

P-05-760 Stop Compulsory Welsh Language GCSE – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Cabinet Secretary for Education, 5.7.17

Dear Ms Williams,

Thank you for taking the time to reply to Mike Hedges letter concerning the petition seeking to ask the Welsh Government to stop the compulsory study of welsh as Key Stage 4. I had been asked for my comments on your letter, hence this reply.

I was educated in Wales prior to the implementation of compulsory welsh at Key Stage 4 (being 40 myself) and am aware of how long this policy has been in place. However I do not know what this policy has cost us financially and educationally, and whether it has had a significant effect on numbers of people speaking Welsh, which I assume was the original purpose. From very brief research on statswales.gov.wales it appears that the percentage of people who speak welsh has actually declined in this time.

I am Welsh having been brought up in Swansea and now living in Tenby, but neither myself or my family have ever been Welsh speakers. I do fully support the right of Welsh speakers in Wales to be able to educate their children through the medium of welsh. However I do not believe that the compulsory education of Welsh should come at all cost. As we are struggling to fund Education as well as the NHS, social care etc in Wales.

We are in a situation in Wales at present where many English-speaking Welsh people are feeling discriminated against and fear speaking up for anxiety of being labelled racist or discriminatory.

Children educated via the medium of Welsh receive more funding per capita than their English medium counterparts for one. Every teacher and LSA is having to train in the Welsh language regardless of whether they are required to teach welsh. Parents who have chosen to send their children to English medium schools are also paying for this. If we have a never ending education fund then this would not be an issue but I currently feel that Welsh is being put above all else in our education system.

As I believe you recently commented yourself in relation to the initiative with computer coding in schools, our children are going to have to compete in a global market. As a direct result of forcing the continued education of Welsh in senior schools we are becoming more insular, our children no longer have access to

foreign languages and are being put at a disadvantage to other counties. Greenhill school our local senior school no longer offers Spanish or German and is not longer able to offer any modern languages at A's or A level. Please also see bbc extract below.

I am already aware from my time as a governor in the local primary school that due to the amount of time having to be spent on Welsh in primary school numeracy is suffering, but heads have no control to improve due to edicts from above.

“ Schools must continue to ensure continuity and progression in learning and that all learners have access to the whole programme of study” I am not entirely sure what this comments means, but given that Welsh schools are falling behind and recent targets to improve (i.e PISA score) have been dropped I fear that our children are falling behind in all areas. Funding is at crisis point with Greenhill school losing 19 staff this year and I am deeply concerned about the future of Education in Wales.

I am afraid that I do not agree with your comment about increasing demand for Welsh language skills from employers, this may be the case in the public sector where the welsh assembly is stipulating this requirement. Council and Government jobs are then main jobs specifying a requirement for welsh, this is not representative of the rest of the country where employers are desperate for highly skilled, educated, qualified people regardless of language backgrounds.

I have always worked in the Construction and Engineering sector, this Industry is a very large employer in Wales with no requirement for welsh, but with a dia need for engineers with good maths and science.

18% of people in wales speak Welsh , but 100% of us are paying for access to Welsh be it via Education, translation costs, training, duplication of all documentation or multiple phone lines.

On a personal note, my son is considering studying to become a Vet, he will therefore have to study the individual sciences, and some universities are asking for a modern foreign language at GCSE. With the requirements to continue with Welsh as well as other compulsory subjects this will not fit into the timetable. At this age, a child should be free to make choices that have a direct impact on their future.

I fear that it is underestimate how forcing welsh on people in general is also causing animosity and taking away people's freedom of choice. I would like to pose a question to you, with the number of welsh speakers in Wales being around 18%, what % of the Welsh Assembly are Welsh speakers? Is this representative of the people?

Kind Regards

Emma Williams

Extracted from : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-40457984>

Teachers in Wales are "extremely worried" about the future of foreign languages in the country, according to a British Council survey.

A Welsh Government spokesman is quoted as saying "We believe that languages play an important part in giving a young person a well rounded education, to support them in becoming global citizens, who are able to communicate effectively in other languages and appreciate other cultures."