

## **Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal**

**Dyddiad:** Dydd Iau, 23 Mawrth 2000

**Amser:** 9.30 am

**Lleoliad:** Ystafell Bwyllgora 1, Adeilad y Cynylliad Cenedlaethol

### **Teitl: LLYTHYR ODDI WRTH YR YSGRIFENNYDD CYNULLIAD DROS ADDYSG A PHLANT AT GADEIRYDD Y PWYLLGOR CYFLE CYFARTAL, 6 IONAWR 2000**

Gan mai Saesneg oedd iaith yr ohebiaeth wreiddiol, nid oes cyfieithiad ar gael.

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Thank you for your recent letter about the working group that the Committee on Equality of Opportunity has set up to examine the role of the Assembly in taking forward the recommendations contained within the MacPherson Report.

There are 3 recommendations in the Report that are specific to education. Recommendation 67 relates to valuing cultural diversity and the National Curriculum. Recommendation 68 refers to strategies that schools and local education authorities should adopt to tackle racism with recommendation 69 proposing that implementation of these strategies form part of the school standards inspection regime (in Wales, this responsibility would fall to ESTYN).

Taking each of the recommendations in order, I offer the following comment:

#### **Recommendation 67**

The Government's response to this recommendation concentrated on developments in England. It stated that the Government considers it vital that the National Curriculum properly reflects the needs of a diverse society. The response made clear that citizenship education would play an important role in teaching pupils to respect themselves and one another as citizens.

In Wales, a new framework for Personal and Social Education (PSE) has been developed by the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority that incorporates citizenship and democracy. This followed the commitment in the Building Excellent Schools Together (BEST) White paper that PSE should be examined as a whole and no longer developed on an ad hoc basis.

The framework draws together best practice in this field. It seeks to promote positive attitudes and an understanding of equal opportunities and tolerance alongside issues such as sustainable development. It provides direct and relevant guidance on essential life skills.

The Authority issued the draft framework for consultation. There was widespread support although the responses to the question of whether the framework should be made compulsory were inconclusive. As a result, it is now intended that the framework will be implemented on a non-statutory basis from September 2000. This status will be reviewed after 2 years.

## **Recommendation 68**

As part of the National Assembly's broader agenda to promote social inclusion, I issued National Assembly for Wales Circular 3/99 'Pupil Support and Social Inclusion' last September. This set out detailed guidance to schools and local education authorities on a range of actions to tackle disaffection in the classroom, including racial harassment and exclusion from school. I enclose a copy of the circular for your information.

Paragraphs 4.23 to 4.27 of the circular deal with strategies to address racial harassment and were drawn up in conjunction with the Commission for Racial Equality and the South Wales Police. From last September, schools are required to record and monitor reported racist incidents and how they are resolved, with governing bodies preparing a report to pupils, parents and the local education authority on all recorded incidents. I have no plans at present for the Assembly itself to publish or to require authorities to publish information on recorded racial incidents in school.

Section 6, and its associated annex E, introduced revised arrangements relating to exclusion from school that came into effect in September. The annex also covers the information that a school must provide to the governing body and to the education authority when a pupil is excluded that includes age, gender and ethnicity (see paragraph 11 of the annex).

On an annual basis, the Welsh Office published information on permanent and fixed period exclusions at the all-Wales level. I expect the Assembly to release comparable information for the 1998-99 academic year although this will not provide data on minority pupils. From the 1999-2000 academic year, the National Assembly will be collecting data on exclusions that is consistent with the requirements set out at paragraph 11 to annex E of circular 3/99.

More recently, I have instructed officials to undertake work to remedy the weaknesses in current data capture by authorities on the numbers of ethnic minority pupils and their attainment. A preliminary report is due in February. My preference would be to consider how best to use the revised information on school exclusion in the light of the on-going work to address the minority ethnic pupil data deficit. It will be important to ensure that information on exclusions is presented in context, even at the all-Wales level. In parallel, I would need to be

assured that schools and local education authorities have taken actions, based on the guidance in circular 3/99, that are consistent with Assembly targets to reduce the over-all level of exclusions.

Under the proposed 2000-01 Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) programme, I have introduced a new element to specifically support local action to tackle truancy and pupil behaviour. Working through the Education Welfare Service, it will be for education authorities, in conjunction with schools, to decide on action where there may be disproportionate rates of exclusion of ethnic minority pupils. In addition, the Children and Youth Partnership Plans that you approved recently for the Swansea and Cardiff partnership teams include specific elements of work to support attainment and curriculum development for minority ethnic pupils.

Separately, a consultation exercise is currently underway seeking views on how we might make better use of the resources available to support English as an additional language provision for those ethnic minority pupils whose first language is neither English nor Welsh. The consultation ends on 14 January. I will let you know how matters are to proceed.

### **Recommendation 69**

ESTYN is aware of the need to monitor constantly and adjust its policies and practices as necessary to ensure equal opportunities for all and continually emphasises its commitment to ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious equality across all sectors of education in Wales. ESTYN Inspectors are required to assess the extent which a school meets a range of racial equality criteria.

ESTYN's Inspection Framework is being reviewed and the extent to which the non-statutory framework for PSE is covered by the inspection regime is one aspect of that review. However, a great deal of what is drawn together under the umbrella of the PSE framework is already part of the statutory requirements under the national Curriculum for Wales and is therefore inspected. The national Assembly has made clear that it will review the status of the PSE framework in 2002 after which it may be made a statutory requirement that must be inspected.

I understand that the Chief Inspector has written to Commissioner Ray Singh suggesting a strategy for signing up all local education authorities, schools and colleges (HE and FE) in Wales to the Commission for Racial Equality's "Leadership Challenge".

Your letter also invited comment on **Recommendation 70** that relates to community and local initiatives aimed at promoting cultural diversity and addressing racism. This recommendation is not specific to education. However, the National Assembly has developed a number of initiatives specifically aimed at promoting and celebrating cultural diversity.

The Assembly has provided active support for the establishment of the All Wales Ethnic

Minority Consultative Association to ensure that there is a mechanism for the black and ethnic minority community to enter into meaningful dialogue with the Assembly, in particular seeking to influence policy formulation and development.

Although responsibility for law and order is not a devolved function, a key priority for the Assembly is to build communities that are free from crime. A range of Assembly initiatives, covering education, training, health and social inclusion will contribute to this. Central to this work in Wales are the local crime and disorder reduction partnerships that are implementing strategies for each unitary authority area; all were encouraged to include black and ethnic minority community groups in their membership. The strategies are locally determined and a number of the partnerships have taken racist (and homophobic hate) crime as a priority for action. The Assembly supports the work of the partnerships particularly given the close relationship between the Assembly and certain of the key partners such as local authorities, the health service and the voluntary sector.