

PE1813/B + PE1814/B

Andrew Strachan Submission of 20 August 2020

In connection with petitions PE01813 and PE01814 please include the following points during your consideration:

On page 4 of the SPICe briefing covering these petitions you are asked to consider the work done for LGBTI inclusive education. When you are looking at this can I please ask that in particular you read the [minutes of the June 2017 meeting](#) of the Working Group.

On page 4 of the pdf, in the section headed 'Terms of reference', you will see that members of the Working Group back in June 2017 "remained concerned about the risk of excluding other equality identities". It is shocking that this situation was pointed out to the Working Group and yet they still proceeded with recommendations which only included LGBT pupils. It is even more shocking that the Scottish Government then went ahead and accepted the group's recommendations, in full, knowing that other equality identities were being left behind. Had the working group acted on those serious concerns at that time we would be in a better position now.

I was among the voices at that time who pointed out that, far from being inclusive, the recommendations which were made at that time were actually exclusive as they only supported one group. Had the Working Group decided to provide an inclusive education for pupils of ALL protected characteristics a much better outcome would have been achieved.

My particular concern is for Christian pupils to receive an education which is inclusive of their identity. The ideal solution would be for every protected characteristic to be included in the recommendations which were accepted only for LGBT pupils. However, as the Scottish Government has chosen a piecemeal approach of preparing guidance for only one section of one protected characteristic they should now be preparing recommendations for all the other sections of all the other protected characteristics to be ready for March 2021.

I'm saddened to say that, so far, the Scottish Government has been unwilling to even consider giving similar recommendations to any other protected characteristic. I hope that these petitions now make them take notice and that EVERY section of EVERY protected characterised is given the same level of inclusive education as has been accepted for LGBT pupils.

The SPICe briefing covering both petitions points to the [Experiences and Outcomes](#) of the Social Studies curriculum and says that BAME issues are already able to be included in Scottish education.

That is true but it is also true to point out that LGBT issues could already be included in the Scottish curriculum as far back as 2014. This is confirmed in [section 36 of the Conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood guidance](#) and also in the [Experience and Outcomes for Health and Wellbeing HWB2-44a](#) on page 17 was all in place before the LGBT inclusive education working group was even thought of.

So, you can see that even when existing provision was in place the Scottish Government still accepted a further 33 recommendations just for LGBT pupils. It is also important to point out that the LGBT recommendations are to be implemented across the whole curriculum, not just in one subject. I'd be amazed if the Committee feels that BAME pupils do not deserve the same level of inclusion for their identity (and indeed there will be pupils who would benefit from both sets of recommendations as some BAME pupils will also identify as LGBT).

A simpler solution remains possible. The current LGBT Implementation Group's work is currently on hold due to COVID19. It would be possible for their work to be re-evaluated to correct the mistake of June 2017 (we've seen recently that u-turns can be made). One set of guidance could then be published to cover ALL protected characteristics with the same level of inclusion across the curriculum.

However, if the Scottish Government is not prepared to go down that route then they should now provide a timeline for when other protected characteristics will be able to have the same level of inclusion as LGBT pupils have been awarded. I'd suggest having March 2021 as the date for this as that would tie in with when the LGBT recommendations are due to be implemented. It should not be the case that one group of pupils is receiving a more inclusive education than another group. That is a clear inequality.

If the piecemeal approach continues to be the favoured option can I ask the Committee to consider which other races should also be given an education inclusive of their identity e.g. should separate recommendations be put in place for pupils from the Gypsy community?

From my perspective a truly inclusive system should be in place where all pupils are receiving an education inclusive of their identity. If the Committee considers that the current piecemeal system is more suitable can I ask that they look at when Christians will receive similar recommendations, and will other faiths also be able to have individual guidance for their identity?

I would urge the petitioners not to accept anything less than 33 similar recommendations to those which were accepted for LGBT pupils. I would also encourage action be completed by March 2021 before this session of Parliament is completed as any items not completed by then would likely be abandoned.

To avoid any doubt, I am not asking that LGBT pupils should not receive an education inclusive of their identity, but I am asking that every pupil should have a similar level of inclusion set out for their identity. Therefore, I wish the petitioners well with these petitions.