

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-992
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/05654/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair Senedd Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

9 October 2020

Dear Janet,

Petition P-05-992 We call on the Welsh Government to create a common body of knowledge about Welsh history that all pupils will learn

Thank you for your letter dated 30 September following the Committee's first consideration of petition P-05-992 on Welsh History.

It is important for learning to be inclusive and to draw on the experiences, perspectives and cultural heritage of contemporary Wales. The history of Wales is diverse, and comprises a variety of diverse and rich histories of the many communities, races, religions, and individuals in our country.

As you will be aware, in January 2020 the first iteration of the new Curriculum for Wales guidance was launched. Full rollout will commence 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. These four purposes, which specifically support learners to become "ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the World", are a part of the statutory framework for the Curriculum for Wales. Instilling learners with passion and pride in themselves, their communities and their country is a principal object of the four purposes. In the new curriculum, learners will explore the local, national and global contexts to all aspects of learning, and will learn how to make connections and develop understanding within a diverse society.

The Curriculum for Wales framework includes mandatory elements, including statements of What Matters for each Area of Learning and Experiences (AoLE). From 2022, Welsh History will be mandatory in the new curriculum, as it is included within the statements of What Matters for Humanities and is embedded throughout the guidance. The statements of What Matters refer to the need for consistent exposure to the story of learners' locality and the story of Wales.

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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.

A defining feature of the Framework is that it requires schools to design their own curriculum and assessment arrangements. By itself, it is not an 'off the shelf' programme for delivery. Our new approach recognises:

- the role of leadership in enabling high-quality learning and teaching. Establishing a high-performing education system through high-quality learning and teaching depends on building its professional capacity, developing local leadership, responsibility and decision-making;
- within the national framework, schools and practitioners are best placed to make decisions about the needs of their specific learners, including choosing topics and activities which will best support their learning;
- the importance of meaningful learning. A content-focused curriculum does not guarantee meaningful learning, only that certain topics are covered to varying extents; instead, the Curriculum for Wales guidance articulates what concepts and essence of learning should underpin a range of different topics, learning activities and acquisition of knowledge; and
- the need for innovation and creativity. Practitioners select content, enabling them to use their professional skills to drive improved learning and outcomes for their learners.

It is essential that all learners have an appreciation of identity, heritage and cynefin to help build their sense of self and of belonging. It will be for schools to select and develop content which expose learners of all ages to a range of historical periods on a local, national and global scale. The new curriculum framework makes clear that a school's curriculum is expected to reflect Wales, its cultural heritage and diversity, its languages and the values, histories and traditions of its communities and all of its people.

The 'Designing Your Curriculum' guidance, published to support schools in implementing the Curriculum for Wales framework, explains that Wales, like any other society, is not a uniform entity, but encompasses a range of values, perspectives, cultures and histories that are inclusive of everyone who lives in Wales. In contemplating different perspectives, and different ethnic and cultural thinking in Wales, learners will appreciate the extent to which they are part of a wider international community, fostering a sense of belonging that can encourage them to contribute positively to their communities. In Humanities, the guidance provides detailed support on the breadth and depth of topics that should be included within a school's curriculum and their teaching of history.

On 21 July, I announced that Professor Charlotte Williams OBE, a leading academic who has written about ethnic diversity in Wales, has agreed to chair a Communities, Contributions and Cynefin: BAME Experiences and the New Curriculum Working Group.

The work of the Group includes, but goes beyond, black history to consider a range of minority ethnicities as part of the story of Wales, and membership comprises experienced practitioners and contributors to BAME and Welsh history. On 1 October, we published the [Group's Vision Statement](#).

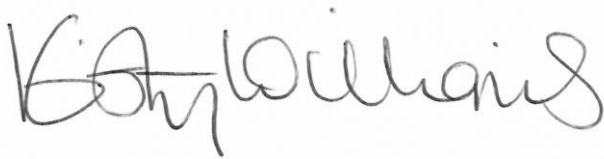
The Group's work is being carried out in phases, which will allow it to start feeding into teaching for the coming academic year, before the Group is hopefully in a position to present key recommendations to me by the end of December. The first phase is in progress and is

to review existing resources available to teachers and good practice. The second phase will focus on a review of professional development and learning related to BAME communities.

In order to deliver the new curriculum effectively and realise our shared vision, it is vital that our schools have the support, understanding and resources they need. My officials have undertaken a review of all presently available resources to support the teaching of Welsh history in schools, to identify any gaps. Many teaching resources are currently available on Hwb, and my officials will consider how best to ensure that existing and new resources are made as widely available as possible. In addition, we will be working with practitioners to commission new resources, which will refer to key events and topics in the histories of Wales and the world. The commission of additional resources to support the teaching of the new curriculum will be informed by the outcome of the Estyn review of Welsh history, which will take full account of Welsh and wider history, identity and culture along with the recommendations of the Communities, Contributions and Cynefin: BAME Experiences and the New Curriculum Working Group.

I have noted that the Business Committee have confirmed a plenary slot for a debate on this petition and the issues raised in petition P-05-1000 related to the teaching of black and UK POC histories and look forward to having the opportunity to debate these issues with Members on 4 November.

Yours sincerely

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

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