

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Parents can request for their child to be withdrawn from collective worship and schools must agree to such requests in all circumstances.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

**Kirsty Williams AC/AM**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg  
Cabinet Secretary for Education

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

KW/00682/17  
CC: Claire Rowlands  
John Pugsley  
David Heath  
Manon Jones  
Pauline Smith

**Date: 2 May 2017**

**KW/00682/17 – Letter from Mike Hedges AM, Chair of the Petitions Committee**

1. Mike Hedges AM has written to you about the following petition which has been received by the Petitions Committee. Mike Hedges AM has welcomed your views on the petition before the committee gives it their formal consideration.

*“We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to pass a law that removes the obligation on schools to hold acts of religious worship.”*

2. The petition was started on 21 April by Rhiannon Shipton and Lily McAllister-Sutton, who are students at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf. The petition is open for signatures until 28 May and to date, has received over 800 signatures.
3. Acts of collective worship must be broadly Christian in ethos, as set out in Welsh Office circular 10/94, but those leading acts of collective worship should be sensitive to the views and beliefs of others. Times of prayer may be left open-ended so learners are afforded the opportunity to pray in their own way, to reflect on events in their life or to consider moral issues.
4. Last October, the National Secular Society wrote to you about collective worship and your reply (KW/05930/16) stated *“With curriculum reform currently being a driving focus for schools in Wales, it would not be appropriate to review collective worship until the new curriculum has been established. Once the curriculum reform has been completed and the six Areas of Learning and Experience have been developed and are being implemented we will then consider reviewing collective worship in Wales.”*
5. The National Secular Society has posted an article on its website in support of the petition, and this refers to your commitment to consider reviewing collective worship after the new curriculum has been implemented. This line has not been included within the attached draft reply as the consideration is currently being given as to whether to review collective worship.
6. A draft reply is attached for your consideration.