

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: KW/05199/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
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14 September 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter dated 4 September regarding the Petition (P-05-1024) For Environmental awareness to be made compulsory and a key module within Schools in Wales for all years (Primary and Secondary Education). The petition aims for Welsh Government to consider for all schools in Wales to apply a core module from early years on the Environment encouraging awareness and action.

Your letter is very timely as education in Wales is changing and environmental awareness is an important part of this. As you will be aware, in January 2020 the first iteration of the new Curriculum for Wales was launched. The curriculum will be available for first teaching in September 2022.

At the heart of the new curriculum are the four purposes which set out the aspirations for all children and young people. By the age of 16, they should be confident, ethical individuals who play an active part in their community and society. Specifically on encouraging awareness and action on the environment, under the four purposes, children and young people in Wales will be able to:

- understand and consider the impact of their actions when making choices and acting
- are knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and the world, now and in the past
- respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society
- show their commitment to the sustainability of the planet

The Curriculum and Assessment Bill proposes that every school's curriculum must enable learners to progress towards these purposes. The Curriculum for Wales guidance forms part of the Curriculum for Wales Framework (Framework). The Framework is determined

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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.

nationally and includes both the curriculum requirements, which will be set out in legislation, and a range of supporting guidance. The Framework is designed to help practitioners to develop a more integrated approach to learning. A copy of the guidance can be accessed from the following link:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/afca43eb-5c50-4846-9c2d-0d56fbffba09/curriculum-for-wales-guidance-120320.pdf>

There are 27 statements of what matters in the Framework which are mandatory for schools to teach. These ensure a level of consistency in curriculum design across settings and schools, as under the Bill it is proposed that schools must include learning around all statements in their curriculum. There are three statements which are explicitly linked to the environment and raising awareness, which are:

- **Our natural world is diverse and dynamic, influenced by processes and human actions.**
 - *Experiencing the wonder of the natural world can contribute to learners' spiritual development and well-being, and can help to cultivate in them a sense of place and sense of belonging, as embodied in the Welsh word *cynefin*.*
- **The world around us is full of living things which depend on each other for survival.**
 - *By recognising the diversity of living things and how they interact with their environment, learners can develop an understanding of how these have evolved over significant periods of time.*

As such, through these mandatory statements of what matters, learning around different aspects of the environment will form part of every child's education for all year groups.

The process of exploring and revisiting these statements will enable learners to develop ever deeper knowledge over the learning continuum and to progress to a more sophisticated understanding of the key knowledge, ideas and principles in each Area.

As part of the *Keep Education Safe: guidance on learning over the summer term* issued on 10 June 2020, schools were advised to maximize the time learners spend outdoors. The physical, mental and educational benefits of outdoor learning approaches are:

- learning 'in' the outdoors has been shown to support both physical and mental health and well-being
- learning 'about' the outdoors provides a context to develop ambitious, capable learners (particularly through science and humanities)
- learning 'for' the outdoors can be about understanding the climate emergency and environmental sustainability, leading to the development of ethical, informed citizens.

Similarly, the learning guidance from the autumn term emphasises the importance of outdoor learning as a critical component of supporting learners' well-being.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/guidance-learning-schools-settings-from-autumn-term.pdf>

A wide range of organisations provide resources to support schools and settings when considering outdoor learning which accessed via Hwb, as well as through the Wales Council for Outdoor Learning, including their guidance on 'High Quality Outdoor Learning for Wales':

<https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/discovery>

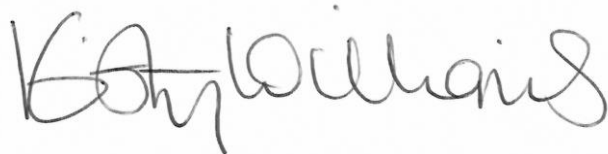
<https://www.walescouncilforoutdoorlearning.org/activity-ideas/>

As part of its on-going activities Natural Resources Wales has developed on-line resources which cover issues including trees and woodlands to sustainable development. The resources highlight the importance of sustainability in managing our natural resources, the environment and local communities:

<https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/education-learning-and-skills/looking-for-learning-resources/?lang=en>

I hope this information has been helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

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