

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-757 & P-05-765
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/07216/19
Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Assembly Member for Aberconwy
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

October 2019

Dear Janet Finch-Saunders AM

**P-05-757 Remove the Obligation on Schools to Hold Acts of Religious Worship
and P-05-765 Keeping Current Guidelines for Religious Assemblies**

Thank you for your letter dated 27 September requesting an update on the above petitions.

There are a range of issues around the rights protected by the Human Rights Act 1998, equalities legislation and the UNCRC, in relation to collective worship. My officials are continuing to consider these issues.

Naturally, at the moment, my priority is completing work on developing the new curriculum and supporting the profession to implement it effectively. More in depth consideration of collective worship will need to wait until this work is complete.

I will keep the Committee informed on progress in this area over the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

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: Minister for Education
From: Kerry Davies
Ext: 256280

[KW/06929/19]
CC: John Pugsley
Clare Bennett
Sarah Fulthorpe

Date: 2/9/19

KW/07216/19- P-05-757 Remove the Obligation on Schools to Hold Acts of Religious Worship and P-05-765 Keeping Current Guidelines for Religious Assemblies

1. You have received correspondence from Janet Finch-Saunders, Chair of the Petitions Committee requesting an update on the latest position in respect of the above petitions in relation to the compulsory act of collective worship in schools.
2. The National Assembly for Wales Petitions Committee received in June 2017 two opposing petitions on the subject of collective worship;
 - P-05-757 (1,333 signatures) - Remove obligation on schools to hold acts of religious worship
 - P-05-765 (2,231 signatures) – keep current guidelines for religious assemblies... while considering ways to ensure that they continue to be relevant to people of different faiths and no faith.
3. The questions raised by the petitions relate to complex matters involving human rights, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and equalities legislation. As such, advice from Legislative Counsel has been sought on three occasions, covering a number of matters relating to both RE and collective worship:
 - SACRE membership and Agreed Syllabus Conferences;
 - compatibility of legislation with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Equality Act 2010, and UNCRC;
 - RE and collective worship - Right to Withdraw, Human Rights Act, and UNCRC specifically
4. Your last correspondence with the Committee in relation to these Petitions was in May 2018 when you indicated that the Petitions raised complex issues and we are taking time to consider these issues in detail.