

PE1487/GG

By email to: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee

18 November 2013

Dear Clerk,

Consideration of Public Petition PE01487 Religious Observance in schools

I write to you as Church representative of St Bernadette's Primary School Falkirk Parent Council Group regarding the above.

I attach a copy of our response to Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC) regarding their letter to the Scottish Parliament in connection with the above petition. We strongly disassociate ourselves from the views of the SPTC as they do not reflect the needs or desires of our Parents.

Parents electing to send their child(ren) to Denominational schools in Scotland do so because they wish their child to be educated in a community where ethos, values and culture are paramount to the well-being of both the community and the child. Consequently, it seems a little paradoxical and nonsensical that we would ask parents to 'opt in' for Religious Observance when they have already made such a decision by electing to send their child(ren) to a Catholic school.

The SPTC is not in a position to represent the views of St Bernadette's Falkirk Parent Council as they have not canvassed for any views outside of a very small group of members.

We would be obliged if our views could be taken into account when considering the petition please.

Yours faithfully

Michael J. Kelly
Church representative
St Bernadette's Falkirk Parent Council

Dear Sir/Madam,

Consideration of Public Petition PE01487 Religious Observation in schools

In response to the Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC) letter dated October 11, 2013, I write to advise that the Parent Council group of St Bernadette's Primary School, Falkirk have openly discussed the proposals and unanimously agreed that we **do not** support the position adopted by SPTC on this matter. We would also opine that this is similar to the views held **by all** Parent Councils at Denominational schools throughout Scotland.

The SPTC does not seem to have canvassed opinions from a wide range of constituents in this regard and therefore the views expressed in your letter should not be taken as being representative of the wider Parent council community.

We are not aware of any involvement of our Parent Council with this body and as far as I am aware the opinions of our Parent Council were not sought prior to SPTC responding to the Petition. As a consequence, we can only determine that the views expressed are limited to close members of SPTC and not at all representative of the wider school communities.

It is the opinion of our Parent Council that parents electing to send their child(ren) to a Catholic school have already taken the decision to 'opt in' for Religious Observation and do so because they want their child to be involved in the ethos, community and culture of our schools. Catholic schools and religious observance in schools are part of the traditions of this country and should not be brushed aside without due consultation across a broad spectrum of Scottish society.

We are very concerned that your letter could give a false impression that all Parent Councils have been involved in reaching the conclusions – they have not. At our recent Parent Council meeting the Petition and position adopted by SPTC were unanimously rejected and I was asked to formally communicate same to you.

It would therefore, in our opinion, be appropriate for SPTC to clarify that they were not speaking on behalf of anyone other than yourselves in this regard please, as this then would remove any confusion around the messages being portrayed as having a significant backing. I would be obliged if you could please acknowledge receipt of this letter. Please note that, we are also sending a copy of this letter to the Scottish Government department coordinating responses to the Petition.

Yours faithfully

Michael J. Kelly
Church Representative St Bernadette's Falkirk Parent Council