

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-757 - P-05-765
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/01317/18
David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions committee.
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA
government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

May 2018

Dear David John Rowlands AM

Thank you for your email of 17 May in relation to Acts of Religious Worship.

The Welsh Government has considered a range of issues around the rights protected by the Human Rights Act 1998, equalities legislation and the UNCRC. Those issues are complex and for that reason we have taken some time to consider those issues in great detail. We recognise that this process is taking some time. However, it is important that great care is taken to ensure we achieve the correct balance between the competing interests in this area. That process is ongoing but is nearing completion. I regret that until that process is fully complete it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage.

I cannot give a definitive answer as to when I will be in a position to provide a substantive response to the Committee. However I recognise the importance of this work and it is for that reason my officials are taking the time necessary to get it right.

I hope this letter clarifies the current position and reassures you I am fully considering the issues you have raised.

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: Cabinet Secretary for Education
From: David Sargent, Arts, Humanities and Well-Being Branch, Curriculum Division
Ext: 03000 250493
Date: 23 May 2018

[Ref] KW/01317/18
CC:
Claire Rowlands
John Pugsley
David Sargent
Pete Kennedy
Meurig Roberts
Manon Jones
Ceri Planchant
Tom Woodward
Dewi Knight

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 three occasions; initially in 31 July 2017 (KW/01220/17), and subsequently in February 2018 (MA-(P) / KW/0145/18), 11 April 2018 (KW/00885/18).
5. A draft reply is provided.