

## **P-05-802 Protecting Class Sizes in Design and Technology Classrooms and Workshops – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 07.02.18**

Thank you for your e-mail on the 28/2, which included a copy of Ms Kirsty Williams AM's letter to Mr David John Rowlands AM relating to the petition in question.

Firstly I would like to thank Ms Williams for her time in replying, and for giving this important matter her attention. I would like to make a few short comments in relation to her letter.

1. I accept that Health and Safety is not devolved to the Welsh Government, but in this particular case of protecting pupils within Design and Technology Workshops and Classrooms, there is an element of the protection and well-being of children, which I believe is a matter devolved to the National Assembly for Wales.
2. I also accept that the responsibility for the health and safety of pupils lies with the governing bodies of schools, but it is evident that many governing bodies are happy for class sizes to be in excess of the guidelines set out in BS4163:2014 – a code of practice that is recognised by the HSE and quoted on their website.  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/standards.htm>
3. I'm pleased that Ms Williams states that "It is expected that schools will follow guidance on health and safety issued by the HSE". In essence this is exactly what is requested by this petition, that the Welsh Assembly ensures that this happens in all schools across Wales. This is already the case in Scotland – Schools (Scotland) code 1956 Regulation 15(2) – and in Northern Ireland – Regulation 15 of the Secondary School (Grant Conditions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1973, where student numbers in practical subjects are capped at 20. This information is listed in BS4163:2014 – Section 9.1
4. As regards the number of pupils that may be taught in a school or school work area, this detailed guidance for Design and Technology areas is set out in DfES document Building Bulletin 81, as linked to from the 21st Century Schools website :  
<http://21stcenturyschools.org/guidance/schooldesign/design-guidance-by-schools/secondary/basicteachingindex/designandtechno/?lang=en>  
In fact, Building Bulletin 81 recommends a maximum class size of 18 for secondary schools with a 10% D+T element in KS3+4 – see page 20

In essence, the aim of this petition is to ensure that our students are taught in as safe an environment as possible, whilst gaining the best possible experiences from their Design and Technology education whilst at school. This in my opinion can only be ensured if the Welsh Assembly make sure that all recommendations within BS4163:2014 (and any subsequent versions) are adopted in full by all schools in Wales.

A particular case that remains at the forefront of my mind is of a student that had to have a finger amputated due to a horrific accident with a belt sander in a school in Islington Borough Council in 2014. This sad event should have never happened, and would not, had all recommendations in BS4163:2014 been adhered to.

<http://press.hse.gov.uk/2017/london-council-fined-after-school-injury/?ebul=hsegen&cr=5%2F02-mar-17>

Many Thanks for your time in considering this issue.

Yours Sincerely  
Aled Dafis

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Good morning, following my previous e-mail i would like to add the following information to further support my petition.

The Design and Technology Association (DATA) has long supported the notion that class sizes should be limited to a maximum of 20 pupils. Their website clearly describes what is expected in terms of the guidance set out in BS4163:2014

<https://www.data.org.uk/for-education/health-and-safety/maximum-number-of-pupils-taught-within-dt-workshops-and-studios/>

The page is clear in it's entirety, but I believe that the closing passage is particularly pertinent

"There is often an assumption that because an issue is described as 'advice' or 'not mandatory' that employers and employees can regard them as 'optional' or indeed ignore them. Where a formal, written risk assessment has been carried out in accordance with HSE and other professional requirements, proper regard and action needs to be taken as appropriate to the level of risk identified. Should an employer or employee fail to do what is reasonably practicable and an accident or incident occur which may be found to be partially or wholly contributory to any injury sustained, they may be found culpable."

Many thanks again for your time in discussing this important issue.

Yours sincerely

Aled Dafis