is not intended to promote a particular faith or religion, but should explore a range of philosophical, theological, ethical, and spiritual questions in a reflective, analytical, balanced way that stimulates questioning and debate. Schools have the flexibility to decide how the curriculum is implemented to suit their own local needs, therefore the delivery of the curriculum is delegated to schools and decisions on the precise content, materials and resources lie with head teachers and their governing bodies to ensure that it meets the needs of the children and local community.

Detailed arrangements for the provision of religious education and collective worship are a matter for local authorities. It is at local level that the syllabus for religious education is determined, and at local level that arrangements are made for collective worship by a schools head teacher or governing body. They have a role in promoting respect for and understanding of those with different beliefs, religious practices as well as non-beliefs. In this regard, it is important that schools create and maintain an effective partnership with parents.

As you may be aware, on 30 June, I announced my support for the development of a new curriculum by accepting, in full, the recommendations contained within the Successful Futures report by Professor Graham Donaldson - which is available to read in full at the following:

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/reform/successful-futures/?lang=en>

In line with Professor Donaldson's recommendations we will now set about the task of building a curriculum that supports our children and young people to be: -

- ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives;
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Within this context I am considering how RE, philosophy and ethics might be strengthened within the context of the new Humanities Area of Learning and Experience.

Working with the sector, in line with the principles set out in the report, will be crucial. In supporting this I have invited regional education consortia to work with their schools – primary, secondary, special – to apply to become Pioneer Schools. These schools will work with experts and other key stakeholders as part of an all-Wales partnership to design and develop the new curriculum.

Changes to our curriculum going forward will be subject to full public debate and consultation. I will be announcing further plans in the autumn detailing how Professor Donaldson's recommendations will be taken forward.

Yours sincerely



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