

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-757
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00682/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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2 May 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 24 April about Petition P-05-757, to remove the obligation on schools to hold acts of religious worship.

I would like to thank you for welcoming my views before the Petitions Committee gives the petition its formal consideration.

My view on collective worship is that it should be sensitive to the range of beliefs and non-beliefs held by pupils in the school and should give pupils the opportunity to worship, without encouraging them to do something that is against the teachings of their own religion or beliefs. For example, times of prayer may be left open-ended for pupils to say their own prayers silently or to reflect on moral or philosophical issues.

The specific legislative requirements for acts of collective worship in schools are set out in Section 70 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which says there must be a daily act of collective worship, and Schedule 20 of the Education Act 1996, which sets out the nature of collective worship.

The responsibility for the planning and delivery of acts of collective worship rests with individual schools. The law states that most acts of collective worship in each term should be '*wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian nature*' and therefore, it is acceptable if occasionally an act of collective worship is not clearly linked to the Christian faith.

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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.

Parents can request for their child to be withdrawn from collective worship and schools must agree to such requests in all circumstances.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

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