

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-861
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/02720/18

David John Rowlands AM
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Dear David

Thank you for your letter of 05 December in relation to Petition P-05-861 'Make political education a compulsory element of the new national curriculum'.

It is essential that we listen to the opinions and perspectives of our young people, to understand what matters to them and to ensure that our next generation of voters are equipped to participate in democracy.

Schools are already encouraged to deliver a broad education, including political awareness and there are opportunities for learners to explore politics in the current curriculum through the Welsh Baccalaureate and personal and social education (PSE). The 'Active Citizenship' theme within PSE allows learners to develop their knowledge on politics, employment and their rights in a democratic society which reflects the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They also develop a practical understanding of their rights and of the links between political decisions and their own lives.

I recently spoke about this topic to young people at the 'Our Voices Heard' event where I was grateful to receive the Electoral Reform Society report from young people in Wales. I am currently considering the recommendations and will be formally responding early in the new year.

As the petitioner mentioned, Welsh Government is currently developing a new curriculum in Wales, taking forward the recommendations of *Successful Futures*, an independent review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements by Professor Graham Donaldson. The curriculum is being designed with four purposes at its heart. One of which is, supporting all young people to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world, who understand and exercise their human and democratic responsibilities and rights.

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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.

The four purposes are central to all decisions made in respect of the new curriculum and these will be reflected in the What Matters statements for each of the AoLEs.

The Humanities AoLE will incorporate learning regarding citizenship and politics. Pioneers recognise the importance of ensuring learners develop the knowledge, skills and experiences to participate effectively in their local communities and within democratic processes. The AoLE currently includes strands to support learners’:

- Media literacy
- Critical thinking
- Understanding the different structures and systems for governance in Wales
- Understanding of political concepts
- Understanding of their democratic rights and responsibilities (which of course includes voting rights)

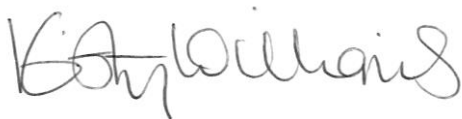
Successful Futures has challenged us to re-think our approach to the curriculum. It makes it clear that a high degree of prescription and detail at a national level inhibits “the flow and progression in children and young people’s learning”. As such, we need to ensure that the new curriculum does not provide a comprehensive list of detailed content which would quickly become complicated and overcrowded. The curriculum must allow professionals the flexibility to choose the specific content which meets the needs of their learners in their specific context.

Our Draft Local Government and Elections Bill, due to be introduced to the Assembly in the new year, will contain provision to extend the voting right in local government elections to 16 and 17 year olds. The Assembly Commission have also indicated an intention to introduce legislation that will similarly reduce the voting age in Welsh Assembly elections to 16.

On 21 November, I met with the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, and the Llywydd of the National Assembly to discuss how to support the legislation, and the recommendation of the Expert Panel on Electoral Reform; *to ensure that young people hear political views from across the spectrum, and are equipped to make up their own minds about how to exercise their democratic right.*

I will be making a formal statement on how this work will be taken forward in the new year.

Yours sincerely



Kirsty Williams AC/AM

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