

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref KW/07523/19

Jayne Bryant AM
Assembly Member for Newport West
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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Jayne.Bryant@assembly.wales

18 November 2019

Dear Jayne Bryant AM,

Thank you for your letter dated 13 November on behalf of your constituent in relation to Religious Education (RE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in the new curriculum.

The key aims of our national mission in Wales is to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence.

The biggest change will be the introduction of a new curriculum for schools and funded non-maintained nursery settings in Wales from September 2022. The new curriculum has been made in Wales but informed by international evidence and expertise. There will also be changes to improve how we assess pupils, teacher training and school accountability. These improvements will complement the new curriculum.

The intention is for our new curriculum which is broad, balanced, inclusive and challenging with the four purposes at its heart to ensure that children and young people develop as:

- Ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives;
- Enterprising, creative contributors ready to play a full part in life and work;
- Healthy, confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society; and
- Ethical, informed citizens ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.

The four purposes are the starting point for all decisions on the content and experiences developed as part of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. The Curriculum for

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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.

Wales encompasses a high level national framework to enable school-level curriculum design, with a focus on individual schools' context and locality ensuring flexibility.

Key to the new curriculum is ensuring learners have every opportunity to develop as healthy confident individuals and ethical informed citizens. Teaching and learning RE and RSE provide unique contributions to learners realising those purposes.

I am committed to ensuring that all young people receive high-quality sexuality and relationships education. In May 2018, we announced our intention to rename this area of study and have proposed that Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) will be statutory in the new curriculum.

Safeguarding our young people and supporting them to navigate this complex world is vital. Parents, of course, have a central role to play in this but there is a crucial role for schools and a role which is now more important than it has ever been. This is why we are proposing to make RSE a statutory requirement in the new curriculum. High quality RSE has an important role to play in supporting learners in recognising healthy safe relationships and understanding, and developing respect for others.

As your letter highlights, the Welsh Government is minded to end the current practice where parents can prevent their children from attending RE and RSE when the new curriculum is introduced and we are currently consulting on this issue. For RE we are also consulting on changing the name to Religions and Worldviews, to reflect the broader scope of this area in the new curriculum which will include non-religious views.

The White Paper consultation, 'Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum' earlier this year contained questions on the principles around having the right to withdraw from RSE and RE in the new curriculum. While responses to the White Paper were not supportive of its removal, engagement with young people in relation to the draft curriculum showed that relationships and RSE are considered important matters for them to study at schools, so we now want to gain a more rounded understanding of views before making a final decision. This consultation focusses on the implications should the right to withdraw not be included in the new curriculum.

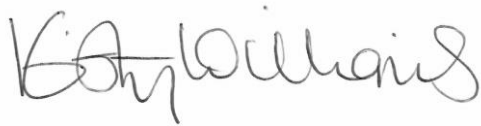
This consultation will help us to understand what the practical implications of such a decision would be, and to gather more feedback from parents, teachers and children and young people. This consultation also provides an opportunity to explore any concerns in more depth and to seek further views on these important issues. We will be carrying out meaningful and sustained engagement with communities, particularly about the content of RE and RSE in the new curriculum and the way in which it will be taught. In addition, we will be establishing a steering group to support the development of the guidance for RSE and will ensure that representatives from a variety of communities across Wales, including faith communities, are involved and able to help shape the final guidance.

The consultation closes on 28 November and can be accessed via the link below should your constituent wish to participate.

<https://gov.wales/ensuring-access-full-curriculum>

We will be reflecting carefully on the feedback from the consultation and will publish a full summary of the consultation responses and confirmation of proposed policy approach in due course.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

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