

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



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-807
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00597/18

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

David John Rowlands AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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5 March 2018

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 21 February about the petition you have received from Laura Charles-Price urging the Welsh Government to change the guidance on attendance awards in schools in Wales.

The [All Wales Attendance Framework](#) provides standards and guidance for schools and local authorities to ensure consistent reporting for school attendance. If the school administers a school attendance reward scheme for pupils then the criteria for deciding who should receive these rewards is a matter for the school to determine. Schools, in conjunction with local authorities, set their own attendance targets. This ensures that each school's individual circumstances are taken into consideration. I expect these targets to be challenging, but realistic.

On page 8 of the attached [guidance](#) advice is provided on the use of rewards and incentives in schools alongside examples of case studies.

In 2014 we commissioned Estyn to undertake a thematic review of school attendance. One of the main findings in the [report](#) on effective practice in primary schools was that schools with consistently good or improved attendance use appropriate rewards and incentives to encourage good attendance. The report recognised that incentives for good attendance can be an effective way to motivate pupils.

Whilst it is clear that rewards and encouragement incentivise good attendance, the Welsh Government is also clear that there must be fairness and equity.

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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.

The Equality Act 2010 (the 2010 Act) places a duty on learning establishments to make reasonable adjustments for children and young people who are disabled (as defined by the Act). This should be taken into account when determining who is eligible for reward schemes to ensure pupils with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are not unfairly disadvantaged.

The 2010 Act applies to all maintained and independent schools, including maintained and non-maintained special schools. The Government has introduced specific duties, which are intended to help public authorities to meet their obligations under the 2010 Act. Therefore, if a school does have an attendance reward scheme, it must ensure it takes the provisions of the 2010 Act into consideration and not disadvantage those pupils with a disability or medical condition. This means that a child or young person with an attendance record of less than 100% because of medical reasons should not be negatively impacted in regard to the school's reward scheme.

The Welsh Government's statutory guidance '[Supporting Learners with Healthcare Needs](#)' is also relevant and important in this context. We advise that it is unacceptable to penalise a learner for their attendance record if the absence is related to their healthcare needs. 'Authorised absences' including healthcare appointments, time to travel to hospital or appointments, and recovery time from treatment or illness should not be used to penalise a learner in any way. This includes, but is not limited to, participation in activities, trips or awards which are incentivised around attendance records.

Working with partners and stakeholders my officials are currently reviewing the attendance guidance to ensure that arrangements continue to provide effective support and clarity to local authorities, schools, parents and learners. The issue of incentives and award schemes is being considered as part of this review.

Yours sincerely

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

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

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Cabinet Secretary for Education