

**Leighton Andrews AC/AM**

**Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg & Dysgu Gydol Oes  
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning**



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

SF/LA/0437/10

Sandy Mewies AM  
Chair  
Communities and Culture Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CARDIFF  
CF99 1NA

11 November 2010

*Dear Sandy*

### **INQUIRY INTO THE ACCESSIBILITY OF ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN WALES**

Thank you for your letter of 15 October. You asked that I provide the Communities and Culture Committee with clarification of three specific points related to support for Theatre in Education to inform the Committee's inquiry into the accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales. I have addressed the questions in the order set out in your letter.

#### **What the Welsh Assembly Government's current policy is on the provision of 'Theatre in Education' in schools**

It is recognised that the Arts have an important part to play in the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum. The school curriculum therefore includes art and design, music, dance, drama, poetry and other forms of creative writing. Schools are provided with guidance on the provision to be made for each National Curriculum subject. This includes a detailed programme of study for each Key Stage of learning. Meeting the requirements of the programme of study is a matter for schools, working with local authorities. This includes decisions on how the programme of study is best addressed, allocation of time in the school day and use of specific teaching resources. In addition, schools are encouraged to work with partners to enhance the delivery of the curriculum. This can take many forms, including visits to professional productions, workshops run as part of the school day and extra-curricular activities led by experienced practitioners in fields such as dance, drama and music.

I would certainly hope that we continue to encourage schools to provide pupils with the opportunity to experience theatre at school, on theatre visits or by taking part in theatre productions. While recognising that the opportunities provided by the Theatre in Education companies in Wales are valued by many schools, decisions on working with specific partners have to be a matter for schools. This is consistent with the approach taken in all subject areas, based on the premise that schools must have the freedom and flexibility to

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*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)*

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determine how best to complement and add value to their respective programmes of study. However, it is important that schools have access to a range of experiences and, where possible, a range of partners. I therefore welcome the evidence provided to your Committee by the Chief Executive of the Arts Council of Wales, which confirms that in reviewing and reconfiguring provision across Wales, the Council remains committed to providing access to the theatre for young people, both in and out of school.

**Whether the impact of withdrawing funding from organisations currently providing 'Theatre in Education' was discussed with your department, prior to the conclusion of the Arts Council of Wales' investment review's decision-making process.**

The Investment Review completed recently by the Arts Council of Wales was commissioned by the Heritage Minister in his remit to the Council for 2008-09. The Review was considered at Cabinet on 21 June 2010 and this included discussion of the background to the Review and the process by which decisions had been made. Cabinet was also provided with an indication of outcomes, including plans to reduce the number of organisations supported by the Arts Council of Wales.

**What impact you anticipate the withdrawal of this funding will have on the provision of Theatre in Education on a pan-Wales basis, and what effect you anticipate this may have on the equality of access to such provision for children and young people in different parts of Wales.**

In broad terms, this is a matter for the Arts Council of Wales. I would be concerned if changes to the funding regime impacted adversely on the equality of access to Theatre in Education to communities in Wales, particularly in deprived areas. I would expect the Arts Council of Wales to monitor the impact of its policies and to consider the equalities impact.

*Yours sincerely*



**Leighton Andrews AM**  
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning