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Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-516
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/00386/14

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions committee

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4 March 2014

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 21st February on behalf of the Petitions Committee seeking my views on the additional information regarding making political science a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

I note the additional information from the correspondent and as previously stated in my response of 6 January, Personal and Social education (PSE) is a statutory curriculum requirement and forms part of the Basic curriculum for all registered pupils at maintained schools who are of compulsory school age. Decisions on the precise content and model of delivery of a school PSE programme lie with head teachers and their governors, working with local authorities and other local partners. This gives schools flexibility to focus on aspects of PSE that are particularly relevant to their situation and best meet the needs of their learners.

In addition, within the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification PSE, which includes a Community Participation element and Wales, Europe and the World are compulsory elements of the Core of the Welsh Baccalaureate at all three levels. PSE aims to:

- develop awareness of what it means to be an active and responsible citizen through helping others;
- provide opportunities for candidates to involve themselves in working in active community participation, it cannot be desk based;
- relate to the real world and the wider community, outside the classroom; and
- encourage candidates to work in groups.

Wales, Europe & the World aims to:

- develop awareness of political, social, economic, and cultural issues in the context of Wales, Europe and the World.

Following the Review of Qualifications in Wales, the Welsh Baccalaureate is being revised to make the model more rigorous. The revised more rigorous model is due for first teaching in September 2015. A Steering Group has been established to oversee this development and a number of working groups are considering the detail of the elements of the Core.

A high level model has been agreed. It retains, at all levels, a compulsory Community Participation element - the strengthened and renamed 'Community Challenge'. Learners will be expected to identify and develop opportunities in the local or wider community and actively participate to support improvement. This may be a centre led activity or involve third sector organisations specifically designed challenges.

The Wales, Europe and the World element has also been retained and strengthened – now named 'Global Citizenship Challenge'. Learners will be expected to understand, empathise and respond appropriately to a global issue. Again this may be centre led or involve external organisations.

Currently the Welsh Baccalaureate is not compulsory and approximately 60% of learners in post 16 and half of Key Stage 4 learners now follow Welsh Baccalaureate courses. However, in line with the recommendations from the Review of Qualifications, Welsh Government will encourage universal take up of the revised, more rigorous Welsh Baccalaureate that will be implemented from September 2015.

Precise details of the challenges are being developed and Officials are working closely with stakeholders, such as the Welsh Centre for International affairs and the British Council, to develop the Community & Global Citizenship Challenge part of the qualification.

In addition, the Review of the National Curriculum and Assessment provides an important opportunity to look at existing arrangements and consider how they can be improved. It gives us recourse to look at how we will continue to drive up standards, not only by strengthening and supporting the teaching of literacy and numeracy in schools in Wales, but by looking at curriculum and assessment arrangements as a whole.

Whilst the first phase of the review has included a focus on literacy and numeracy, we will be taking a much wider view as we move forward. On 22 October 2013 I announced a second phase to the review. This second phase will give us an opportunity to do something unique in Wales: to develop a curriculum for Wales and, in doing so, give every child the best possible chance to go out and succeed as citizens of the world. The second phase of the review will also revisit the Basic curriculum to ensure that it addresses some of the key challenges faced by learners growing up in the modern global society.

Yours sincerely



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