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Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-924  
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/07408/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM

Chair, Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
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01 November 2019

Dear Janet Finch-Saunders AM,

Thank you for your letter of 23 October enclosing details of the petition received from Dwr y Felin School which calls on the National Assembly for Wales to introduce suitably trained Wellbeing Ambassadors into every school in Wales

I note that Dwr Y Felin's petition arose from their work on the ENABLE project, a UK initiative to pilot lessons on anti-bullying, which initially led them to train and appoint pupils as anti-bullying ambassadors at the school. Addressing bullying within education remains a key priority for the Welsh Government. Our vision is to challenge bullying holistically, addressing the root causes of unacceptable behaviour and creating an inclusive and engaging environment where learners feel safe and are ready to learn. We all need to ensure respect, tolerance and kindness forms part of our school communities and cultures. This will help us create an inclusive, engaging environment where everyone's well-being is considered and everyone feels accepted.

All education settings in Wales have a legal duty to ensure that all learners have access to a safe learning environment, the Welsh Government expects these safeguarding responsibilities to be taken seriously. All schools must by law have a school behaviour policy. Effective anti-bullying strategies should be central to that behaviour policy and be developed and put into effect by everyone in the school including the staff and learners. It is for individual schools to determine the most effective way to address bullying and implement anti-bullying policies in their school setting. This includes which, if any, programmes they choose to employ to support this provision.

To support schools and their communities in addressing bullying in their settings, we are updating our anti-bullying guidance, which was published in 2011. This guidance is being

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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.

updated on the basis of a partnership approach, working collaboratively with partners and key stakeholders, including children and young people, to assess how we can ensure the guidance is user friendly and provides consistent guidelines and practical support to help schools and their communities prevent and challenge all forms of bullying. Information on the benefits of peer support initiatives is included within the revised guidance, which will be published very shortly.

More generally, the issue of ensuring pupils' wellbeing in school is a key focus of *Our National Mission*, in particular enabling objective 3 (Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being), which recognises that all learners must be supported to be emotionally and physically ready to learn in a safe and supportive environment. The new curriculum which will be introduced in 2022, places health and wellbeing at its heart and will ensure mental health is given equal priority as physical health and emotional wellbeing and attainment is nurtured on an equal basis.

The Welsh Government is also in the process of drafting new Framework guidance for schools on embedding a whole school approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health. The new Framework will emphasise the need for schools to improve their own mental health literacy and empowering the school community to make informed decisions about their mental health needs. This can be done through whole-group approaches, e.g. promoted through community campaigns, peer-support approaches or school based interventions. Schools should assess who they need to communicate with (pupils, parents/carers, staff) and look for innovative ways of making information available to each audience. For instance on the school website, developing older pupils to act as peer mentors, signposting by non-teaching staff such as canteen staff, school nurses, coaches etc.

Overall, the Framework will strongly encourage schools to promote an ethos of sharing good practice and empowering pupils to both act as their own advocates and to seek additional support when needed.

The actions which Dwr y Felin School has taken to train pupils to become wellbeing ambassadors in order to support their peers is very much in keeping with the advice in the new Framework and I applaud the stance they are taking on this vitally important issue. However, I appreciate that not every school will be in a position to train and appoint its own wellbeing ambassadors and would reiterate that the main purpose of our new whole school approach Framework guidance will be to help schools devise their own wellbeing solutions to address their own wellbeing issues in their particular community.

However I hope this reassures the Petitions Committee of the Welsh Government's (and indeed my own personal) commitment to continue to challenge bullying, and to promote a whole school approach to mental health and well-being, ensuring our schools and their communities are safe and happy places for all our learners.

Yours sincerely,



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