

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-752
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00530/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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4 April 2017

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 27 March.

I would like to be absolutely clear that I will not tolerate any form of bullying within education in Wales. The Welsh Government has undertaken significant work to ensure that children and young people are free from the consequences of cyberbullying, and that all learners contribute positively to the digital world. I also expect schools and education services to adopt a similar approach and to tackle all incidents of bullying and cyberbullying vigorously, ensuring that pupils are properly supported

The Digital Competence Framework (DCF) was made available on 1 September 2016. This is the first element of the new curriculum to be made available and it will form one of three cross-curricular responsibilities, alongside literacy and numeracy. The DCF is about embedding digital skills and knowledge in everything learners do as they progress through school and teachers will increasingly apply relevant digital skills in their lessons.

The Citizenship strand of the Framework includes a focus on identify, image and reputation; health and well being and online behaviour and cyberbullying. The strand focuses on learners developing the skills needed to contribute positively to the digital world around them. These skills will help learners to critically evaluate their place within the digital world, so that they are prepared to encounter the positive and negative aspects of being a digital citizen.

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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.

Since January 2014, the Welsh Government has worked in partnership with South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) to promote and provide a range of online safety activities on issues including cyberbullying.

Activities to date include delivery of training sessions for education professionals and school governors across Wales, and the development of resources to support children, parents, carers and teachers. Over 60 training days have been delivered over the past three years, with further sessions scheduled to take place in May specifically on 'Safe Use of Social Media'. In the autumn term, 12 bilingual training events on 'Tackling cyberbullying and online hate' for education practitioners will be rolled out.

As part of the contract with SWGfL, we have developed the [Online Safety Resource for Wales](#). This was designed to empower learners to think critically, behave safely, and participate responsibly in our digital world. These materials are based on Common Sense Media resources from the United States. There are five individual lessons for every year group with a suite of supporting materials.

In February, I was pleased to launch the [Online Safety Zone](#) on [Hwb](#) to provide a one-stop shop for information about online safety issues. The zone provides access to sources of guidance and advice to learners, parents and schools, in addition to hosting a range of useful resources and links to training and further expert support.

To support schools in Wales in dealing appropriately with issues of 'sexting', my officials are working with SWGfL and education stakeholders to adapt, contextualise and translate the UK Centre for Internet Safety guidance 'Sexting in schools and colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people'. This will be available for school in Wales in the summer term.

The Welsh Government has produced a series of anti-bullying guidance materials - 'Respecting others' – which provides advice and support to schools and education services in managing incidents of bullying. As more and more schools respond to the growing challenge of cyberbullying, it is vital that schools understand the issues, know how to prevent and respond to incidents, and are updated on the legal issues surrounding this challenging subject. That is exactly why – within this series of guidance materials – we have produced specific advice on how schools and education services should respond to incidents of cyberbullying.

All schools must, by law, have a school behaviour policy in place. Effective anti-bullying strategies should be central to that behaviour policy and be developed and put into practice by everyone in the school, including the pupils.

I am conscious however that we operate in an ever-changing world and we must be constantly vigilant about new technologies and the way in which they impact – positively and negatively – on young people's lives. I have therefore agreed that the current 'Respecting others' guidance should be reviewed and up-dated to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and continues to support schools and practitioners in Wales.

The Welsh Government has also published statutory safeguarding guidance 'Keeping learners safe' to help schools and FE colleges ensure that child welfare issues are identified and acted upon. The guidance outlines the responsibilities of education services to build children's understanding, awareness and resilience through the curriculum and also provides specific advice on e-Safety.

The Welsh Government also published e-learning safeguarding modules last autumn, aimed at all school staff, to help practitioners understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. These can be accessed on the Hwb. Two modules specifically focusing on online safety will soon be added to this suite of support, to help improve practitioners' and school governors understanding of online safety issues. Cyberbullying will form part of this module.

I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that considerable work is already being undertaken in this critical area, to help learners stay safe online and to prepare them to become safe and responsible, think critically, behave safely, and participate responsibly in our digital world.

Yours sincerely

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

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