

P-06-1180 Increase the teaching and readily available information on drugs in Welsh secondary schools, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 23.08.21

Petitions Committee

Response

Dear Petitions Committee,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for welcoming my thoughts on the document attached to my email. Also, I would like to show my gratitude towards Jeremy Miles for taking the time to explain his plans to widen the Curriculum for Wales and, I would like to show my appreciation to Jack Sargeant for passing on this exciting information.

I believe that, by expanding the Curriculum for Wales with the introduction of a Health and Well-being Area of Learning, the Welsh Government are taking a step in the right direction. In addition, I feel that, if executed correctly, Welsh students will have the ability to make more educated choices in their lives. Moreover, whilst acknowledging that the innovative new area aims to invite pupils to reflect, and change, their behaviour in order to improve their physical and emotional health : it should be considered that some decisions are not within the grasp of the child. For example, when discussing diet, on occasion the child will have little to no choice over what they eat - in several cases this could be to do with family income, and in other cases this may involve a child's medical needs. Also, the same idea should be taken into consideration when discussing the child's choice of activities. For instance, a child may not possess the means of transport to participate in certain activities and, there may be a lack of information on activities in a child's area. Thus, in summary, I think that it is vital to include widely accessible choices in the new area in order to ensure that the impact of the new area of curriculum is similar for all children.

Furthermore, the new area of curriculum will need to be introduced correctly to see positive results in students, so I believe that the teachers of the new curriculum should be thought about carefully. Upon reflection, I believe that the differences in teachers who deliver lessons on the new area of curriculum will create disparities amongst the students who are taught. To be quite frank, I do not believe that students will take in as much of the new area of curriculum being taught by an older, old-fashioned, science/history teacher as they would in comparison to a younger, more flexible, specialist teacher. Perhaps this idea may be seen as ageist but, this thought has crossed my mind when thinking of the delivery of lessons in the innovative new area.

In addition, I am really overjoyed that the Welsh Government has chosen to create a base line knowledge on drugs for students in Welsh schools. And, from reading the information about the 'Area of Learning and Experience: Health and Well-being' on the Hwb, I have assumed that the topic of drug misuse falls under 'an understanding of health-harming behaviours'. I completely agree that the topic of drug misuse belongs within this category, however, I believe that 'an understanding' should literally be 'a full understanding' because if students are just informed that 'drugs are bad' the cycle will never end. I believe that students should be informed about; what drugs are, why are

they illegal, who you can talk to about a situation involving drugs, why do people use drugs and, last but not least, the wider implications of drug dealing. Overall, the letter in question (written by Jeremy Miles) does address my plea to implement more mandatory teaching on drugs into the secondary school syllabus but, I do believe that the new area of curriculum could be entirely successful if the consequences of drug dealing were included. Ultimately, with no teaching on drug dealing, children are oblivious to the possible detrimental effects for the economy, law and society as a whole.

So, in response to the letter written by Jeremy Miles, I would like to know more about how the delivery of lessons will avoid widening inequality amongst students. And, I would also like to know how much (if any) of the new area of curriculum will teach children about the implications of drug dealing. Lastly, I would like to add that, with reference to the Wales Police Schools Programme (WPSP), in some communities, the police are not widely regarded as reliable or trustworthy and, this does trickle-down to the children of these communities.

Therefore, it should be acknowledged that, due to reasons beyond their control, some children may not make an effort to listen to police officers which may prove detrimental to the delivery of lessons.

I hope that my thoughts are helpful in shaping a brighter future for all.

Kind regards,
Pearl Crumb.