

P-06-1331 Consider implementing legal requirements to private businesses to ensure they are accessible to all, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 24.05.23

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1331
Ein cyf/Our ref JH-/00265/23



Libanus Primary School,
Libanus Road,
Blackwood,
Caerphilly,
NP121EH

24th May 2023

Dear Petitions Committee,

In response to your letter regarding our petition being debated in the Senedd on June 5th, myself and pupils have read the inclosed statement document and relevant legislation.

As a result, the pupils of Libanus would like to highlight a few points:

It states in the letter that the Social Model of Disabilities is to be embedded by 2024, and with this drawing ever so close, they believe that this is still not well known within their community and that it is emerging rather than embedded. They believe through attending Blackwood High Street to research the current conditions that the general public are not aware of the Social Model and that more education and enforcement of this is required. One pupil stated "One shop keeper said I don't have a ramp and go away", they believe that this illustrated the lack of awareness and desire to make changes to include all members of society.

Although the letter mentions staff within the Government are required to have disability awareness training, the pupils all questioned how relevant this is when it is the private businesses that have been highlighted as having limited access. Gracie Coles (of Libanus Primary) stated "Staff employed within organisations appeared to have very little, to no knowledge of the disabilities". It is the whole of society that need to be informed, to ensure all members of society feel included, are treated "fairly, with dignity and respect" (Guidance for Service providers - Equality and Human Rights Commission).

It mentions in the Equality and Human Rights document that reasonable adjustments should be made to enable all individuals to use private businesses and suggested ramps were placed near the entrance of the door ways. Although pupils asked about a ramp during their research of Blackwood High street, in those that stated they had a ramp available they weren't brought out for the pupils to see or use. Olly Morris stated, "It was not clear there were any ramps available". Pupils at Libanus believe that having to call for the attention of a shopkeeper, whilst stood outside a shop and for individuals to have to wait for the attendee to retrieve the ramp from the back of the shop isn't inclusive enough. They believe this isn't making reasonable adjustments and can have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of physically disabled individuals. Pupils were concerned that this could even result in disabled individuals feeling different, disheartened and isolated.

Pupils understood a large proportion of shops were built many years ago, when people weren't so aware of equality rights. However, they did discuss that the Government should ensure there are procedures in place (maybe grants) that would allow shop fronts to be amended to ensure all members of the community are able to freely access all public shops and facilities.

It is clear from the pupils' research that more education is needed amongst the public, businesses and ultimately more access to all shops on our high streets is needed if we are to live in a free and fair society. Pupils of Libanus are concerned that they are learning about the 'Rights of the Child' and how we should treat others with respect, dignity and kindness, yet our world in which we live isn't fair and inclusive. They plead with the government to make the changes needed to ensure all citizens of Wales have equal access to our wonderful Wales and that all citizens are educated well enough to make the reasonable adjustments required.

Libanus pupils thank you for taking the time to read and discuss our concerns and hope their efforts make a positive difference to society.