

PEMBROKESHIRE PARENTS WANT A SAY

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William Powell AM
Chair – Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

27th January 2016

RE: P-04-606 Ensure schools exercise their statutory powers under regulation 7 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 without interference or bias.

Dear William,

Many thanks for the assistance of the Petitions Committee with the above petition.

We listened to the Committee discuss the petition on 19th January with interest. We understand that a decision was made to close the petition on the grounds that the subject of the petition had been dealt with and the current concerns raised on the topic in our letter to the Committee of 11th January were considered "related matters" or "secondary issues".

We are requesting that the petition remain open on the grounds that the potentially unlawful issue of FPNs for "regular non-attendance at school" is not a "secondary issue" and our concerns that fines may be issued unlawfully was clear from the start.

In our original petition text we stated:

"Where a family disregards a decision to refuse authorisation of absence the issue of a penalty notice and potential criminalisation can result."

In the additional information supplied with the petition we elaborated:

"A school's refusal to authorise an absence which is allowable under the law can seriously damage the home/school relationship, particularly if the family believe that the absence is important to their child's well-being and take their child out of school anyway. The family can receive a penalty notice (fine) or be criminalised. "

As we have discussed previously the costly nature of legal proceedings exclude the vast majority of Welsh families from seeking redress through our judicial system for FPNs which may have been issued unlawfully.

If the Petitions Committee cannot pursue these issues under the text of the current petition we would be very grateful for their advice regarding the most effective routes for families to take to address the series of concerns raised in our letter of 11th January 2016. Certainly the failure of systems which allowed local authorities to influence head teacher's against exercising their statutory powers for so long is a matter of grave concern and one which is likely to have ongoing and far reaching consequences.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Douglas
Pembrokeshire Parents Want A Say