

To: Janet Finch
Saunders, AM

Chair of the Petitions
Committee

Via email only

04 March 2020

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the new anti-bullying guidance, Rights, Respect, Equality.

As you note in your letter, a new national approach to preventing and tackling bullying has been of high priority to me in my term as Commissioner. A full explanation of the background and details of my policy position can be read here: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/our-work/policy-positions/bullying/>

My work in this area has been firmly based in evidence from children and young people's experiences, drawing on data from my 2015 nationwide consultation *Beth Nesa*, where bullying was identified as the top priority for change by both the 7-11¹ and 11-18² age range, and my subsequent 2018 nationwide consultation of over 10,000 children and young people³. My work is reinforced by wider evidence in Wales which shows the extent of bullying.⁴

I have made recommendations about anti-bullying approaches in my last two Annual Reports⁵ ⁶, both of which were accepted by Welsh Government, and this includes my call to Government to introduce a duty on schools to monitor and record bullying incidents, as noted in your letter. I have also made several other recommendations which relate to the new guidance; in my 2017 report *Sam's Story: Listening to Children and Young People's Experiences of Bullying in Wales*⁷, over 2000 children and young people shared their own portrayals of the experience of bullying. Analysis of these showed several key messages from children and young people about their experiences and informed the 18 recommendations I made in my *Sam's Story* report, several of which related directly to the development of Rights, Respect, Equality.

¹ <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/What-Next-7-11.pdf>

² <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/What-Next-11-18.pdf>

³ <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/What-Now-Report.pdf>

⁴ <https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151022-health-behaviour-school-children-2013-14-key-findings-en.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Annual-Report-2017-18.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/A-Year-of-Change-CCFW-Annual-Report.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Sams-Story.pdf>

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I was therefore greatly pleased that Rights, Respect and Equity, is statutory for Governing Bodies and Local Authorities. At consultation stage, this guidance did not have statutory status and my response called clearly for Government to re-think this in order for the guidance to have the necessary impact on the experiences of children and young people.

I congratulate Government for taking this step and for introducing new statutory requirements for schools to develop robust anti-bullying policies informed by children and young people, which set out how bullying will be recorded and monitored, and how anti-bullying will be embedded into the curriculum.

In addition, the guidance as a whole advocates a whole school approach to anti-bullying informed by children's rights and in which participation is a central element. It is informed by the perspectives of children and young people throughout, in particular drawing on my Sam's Story report.

However, it is now important for Government to ensure schools are supported to implement this new guidance. Implementing effective whole school anti-bullying approaches is challenging, and Government must ensure this is part of the professional learning offer for initial teacher education and continued professional development, and the consortia have an important role in this. Awareness and understanding of the guidance must also be developed for school Governing Bodies.

It is also vital that there are effective mechanisms for schools and local authorities to be held accountable for their implementation of the guidance. Estyn has an important role here; reviewing how well schools and local authorities are implementing this guidance must be included as part of Estyn's future inspection arrangements.

My office will be continuing to assess the effectiveness of support and accountability arrangements so that this new approach truly has the impact that it should for children and young people.

Yours sincerely,



Sally

Sally Holland
Comisiynydd Plant Cymru
Children's Commissioner for Wales

