

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-834
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/01965/18

David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions committee.
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

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4 September 2018

Dear David

Thank you for your letter received on 15 August, in which you are seeking my views on the proposed petition for all schools in Wales to be Welsh-medium and for Welsh history to be taught in all schools in Wales.

The 1996 Education Act determines that education in Wales is organised on the principle that pupils should be educated in accordance to the wishes of the parents, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure. Local authorities in Wales have a statutory duty to secure sufficient provision of school places whether that is provided in English-medium, Welsh-medium, faith, voluntary or special schools.

With respect to the process for changes to school organisation, the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 ("the 2013 Act") sets out the legislative framework for school reorganisation. The 2013 Act requires Welsh Ministers to publish a school organisation code ("the Code"). The Code imposes requirements on those bringing forward and determining proposals to reorganise schools. It also provides guidance and sets out general principles that should be taken into account.

If a local authority or other promoter concludes that there is a need to establish a new school, close an existing school or make a regulated alteration to a school there are statutory procedures which must be followed. Regulated alterations are listed in section 2 of the Code. Increasing or decreasing the percentage of teaching through the medium of English or Welsh in a primary school or the number of subjects in a secondary school is a regulated alteration. A link to the School Organisation Code is included for your information:

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

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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.

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/school-organisation-code/?skip=1&lang=en>

In the first instance, the local authority must consult interested parties explaining the reasons for bringing forward the proposal. The local authority must ensure that those consulted have sufficient information to allow them to form a considered view and must make suitable arrangements for them to express those views in writing.

The purpose of these procedures is to ensure that, so far as is possible, all those likely to be affected by a proposal are informed and have an opportunity to express their views and contribute to and influence the statutory process.

With regard to current Welsh-medium education planning, all local authorities must prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) outlining how the authority intends to increase provision in relation to the growing demand for Welsh-medium education. How they must undertake this planning is outlined in the *Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing Demand (Wales) Regulations 2013*, which is currently being reviewed. The aim is to lay amended regulations before Assembly in 2019. This review of the regulations, is driven by the ambition set out in the Welsh Government's Welsh language Strategy, *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers*. The expansion of Welsh-medium education will be crucial if we are to meet the 1 million Welsh speakers target by 2050. The proposed amendments to the regulations should lead to increased provision of Welsh-medium education in line with specific targets set in the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy.

Increasing capacity of Welsh-medium schools must naturally be supported by a growing workforce. The need to monitor the supply and demand for staff able to teach in Welsh-medium schools as well as monitoring sufficient access for learners to Welsh-medium education is highlighted in *Education in Wales: Our National Mission*.

Turning to the other aspect of this petition regarding Welsh History, you will recall that I attended your Committee on 17th July where I outlined the Welsh Government's position in relation to the teaching of this subject.

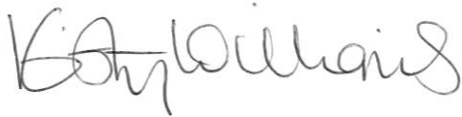
I am sure you will agree Wales has a rich culture and heritage and I believe it is essential that all pupils in Wales have the opportunity to learn about our nation's history. From the Foundation Phase through to AS/A level, teachers and schools are encouraged to develop pupils' understanding of the cultural identity that is unique to Wales. This helps them to appreciate the different languages and cultural aspects that are integral in Wales today, as well as gain a sense of belonging to Wales and to understand our Welsh heritage, literature and arts.

In the current curriculum, within the Foundation Phase there are seven Areas of Learning, one of which is: 'Knowledge and Understanding of the World' - this allows learners to get a clear understanding of Wales and its history. Welsh history is a prominent part of the programme of study for history at Key Stages 2 and 3 and schools are encouraged to focus on contexts from local and Welsh history. The programme of study for History specifies that local and Welsh history must be a focus of the subject, helping learners to understand the factors that have shaped Wales and other countries today.

Both the new AS/A Level qualification, introduced for teaching from September 2015, and the new GCSE introduced last September, require learners to consider a Welsh perspective and there are suggested topics of study at each stage of learning which cover various aspects of Welsh History.

As you are aware we are developing a new curriculum in Wales, with four purposes at its heart, including supporting all young people to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world. In order to achieve this, children and young people need to be knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and the world, now and in the past and this will include study of the history of Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Kirsty' written in a larger, more prominent script than the surname 'Williams'.

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