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Y Gweinidog Addysg  
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-868  
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/05326/19

David John Rowlands AM  
Chair - Petitions committee.  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

15 February 2019

Dear David John Rowlands AM,

Thank you for your letter dated 8 February in relation to petition P-05-868 "Water Safety, Drowning Prevention and the effects of Cold Water Shock to be taught in all Schools in Wales".

Giving our children and young people the knowledge and skills they need to keep safe and well is an essential part of preparing them for life and supporting their health and well-being. It is also important that they are able to keep themselves safe in a range of physical and social environments, including in and around water.

Physical education is a compulsory part of the current curriculum for learners at Key Stage 2 (age 7-11), Key Stage 3 (age 11-14) and Key Stage 4 (age 14-16). The programme of study gives learners the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities, organised into 4 strands. One of these strands is "adventurous activities".

Through the adventurous activities strand, learners develop the skills needed to swim, be safe and feel confident in water. At Key Stage 2, this means that learners should be taught to "develop skills of water safety and personal survival" and to "swim unaided for a sustained period of time".

There are also opportunities for schools to engage with learning regarding personal safety within the personal and social education (PSE). PSE forms part of the basic curriculum for all registered pupils in maintained schools. Within the non-statutory framework for PSE, there are 5 themes, one of which is "health and emotional wellbeing".

Through the "health and emotional wellbeing" theme, learners are supported to develop an understanding of the need to exercise responsibility for personal and group safety in social settings.

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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.

As mentioned in your letter, the Welsh Baccalaureate also provides learners at Key Stage 4, with opportunities to engage with challenges that support their health and well-being. In April 2017 I attended the launch of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service's Open Water Community Challenge for the Welsh Baccalaureate. This challenge develops learners' knowledge of the risks associated with open water, such as quarry lakes, reservoirs, canals and rivers; with the aim that they share that knowledge with others in their school and community.

Within the new curriculum for Wales, one of the four purposes of the new curriculum is to support children and young people to become healthy confident individuals who know how to find the information and support to keep safe and well. The four purposes will be at the heart of the new curriculum and are a starting point for all decisions on the development of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements.

The new curriculum is structured around 6 Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE), which includes Health and Well-being. Within each AoLE are "what matters statements", these support practitioners to identify knowledge, skills and experiences that are important to a learner's understanding of the AoLE and achieving the four purposes.

As the pioneer schools developed the "what matters" statements for Health and Wellbeing AoLE, careful consideration was given to how the new curriculum could support schools to provide swimming, as part of a holistic approach to physical, mental and emotional well-being. In the case of swimming, it was recognised that its importance went beyond being a mode of physical activity; in that it provides an important element of keeping learners safe. As such, "what matters" statements within the Health and Wellbeing AoLE support the delivery of swimming by specifying that learners need to experience opportunities to be physically active in a variety of environments, including around water, and need to be able to make safe decisions in a variety of situations and environments.

Pioneer schools have worked with a range of experts in the development of the Health and Well-being AoLE, including Sport Wales, higher education institutions and Public Health Wales.

*Successful Futures* has challenged us to re-think our approach to the curriculum. It makes it clear that a high degree of prescription and detail at a national level inhibits "the flow and progression in children and young people's learning". As such, we need to ensure that the new curriculum does not provide a comprehensive list of detailed content which would quickly become complicated and overcrowded. The curriculum must allow professionals the flexibility to choose the specific content which meets the needs of their learners and reflects their local contexts. Throughout the process we have been working with practitioners to ensure the right balance between flexibility at school level and clarity at national level.

The new curriculum for Wales will be made available for feedback in April 2019. It will then be phased in from September 2022, starting with nursery through to Year 7 and will roll out year-on-year until 2026.

Yours sincerely



**Kirsty Williams AM**  
Minister for Education