

P-05-757 Remove the obligation on Schools to hold acts of religious worship – Correspondence from Petitioners to Chair, 25.04.18

Dear Mr Rowlands,

As the original petitioners who called for the lifting of the obligation on schools to hold acts of religious worship, we write in response to the recent letter sent to you by Kirsty Williams, the Cabinet Secretary for Education. We are frustrated by what we see as the Cabinet Secretary's delaying tactics in relation to the important issue we have raised.

It is now 10 months since our petition was first considered by the committee. On June 27 2017, a research briefing document submitted to the committee explained how the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 "embeds consideration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Welsh law".

The Measure placed a duty on Welsh Ministers to have "due regard" to the UNCRC.

The briefing document also outlined how the UN committee recommended that the law concerning acts of worship in schools in Wales and England should be repealed.

We believe that the Cabinet Secretary has had plenty of time to take legal advice on this issue, but is now delaying progress for purely political reasons. In her latest letter to the committee she refers to the issue as "very emotive".

From our point of view it is not a matter of emotion, but of fundamental human rights. Many thousands of school students throughout Wales are currently being deprived of their human right to decide whether to attend acts of religious worship or not. We believe that in not progressing this matter, the Welsh Government is not complying with its own Measure. Contrary to what the Cabinet Secretary implies in her latest letter, the issue we have raised has nothing to do with the school curriculum and should be considered in its own right independently.

We ask the committee to put further pressure on the Cabinet Secretary.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Rhiannon Shipton and Lily McAllister-Sutton