

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref KW/03726/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Member of the Senedd
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14 July 2020

Dear Janet Finch-Saunders MS,

Thank you for your letter of 6 July about a petition regarding the teaching of Welsh history in the new Curriculum for Wales and their concerns about the Welsh Government's rejection of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee's recommendation that the new curriculum should include guidance which sets out a common body of knowledge for all pupils studying history.

As I stated during January's Senedd debate about the teaching of Welsh History, 'studying the history and histories of Wales is important to the fulfilment of the purposes of the new curriculum. To be an engaged, informed and ethical citizen, learners will make sense of their identity and that history, cultures and geography helped shape it'.

This is why, whilst the recommendation was rejected, I accepted the recommendation for Estyn to undertake a review of Welsh history, and my officials are currently discussing the remit of this review with Estyn.

It is vital for learning to be inclusive and to draw on the experiences, perspectives and cultural heritage of contemporary Wales. In the new curriculum, learners will explore the local, national and global contexts to all aspects of learning, and to make connections and develop understanding within a diverse society.

The Curriculum for Wales framework gives every school in Wales the opportunity to design their own curriculum within a national approach that ensures consistency. All aspects of learning will in the future have a Welsh dimension, and learners will have the opportunity to understand their locality, country and its contribution to the world in every part of the curriculum.

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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.

Whilst the new curriculum guidance does not include a long list of individual topics to be studied, it does outline a methodology to help teachers select content and ensure The Curriculum for Wales guidance (Humanities Area of Learning and Experience) states: *'the need for consistent exposure to the story of learners' locality and the story of Wales, as well as to the story of the wider world, to enable learners to develop an understanding of the complex, pluralistic and diverse nature of societies, past and present. Learners should be grounded in an understanding of the identities, landscapes and histories that come together to form their cynefin. This will not only allow them to develop a strong sense of their own identity and well-being, but to develop an understanding of others' identities and make connections with people, places and histories elsewhere in Wales and across the world. Local, national and global contexts are integral to the Area and form part of the key principles ... relating to the choice of content.'*

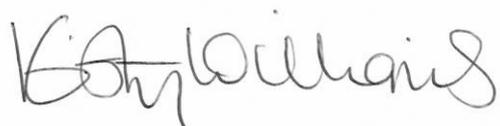
Key to the new curriculum is the concept of collaboration and cross-disciplinary learning, both within and across the six Areas of Learning and Experience, with learners building connections across their learning and combining different experiences, knowledge and skills. Whilst History will form part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, the histories of Wales will feature across the curriculum, for example in Expressive Arts and Languages, Literacy and Communication.

In order to deliver the new curriculum effectively and realise our shared vision, it is vital that our schools have the support, understanding and resources they need. We will therefore be working with practitioners to commission new resources which will refer to key events and topics in the histories of Wales and the world. This work will also be informed by the outcome of the forthcoming Estyn review of Welsh history, which will take full account of Welsh and wider, history, identity and culture.

Central to the vision of the Curriculum for Wales is allowing teachers the flexibility to decide which topics, subjects and resources are best suited to their learners. A list of prescribed topics to be studied would therefore be inconsistent with the vision of the new curriculum. I rejected the Committee's recommendation for guidance setting out a common body of knowledge for all pupils studying history because the Curriculum for Wales is non-prescriptive.

Whilst the Committee's recommendation was rejected, I agree with the principle and the intention behind the recommendation, The Curriculum for Wales will ensure Welsh history and culture is embedded across all areas of learning and experience. In my view, this is robust and long-term approach.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

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