

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-757 and P-05-765
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/01220/17
David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

August 2017

Dear David

Thank you for your letter of 24 July about petitions in relation to collective worship.

On balance there is clear strength of feeling both for and against maintaining collective worship. In order for me to give these matters my full consideration, I will respond to your questions in early September before the next scheduled Petitions Committee meeting. This will include my consideration of whether the Welsh Government will contemplate reviewing the law and guidelines surrounding collective worship, and whether the collective worship requirement placed on schools breaches human rights law.

I have previously stated that with curriculum reform being a driving focus for schools in Wales, it would not be appropriate to review collective worship until the new curriculum has been established. However, I will consider this position before replying to you in September.

Yours sincerely

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

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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.

**To: Kirsty Williams AM, Cabinet Secretary
for Education**
From: Abi Williams
Ext: 616067

KW/01220/17
CC: Claire Rowlands
John Pugsley
David Heath
Manon Jones
Lloyd Hopkin
Pauline Smith
Tom Woodward
Dewi Knight

Date: 31 July 2017

P-05-757 Remove the obligation on schools to hold acts of religious worship
P-05-765 Keeping current guidelines for religious assemblies

1. David J Rowlands AM, Chair of the National Assembly for Wales Petitions Committee has written to you about petitions in relation to collective worship. Petitions have been received both in favour of collective worship, and against.
2. A petition **against** collective worship was posted on the National Assembly for Wales' website on 21 April by two pupils from Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf, which called for the **obligation on schools to hold acts of collective worship to be removed**. The petition closed on 18 June, and amassed 1,333 signatures.
3. A petition **for** collective worship was also posted on the National Assembly for Wales' website on 22 May by Iraj Irfan, which called for **religious assemblies in state schools to be kept as 'opt-out' and 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'**, whilst considering ways to ensure that they continue to be relevant to people of different faiths and no faiths. The petition closed on 21 June, and amassed 2,209 signatures.
4. On 27 June, the National Assembly for Wales Petitions Committee considered the petitions. David J Rowlands AM has now written to you to ask:
 - if the Welsh Government will consider reviewing the current law and guidelines surrounding collective worship; and
 - whether any consideration has been given to the compatibility of the current requirements with human rights law, in particular the right to Freedom of Belief.
5. Officials propose that a holding response is issued in order for you to give these matters full consideration. The Petitions Committee is next due to meet on 19 September so officials propose that a further response is issued in early September. Officials will provide advice to you over the summer on a range of options.
6. A draft reply is attached for your consideration.