

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Hynt y gwaith gan Lywodraeth Cymru wrth ddatblygu Cwricwlwm newydd Cymru | Welsh Government's progress in developing the new Curriculum for Wales

CR 22

Ymateb gan: Llenyddiaeth Cymru Response from: Literature Wales

I am writing in response to the following points of reference:

- The involvement of academic and other external expertise in informing curriculum design
- How the 'What Matters?' statements, published in December 2017, are evolving into the design of curriculum content in each of the six AoLEs

Literature Wales has been involved in the development of the new curriculum throughout 2017 and 2018 via the Languages, Literacy and Communication (LLC) AoLE. In 2017, we worked with educationalist Jude Brigley on a thought paper commissioned by the LLC AoLE Working Group.

Entitled [*Love the Words: A discussion of how Literature can inspire successful Welsh futures*](#), it argues that whilst literature contributes to literacy, language development and communication, it is also an expressive subject. The power of creative reading and writing to expand the mind, challenge the status quo and develop critical thinking skills cannot be underestimated. For this reason, it is unfortunate that literature lies only with the Languages, Literacy and Communication AoLE and not also with the Expressive Arts AoLE.

The paper also advocates for the capability of literature to improve well-being, supported by the results of numerous recent clinical trials including: decreased depressive symptoms; enhanced performance in understanding of others; higher levels of self-awareness, sense of identity and self-worth; reduced loneliness; and stronger insights into mature relationships. We have provided online links to this research at the end of this letter. These well-being outcomes all contribute to the achieving the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015), and cumulatively improve the life chances of our young people.

During 2018, we have also provided comments on each new iteration of the LLC AoLE 'What Matters?' documents including progression statements, steps, narratives and reference points, as well as achievement outcomes. Our feedback has focused on empathy, critical reading and analytical thinking as key outputs of engaging with literature, and the importance of oracy alongside writing and reading. We also maintain that spoken word and other 'non-traditional' genres such as graphic novels should be treated as equally valid as fiction, poetry, drama etc. Critical analysis of these newer literary forms in the classroom is crucial to encouraging reading for pleasure amongst the broadest possible range of students.

Our position, and the basis of Literature Wales' involvement in this process is clear – literature is too important to be side-lined as a means to achieving linguistic competency. It is central to our understanding of ourselves, our culture and our world and should be compulsory for all young people up to the end of Key Stage 4.

I would be delighted to discuss our work further if required and look forward to hearing the conclusions of the session in due course.

Recent clinical trials on the various well-being outcomes of literature, as referenced above:

- Decreased **depressive** symptoms
- Increased ability to **empathise**
- Enhanced performance in the **understanding** of others
- Higher levels of **self-awareness, sense of identity** and **self-worth**
- Stronger insights into **mature relationships, personal values, cultural identity, physical safety and security** and an **understanding of the physical world**
- Reduced **loneliness**