

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-765 - P-05-757
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00885/18
David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions committee.
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff Bay
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government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

April 2018

Dear David

Thank you for your letter of 23 March about petitions in relation to collective worship.

The current legislative framework in respect of collective worship in schools raises a number of complex legal issues including Human Rights and Equalities legislation. That does not mean of course that there is necessarily any incompatibility but it is something my officials are exploring in detail. That work is on-going and due to its complexity it is taking some time to complete. This subject area gives rise to a range of often competing interests and can understandably be very emotive. In light of that we need to ensure that our analysis is as rigorous as it can be.

Whilst I appreciate the desire of the Committee to want to know more information, I'm afraid I am not in a position to provide that at this point. It is only after the work referred to above has been completed, will I be in a position to provide an informed answer to the Committee.

As for timescales, 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, my officials are currently considering all aspects of Circular 10/94, relating to both religious education and collective worship, ensuring that guidance on these two matters is fit for purpose.

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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.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

**To: Kirsty Williams AM, Cabinet Secretary
for Education**
From: Pete Kennedy
Ext: 251455

[KW/00885/18]
CC: Claire Rowlands
John Pugsley
Manon Jones
Lauren Hopper
Pauline Smith
Tom Woodward
Dewi Knight

Date: 03/04/2018

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 asking for a more detailed update in relation to two petitions on 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. You have previously written to the Chair of Petitions Committee regarding these to petitions on two occasions; initially in 31 July 2017 (**KW/01220/17**), and subsequently in February 2018 (**MA-(P) / KW/0145/18**).