



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-(P)/HL/0391/15

Ann Jones AM
Chair - Children and Young People Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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5th November 2015

Dear Ann,

Thank you for your letter of 23 September asking for an update on the recommendations contained in the National Assembly for Wales' Children and Young People Committee's Inquiry Report into school sun protection policy, published in 2012.

I have been informed that initially there was no formal Welsh Government collective response to the report recommendations. I understand however that the former chair of the Committee, Christine Chapman, AM, did receive a response from Leighton Andrews, AM dated 9 January 2012 concerning the issue of shelters in schools and clarifying what provision had been made within the 21st Century School Programme to provide such shelter and the issue of guidance in respect of the refurbishment of older school buildings.

Additionally Lesley Griffiths, AM the then Minister for Health and Social Services responded (in a letter dated 11 January 2012) to the Inquiry's call for evidence. The letter focussed on the provision of sunscreen for children in schools and the development of advice and guidance for nurseries, pre-schools, primary and secondary schools through the Cancer Research UK (CRUK) SunSmart campaign.

My officials have now re-visited the Report's recommendations and provided an updated response to reflect current policies and developments since 2102. The response to each recommendation is set out below:

Recommendation 1 - The Welsh Government should work with the Welsh Local Government Association to raise awareness of the existing SunSmart guidelines within educational settings.

Recommendation 6 - The Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association, schools and third sector organisations should continue to work together to deliver sun protection education to children.

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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.

Response to both recommendations 1 and 6 - On 11 January 2012 the Minister for Health and Social Services (then, Lesley Griffiths AM) responded to Christine Chapman, AM, the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee setting out Welsh Government activities within the “health” portfolio with regard to sun protection. The Health Minister advised that Public Health Wales (PHW) had been tasked with taking forward the skin cancer prevention programme of work in Wales.

Work in schools is taken forward through the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) which was launched in 1999 to encourage the development of local healthy school schemes within a national framework. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognises the WNHSS as playing a key role in promoting the health of children and young people, and the scheme has been rolled out across Wales since 2000.

Each local scheme is responsible within their area for supporting the development of health promoting schools that protect and support good health and healthy choices. The WNHSS describes a health promoting school as one which ‘actively promotes, protects and embeds the physical, mental and social health and wellbeing of its community through positive action’. This can be achieved through policy, strategic planning, staff development, curriculum, ethos, physical environment and community relations.

Within the scheme, there are seven different health topics that schools need to address, including “safety”, within which “sun safety” is a component. Support for schools is provided by the Healthy School Co-ordinators based in each local authority in Wales. Currently over 99% of schools in Wales are part of the scheme. Unfortunately the data collection processes which surround the scheme no longer enable PHW to identify which schools have addressed the sun safety element of the framework, but strengthening that area of work has been identified as a priority and PHW is working closely with Cardiff University to address the issue.

The Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme has been developed as an extension of the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools. Managed by Public Health Wales it includes “Safety” as one of the elements, including Sun Safety. A bilingual resource pack has been produced for the scheme in conjunction with Children in Wales which provides support to early years settings, including specific information on Sun Safety. It is available on the Children in Wales website <http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/policy-document/healthy-sustainable-pre-school-award-040714-w/>.

Whilst not specifically aimed at schools in Wales, PHW continues to generate periodic web-based public awareness notices around sun protection and skin cancer awareness:

http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/searchresults/?q=sun+cancer+awareness&site=orgid*888&requiredfields=DC%252Elanguage%3Aeng&orgid=888

Recommendation 2 - As part of schools’ broader health and safety policy, they should be required to have a document which sets out the school’s approach to a range of environmental factors which might affect children during the

school day, including sun protection and shade requirements, and wet or cold weather.

Response – In 2010 Cancer Research UK's (CRUK) SunSmart programme published sun protection policy guidelines for Nurseries and pre-schools in Wales and similar guidance for primary and secondary schools. The guidance contained information on why a sun protection policy for children was important; information about the SunSmart campaign; steps and a checklist for schools to take in developing a sun protection policy and a model policy for schools to consider and adopt.

This guidance is hosted on the Welsh Government's Health and Social Services website and education colleagues will liaise with public health colleagues to ensure the guidance documents reflect current best practice and that schools are made aware of their existence.

Recommendation 3 - Work should be undertaken through existing mechanisms, such as the Wellbeing strand of the Estyn inspection framework, to identify and share good practice on approaches to sun protection between schools and local authorities.

Response - Matters relating to the content of Estyn's common inspection framework is an issue for the Inspectorate to consider. However, Estyn published a consultation on 14 October seeking views on the way inspection will be carried out from September 2017.

One of the questions within the consultation refers to the common inspection framework and asks for suggestions on any areas that Estyn should focus on in its inspections. Officials will be providing a response to the consultation and will highlight the recommendation put forward by the CYPE committee for the framework to identify and share good practice on approaches to sun protection between schools and local authorities.

Recommendation 4 - Consideration should be given to the equipment provided to, and the school uniform requirements for, children in the Foundation Phase to ensure that they are suitably protected to be outside in a range of weather conditions.

Response - Foundation Phase Capital was used for the creation of assets including buildings and equipment. Local authorities used this funding to improve Foundation Phase facilities such as toilets, access to the outdoors, fencing, canopies, and outdoor equipment. Funding was prioritised by the local authority who submitted plans on how they would like to spend the money and approved by us.

The grant moved to the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme in 2012-13. When Welsh Government consider business cases for investment under the Programme advice is sought from policy officials to ensure that requirements of the Foundation Phase are taken into account.

Schools should consider the suitability of clothing for both children and adults, as well as equipment, to support access to the Foundation Phase outdoor provision all year round, whatever the weather.

Recommendation 5 - The Welsh Government should issue new guidance which specifically advises on best practice in the provision of shade, both within new school buildings and for the process of refurbishing existing school buildings.

Response – Leighton Andrews, AM the then Minister for Education and Skills wrote to Christine Chapman, AM the chair of the CYPC confirming that the standards of school premises in Wales must conform to the prescribed standards set out in Section 542 of the Education Act 1996 and the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999. This legislation does not prescribe standards regarding exposure to sunshine. However there is a general duty placed on governing bodies and local authorities to ensure that school buildings and land are of a standard to ensure the health and safety of the staff and pupils and visitors.

When considering the physical aspects of school buildings, including the design of new school buildings or the refurbishment of existing buildings, local authorities can access guidance and best practice through the 21st Century Schools Programme website. The website also includes a link to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), which provides excellent guidance on school grounds and design taking into account the topography, climate and ecology of the school site.

The current situation is that Section 542 of the Education Act 1996 requires standards to which the premises of maintained school in Wales must conform. The prescribed standards for schools are currently set out in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999. Whilst these regulations do not explicitly prescribe standards regarding exposure to sunshine, there is a general duty placed on responsible bodies that school buildings and land must provide reasonable assurance of occupants' health and safety.

When considering the physical aspects of school buildings, local authorities can, through the 21st Century Schools website [<http://21stcenturyschools.org>], access guidance and best practice when developing the design of new school buildings or refurbishment of existing school buildings.

The website outlines current statutory requirements but also provides links to important documents, such as Building Bulletins, which address the issues and principles affecting school grounds. The website also contains a link to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE); this provides guidance regarding school grounds and how school design should respond to the topography, **climate** and ecology of the school site.

Welsh Government is currently defining a standard for 21st Century Schools and this aspect will be considered as part of this piece of work. In addition, as the 21st Century Schools Programme moves forward we will continue to improve and enhance the guidance available to local authorities and schools.

I hope this information provides you with an assurance that the Welsh Government is committed to continue working with its partners to ensure the health and safety of pupils by providing advice to schools on the dangers to pupils of exposure to sun without sun protection.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis', written in black ink.

Huw Lewis AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills