

Kirsty Williams AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg  
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-760  
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/01624/17  
David John Rowlands AM  
Chair - Petitions committee.  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

16 October 2017

Dear David

I am replying to your letter of 5 October 2017 regarding additional issues raised by the petitioner, Emma Williams, in response to Petition P-05-760 Stop Compulsory Welsh Language GCSE, issued by your predecessor, Mike Hedges AM.

Welsh language learning forms part of a wide and integrated curriculum, as is fully appropriate to its legal status as an official language of Wales. I respect the petitioner's right to disagree with this long standing policy but, as outlined in my previous response, the study of Welsh remains a key element in the curriculum in Wales to age 16 and there are no plans to change this position. There should be ample opportunities for all learners to develop their core skills while learning Welsh, and learning Welsh should broaden rather than narrow the curriculum.

Being able to understand and speak the language is becoming an increasingly important part of our direction as a nation. In future, organisations in the public and private sector will, increasingly, require staff that can use Welsh confidently for a range of purposes in their jobs. Such developments have implications for the curriculum.

It is against this backdrop that the new GCSE Welsh Second Language (full course) qualification has been introduced. Very few learners following the short course Welsh Second Language GCSEs developed transferable language skills that could be used beyond the classroom. Essentially, the new GCSE will place greater emphasis on speaking and listening skills so young people are better equipped to become more competent and confident Welsh speakers in the future. To clarify, irrespective of whether or not an examination is undertaken in Welsh Second Language, schools must ensure that learners have access to the whole curriculum programme of study. This is a mandatory requirement.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

[Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I understand the pressures that can come into play when considering course options and the specific concern raised over accommodating the study of the three separate sciences and MfL. I should note however, the double science GCSE option introduced in September does cover chemistry, physics and biology content and (subject to suitable results) would also allow progression to study science at A level. That said, it is for individual schools to decide how they can accommodate pupil's subject preferences, including modern foreign languages, at GCSE. We do however encourage schools to work together to help deliver provision, as appropriate.

Funding for statutory age education in schools in Wales, as for other services delivered by Local Government, is provided in the main by the Welsh Government through the Local Government Revenue Settlement Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The funding is not ring-fenced, as the Welsh Government considers that Local Authorities are best placed to judge local needs and circumstances and to fund schools accordingly. Local Authorities are accountable to their electorates for the decisions they make.

Once the RSG has been distributed to Local Authorities, it is the responsibility of individual Authorities to set budgets for their schools which are determined by a local funding formula. The School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010 require 70% of funding for schools' budgets to be distributed on the basis of pupil numbers. Authorities have discretion to distribute the remaining 30% on the basis of a range of factors so that they can take account of individual school circumstances.

In accordance with the regulatory framework, Local Authorities may take into account in their funding formula whether a pupil is being educated through the medium of Welsh and fund schools accordingly, taking into account the costs involved with delivering the same service through the medium of the Welsh language. This is in recognition that it may cost more to provide the same service in the Welsh language than it does through the English language. For example, there may be additional costs to Welsh Medium Education because there are fewer off the shelf learning resources and pupils may require more intensive language tuition if Welsh is their second language. This is a local consideration for the Authority in supporting the needs of its schools and community. A difference in per pupil funding does not mean that Welsh language pupils are being treated more favourably than their English language counterparts rather it is in recognition that it costs more to provide the same service in the Welsh language than it does through the English language.

For information, the internal Skills Audit we held in 2015 found that around three-quarters of the staff members that the Assembly Commission employs consider themselves to be Welsh learners, to have some bilingual skills or to be fully bilingual. I attach a link to the *Welsh language use survey* report, published in 2015, which provides information on surveyed numbers able to speak Welsh and their use of it:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-language-use-survey/?lang=en>.

Yours sincerely



**Kirsty Williams AC/AM**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg  
Cabinet Secretary for Education