

24 November 2014

**Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament**

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Public Petition PE1530

I write as a former headteacher on the matter of 'creationist' teaching in schools, the public petition which you have received on the matter and the correspondence which you have received from School Leaders Scotland.

Firstly, it is necessary to question Mr Cunningham's statement that he is 'speaking on behalf of secondary schools'. Many secondary heads are not members of School Leaders Scotland. Mr Cunningham merely speaks for his own members. My knowledge of the views of many members of SLS, suggests that he may not even speak for them.

My own experience, as a headteacher, was the pressure from certain religious organisations to treat creationist perspectives as a valid scientific theory, was the one issue ever brought to me by staff, concerned at external, ideological pressures on the curriculum. My Science faculty, concerned that pressures would be placed on them even to consider such unscientific approaches in their classes, unanimously raised with me their fears at such pressure. My assurance was unambiguous. The study of mythology was appropriate in Religious and Moral Education but not in science.

In 2008, Fiona Hyslop, the Cabinet Secretary for Education made a robust stand when answering Patrick Harvie's question in Parliament: "Scottish schools and the Scottish Government would challenge creationism if it were taught in our schools."

The recent experience in Kirktonholme School in East Kilbride is illustrative of the methods used by religious fundamentalists to intervene in educational contexts and indicative of the fact that Ms Hyslop's assertion is now, unfortunately, less valid. Precisely to protect schools, teachers and learners from the unscientific dogma of the creationists and from pressure to treat their religious perspective as science, I would urge your committee to endorse Public Petition SE 1530.

Yours sincerely,

Alex. Wood