

Review of Personal, Social, Health and Economics (PSHE) Education

Response Form

The closing date is: 30 November 2011

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Reason for confidentiality:

Name Naomi Phillips
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If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the PSHE review you can contact the public enquiry unit on:

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

e-mail: PSHEEducation.review@education.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the review process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk

Please tick one category that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> School Leader	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority
<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Association/Union	<input type="checkbox"/> VCS Sector/Charity	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Provider
<input type="checkbox"/> Subject Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	

Please Specify:
Religion or belief organisation

About You

Please use this space to tell us about yourself and your job role.

Comments:

The British Humanist Association (BHA) is the national charity working on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. We promote Humanism, support and represent the non-religious, and promote a secular state and equal treatment in law and policy of everyone, regardless of religion or belief. Founded in 1896, we have around 30,000 members and supporters, and over 70 local and special interest affiliates.

The BHA is an active member of many organisations working in education, including the National Children's Bureau Sex Education Forum (SEF) and the Children's Rights Alliance for England. We also provide materials and advice to parents, governors, students, teachers and academics. We have made detailed responses to all recent reviews of the school curriculum, and submit memoranda of evidence to parliamentary select committees on a range of education issues.

We unequivocally support making PSHE a statutory part of the curriculum, and believe that the religious character of a school should not deprive children of their entitlement to good PSHE. We believe that the right of children to PSHE is more important than any other consideration and consequently that the right of parental withdrawal should cease. Our main interest in PSHE is Sex and Relationships Education (SRE).

Please supply up-to-date evidence to answer any or all of the questions in the review. You may want to focus on only those questions most relevant to you.

Q1) What do you consider the core outcomes PSHE education should achieve and what areas of basic core knowledge and awareness should pupils be expected to acquire at school through PSHE education?

Comments:

Summary: We support the Sex Education Forum (SEF)'s core outcomes, knowledge and awareness, but would suggest that SRE is taught from earlier levels than economic wellbeing and financial capability.

Core outcomes: The British Humanist Association (BHA) is a member of the Sex Education Forum and supports the core outcomes in their submission.

A vital task for all schools is the moral education of children, which includes the encouragement of understanding and respect between different groups in society. As part of a broader curriculum including RE and Citizenship, PSHE has an important role to play in this.

We believe that these core outcomes embrace that perspective of a broad and balanced curriculum.

We believe that Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) should be compulsory at both primary and secondary levels, taught in a sensitive, informative, and age appropriate way. Therefore, we would suggest that the core outcomes of personal identity, healthy, safer lifestyles, and relationships education should be taught from earlier levels than career and economic understanding and financial capability, or at least given a stronger emphasis in the curriculum at earlier levels. Economic understanding and financial capability education are certainly important but perhaps more applicable to the lives of older students, unlike relationships.

We think that PSHE and SRE should be evidence-based and objective, whether taught by teachers or external providers. This would include teaching children and young people about what the law says, such as the age of consent, about marriage and civil partnership, about legal sexual behaviour and so on.

Core knowledge and awareness: Again, the BHA is a member of the SEF and finds the core knowledge taught described and taught by age appropriate bands that they have produced in their submission helpful and we would support that way of determining the curriculum.

However, in line with an evidenced approach to education and teaching, we

would also want there to be flexibility in what is taught in an age appropriate way. For example, learning about menstruation is banded for ages 11-13 but if educationally and based on evidence it was agreed that girls and boys would benefit from learning about it (or any other topic) at an earlier age, we would likely support it. In addition, it is not totally clear where issues around unplanned pregnancy would fit in the curriculum as described above. We support a comprehensive curriculum for PSHE including SRE and that would necessarily include information about post-conception services, including abortion, and necessarily taught in an objective way in all state-funded schools, including in 'faith' schools.

- Q2) Have you got any evidence that demonstrates why a) existing elements and b) new elements should be part of the PSHE education curriculum?
Your answer should provide a summary of the evidence and where appropriate contain the title, author and publication date of research.**

Comments:

The BHA is not a provider of PSHE or SRE in schools. However, we are a leading organisation campaigning for curriculum and legislative reform. We are a membership organisation and our work to have PSHE including SRE made compulsory, including in 'faith' schools, has support from our membership and wider support base, with many taking action to write to their MPs in support of our policy. In addition, we have worked closely with MPs and Peers from across all parties to reform legislation in line with our policy, and have enjoyed wide support. We also work with other organisations, such as the Children's Rights Alliance for England, on specific issues such as ending the parental opt-out for SRE. These demonstrate support for making high quality, comprehensive and age-appropriate PSHE and SRE statutory parts of the basic curriculum.

- Q3) Which elements of PSHE education, if any, should be made statutory (in addition to sex education) within the basic curriculum?**

Comments:

Summary:

- We support the SEF's position that the core outcomes of PSHE education as outlined in question 1 be made statutory
- We think it is important that sex education is extended to include full, accurate and age-appropriate SRE, including unbiased information on contraception, STIs, abortion, sexual orientation, and the many forms of family relationship conducive to individual fulfilment and the stability of society
- Academies and Free Schools do not have to teach any sex education. We believe the law should be amended to bring them into line with maintained schools. Amending funding agreements would also be welcome but less positive as this would miss the Academies already in existence
- It is important that SRE is age-appropriate; however, the BHA believes that there is absolutely a place for SRE in primary schools
- We would further emphasise the equal importance of relationships education to sex education

We support the SEF's position that the core outcomes of PSHE education as outlined in question 1 be made statutory, and have a number of further specific points below. First and foremost is our point about Academies and Free Schools, which we believe is of utmost importance.

Extending sex education: Good quality, age-appropriate SRE is known to reduce unwanted pregnancies, to reduce the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and equip young people with the language and tools to be clear about personal boundaries and understand appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, to be able to resist pressure assertively and to know who to talk to and how to ask for help if and when they need it. For older children it helps them resist pressure, make safe choices, and be able to challenge and be critical of misleading and inappropriate messages about sex in the media. National and international research shows that young people who have had good SRE are more likely to choose to have sex for the first time later. When they do have sex they are more likely to use condoms and contraception (See, for example, 'Does sex and Relationships education work? A Sex Education Forum evidence briefing').

We believe that all children are entitled to full, accurate and age-appropriate SRE, including unbiased information on contraception, STIs, abortion, sexual orientation, and the many forms of family relationship conducive to individual fulfilment and the stability of society.

Despite the obvious public health and child rights imperative for SRE, the current situation is that state-maintained schools do not have to teach any SRE beyond basic information on human reproduction and infectious

diseases in the science national curriculum. All state-maintained schools must also teach about STIs, HIV and AIDS however there is no guidance given about what information should be taught. Parents are entitled to withdraw their children from these lessons.

Our firm belief that all children are entitled to essential basic information about human reproduction and physiology in science and to broader and comprehensive SRE elsewhere in the curriculum means that we want it taught as a compulsory subject in all schools from primary age, with no parental opt out.

SRE in Academies and Free Schools: We are deeply concerned that Academies and Free Schools do not have to teach even the most basic sex education. The national curriculum, while not including statutory Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), does ensure that maintained 'faith' secondary schools teach sexual reproduction as part of the science syllabus, and in addition state-maintained secondary schools must also teach about STIs, HIV and AIDS. Nothing in the new, deregulated system obliges religious Academies and Free Schools to do the same. There is a real risk that religious Academies will deny their pupils objective SRE on religious grounds. For example, a new, state-funded, Catholic Academy might be allowed not to teach sexual reproduction in biology lessons, let alone wider and objective sex and relationships education.

Educational experts, children's rights organisations, parents, teachers and young people themselves have been calling for many years for compulsory SRE that is comprehensive, objective and high quality, and this was also the recommendation of the Government's review of Sex and Relationships Education in 2008. The former parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) regarded the provision of mandatory SRE as a 'significant human rights enhancing measure' (*Joint Committee on Human Rights (2009) Legislative Scrutiny: Children Schools and Families Bill; Other bills. Eighth Report of Session 2009-10. 19 February 2010, HL Paper 57, HC 369.*) The BHA agrees that pupils have a right to good, comprehensive and objective PSHE. We believe that for as long as the subject is voluntary many faith Academies will deny their pupils this right. We were greatly disappointed when the provisions to make PSHE a statutory requirement in all schools was dropped from the Children, Schools and Families Bill earlier this year, not least as it was a provision that had cross-party support in parliament.

PSHE should be provided as a statutory entitlement to children in all state-funded schools, including Academies and Free Schools. We believe this not only as a matter of principle but because of the proven benefits of such teaching to the health, well-being and safety of children and young people.

As an alternative to changing the law with regards to Academies and Free Schools, the Department for Education could consider changing the schools' funding agreements. However, this would only apply to future Academies and Free Schools, not the over 1000 that are already open.

SRE in primary schools: It is certainly important that SRE is age-appropriate; however, the BHA believes that there is absolutely a place for SRE in primary schools. Good SRE in primary schools should focus on friendships, relationships, personal wellbeing and going through puberty. It is vital that children are equipped with the knowledge they need to ensure they make informed, healthy decisions throughout life.

Once more, we would want to ensure that any extension in the legislation covers primary Academies and Free Schools, as well as maintained primary schools.

Relationships education: We fully endorse the SEF's position that it is vital all young people, including those in Academies and Free Schools, have a statutory right to learn about how to respect one another, form friendships and care for one another; why bullying including homophobic bullying is wrong; and about different forms of relationship, including marriage and civil partnership treated on an equal footing.

Homophobic bullying is a major issue in all schools, but is a particular issue in 'faith' schools. Stonewall's 2007 'The School Report' showed that two thirds of young gay people at secondary schools have experienced homophobic bullying, but in 'faith' schools that figure rises to three in four. The report also showed that lesbian and gay pupils who attend 'faith' schools are 23% less likely to report bullying than those at other schools.' Many 'faith' schools also have issues with teaching about relationships other than heterosexual relationships, and it is important that different sexual orientations are treated equally including in issues to do with marriage and civil partnership.

Q4) Are the National, non-statutory frameworks and programmes of study an effective way of defining content?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Summary:

- We agree that the non-statutory frameworks and programmes of study are on the whole effective, but believe they could provide more detail on matters related to SRE
- We are extremely concerned that in all four Key Stages, religion and religious beliefs are discussed but non-religious beliefs and the non-religious are excluded
- We are also concerned about references to religious leaders in Key Stages 1 and 2
- We are concerned about references to marriage in Key Stages 2 and 3 that come without equivalent references to civil partnership

We agree that the non-statutory frameworks and programmes of study are on the whole effective, but believe they could provide more detail on matters related to SRE, as per our response to question 1.b). We also support SEF's position that the frameworks should be updated and reorganised into a more coherent single framework to align with the revised National Curriculum subject frameworks. Furthermore, we do have some specific concerns.

Exclusion of the non-religious: In all four Key Stages, religion and religious beliefs are discussed but non-religious beliefs and the non-religious are excluded.

In Key Stage 2, '*Pupils should be taught: ... to recognise the role of voluntary, community and pressure groups to appreciate the range of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom*' and '*that differences and similarities between people arise from a number of factors, including cultural, ethnic, racial and religious diversity, gender and disability*'. In Key Stage 3, 'Key Concepts': a (page 245), and similarly in Key Stage 4, 'Key Concepts': a (page 255), it is stated that pupils should finish '*Appreciating that, in our communities, there are similarities as well as differences between people of different race, religion, culture, ability or disability, gender, age or sexual orientation*'.

We find this highly objectionable, especially since the list of 'differences' appears to be based on equality law (race, gender, disability etc). In equality law, those with non-religious beliefs are just as protected as those with a religion and it is vital that this be understood in the curriculum. We recommend EITHER changing 'religion' to 'religion or belief' and then defining it in the explanatory notes in the same way as 'religion or belief' is defined in the KS3 programme for RE: '*These include systems of thought that are religious and non-religious, theistic and non-theistic, Western and Eastern, Abrahamic and dharmic.*' OR if the language of 'religion or belief' is thought too technical outside of its equality law context, changing 'religion' to 'religious or non-religious beliefs' (the inclusive phrase used in eg the DfE's guidance on community cohesion).

There are many reasons why this more inclusive change should be made:

- It will match the Religious Education (RE) programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4, allowing for greater cross-curricular links to be made to issues of diversity in RE, where the idea of religions and non-religious worldviews is established.
- Inclusion of the non-religious would be more consistent with the DfE's guidance on community cohesion which is careful to include 'religious and non-religious beliefs'.
- Many young people are themselves not religious (65% according to a DfE research report of 2004, Young People in Britain: The Attitudes and Experiences of 12-19 Year Olds) and need to feel included in

discussions in schools that are concerned with diversity of belief.

- In a diverse society, it is as important that people learn about the non-religious as that they learn about the religious. This is especially true for learners who are from religious backgrounds themselves.
- The various pieces of legislation that are concerned with diversity of belief – the Human Rights Act 1998, the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, the Equality Act 2006 and the Equality Act 2010 – all refer to ‘religion or belief’, where ‘belief’ includes non-religious worldviews such as Humanism, and lack of religion is explicitly included within the definition of ‘religion or belief’.
- The inclusion of non-religious beliefs would be consistent with the UK’s international obligations and agreements such as the OSCE’s ‘Toledo guiding principles on teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools’ and the Council of Europe’s ‘Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education’ (CM/Rec(2008)12).

Role of religious leaders: During Key Stage 1, it is emphasised that ‘*pupils should be taught the Knowledge, skills and understanding through opportunities to: ... meet and talk with people [for example, with outside visitors such as religious leaders, police officers, the school nurse]*’. Similarly, during Key Stage 2, it is emphasised that ‘*pupils should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through opportunities to: ... meet and talk with people [for example, people who contribute to society through environmental pressure groups or international aid organisations; people who work in the school and the neighbourhood, such as religious leaders, community police officers]*’.

We are concerned that encouraging religious leaders to go into PSHE in this manner may lead to inappropriate proselytising, may offend those of other religions and beliefs, and we would also question on what grounds they are qualified to do so. According to a 2004 government survey, 65% of young people are not religious (DfES, 2004). Given the general trend for the population to become increasingly non-religious, we can expect that figure to be even higher in 2011. . Other government surveys find that religion is not a particularly important part of people’s identities. For example in the Citizenship Survey: 2007-08(April 2007 – March 2008), England & Wales, participants were requested to select factors that they regarded as important to their identity from thirteen options. Whilst family was top with 97%, followed by interests (87%), religion ranked bottom at 48%. We question the relevance of religious leaders to young people and their communities.

Marriage and civil partnership: In Key Stage 2, it is stated that ‘*Pupils should be taught: ... to be aware of different types of relationship, including marriage and those between friends and families, and to develop the skills to be effective in relationships*’. And in Key Stage 3, ‘Range and Content’: k (page 249), it is stated that ‘*different types of relationships, including those*

within families and between older and young people, boys and girls, and people of the same sex, including civil partnerships; the nature and importance of marriage and of stable relationships for family life and bringing up children’.

In both instances then, ‘marriage’ is mentioned here but not ‘civil partnerships’. We note that civil partnerships are included in j (and in the Key Stage 4 programme of study), and believe they should be mentioned in Key Stages 2 and 3 as well. It is important that young people grow up with as much respect for those in a civil partnership as those who are married, and see the two forms of union as being of equal worth.

Q5) How can schools better decide for themselves what more pupils need to know, in consultation with parents and others locally?

Comments:

Summary:

- We believe pupils come first, and that every young child has a right to high-quality, comprehensive sex and relationships education
- Schools and parents certainly often play a valuable role in supporting SRE, and this is to be welcomed and promoted. But we would be wary of giving them too much ability to influence the SRE policy and programme of the school, as some may seek to deny children aspects of SRE
- We are concerned that considering local priorities is likely in practice to mean considering local religious priorities. We believe all children have an identical entitlement nationwide and do not see that local priorities should be taken into account

Pupils: With regards to pupils, we support the Sex Education Forum’s position that SRE should be based on the actual needs of children and young people so that it is relevant to their lives. Children and young people can be consulted through focus groups, questionnaires, discussion in class and the school council, and schools should take genuine action in response to children and young people’s points. We believe that every young child has a right to high-quality, comprehensive sex and relationships education. As previously stated, the BHA is a member of the Children’s Rights Alliance for England, who we have worked with on ending the parental opt-out for SRE.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children in education should be prepared for *‘responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship*

among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups...’.

Parents: With regards to parents, we would emphasise that all children should receive high-quality, comprehensive and age-appropriate sex and relationships education. Schools and parents certainly often play a valuable role in supporting SRE, and this is to be welcomed and promoted. But we would be wary of giving them too much ability to influence the SRE policy and programme of the school, as some may seek to deny children aspects of SRE. We do not support the continued power of parents to opt their children out of SRE.

Local priorities: We are concerned that considering local priorities is likely in practice to mean considering local religious priorities, and are worried about the influence of religious groups in opposing age-appropriate SRE due to particular religious beliefs that are at odds with the best available evidence. We believe all children have an identical entitlement nationwide and do not see that local priorities should be taken into account.

How do you think the statutory guidance on sex and relationships education could be simplified, especially in relation to:

6 a) Strengthening the priority given to teaching about relationships?

Comments:

Generally, we supported the draft 2010 guidance and would like to see updates to guidance in line with that. We also support the position of the Sex Education Forum on this question. With regards to specific points in the 2000 guidance, we believe it is on the whole good, comprehensive and we would support it, in particular its coverage of topics such as contraception, abortion and sexuality – although we do have concerns about the sections on marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, abortion and schools’ religious ethos, which we detail here and in our answer to question 6.c).

Marriage and civil partnership: The guidance came into force before the Equality Acts were passed. A number of the points refer to marriage but not civil partnership (on pages 4, 5 and 11). We would want to see any references to marriage come with references to civil partnership, as per our response to question 4.

Sexual orientation: The guidance came into force before Section 28 was repealed, and the Equality Acts were passed. Pages 5, 12-13 and 28 preclude the “promotion of sexual orientation”. It should be made clearer that different sexualities should be taught about, but at the same time, the statements that sexual orientation should not be promoted should be removed.

6 b) The importance of positive parenting?

Comments:

Generally, we supported the draft 2010 guidance on PSHE and would like to see updates to guidance in line with that. We also support the position of the Sex Education Forum on this question.

6 c) Teaching young people about sexual consent?

Comments:

As per our answer to question 6.a) – generally, we supported the draft 2010 guidance and would like to see updates to guidance in line with that. We also support the position of the Sex Education Forum on this question. With regards to specific points in the 2000 guidance, we believe it is on the whole good, comprehensive and we would support it, in particular its coverage of topics such as contraception, abortion and sexuality – although we do have concerns about the sections on marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, abortion and schools’ religious ethos, which we detail here and in our answer to question 6.a).

Religious ethos: We would object to the references to a school’s religious ethos influencing teaching. There are three references in the guidance:

- On page 8: *‘Schools of a particular religious ethos may choose to reflect that in their sex and relationship education policy’*
- On page 8: *‘There are strongly held views and religious beliefs about abortion and some schools will apply a particular religious ethos through their sex and relationship education policy to the issue which will enable pupils to consider the moral and personal dilemmas involved. The religious convictions of pupils and their parents should be respected.’*
- On page 16, referring to abortion: *‘There are strongly held views and religious beliefs about abortion and some schools will apply a particular religious ethos through their sex and relationship education policy to the issue which will enable pupils to consider the moral and personal dilemmas involved. The religious convictions of pupils and their parents should be respected.’*

We believe that, like other state-funded schools, 'faith' schools should be required to teach SRE accurately, in ways that are balanced, promote equality and respect for diversity, and reflect different views. Allowing schools to teach SRE in ways skewed towards their religious character could in practice lead to subjective and narrow teaching and the BHA is particularly concerned how faith schools will teach about crucial issues such as contraception, safe sex, and different sexualities.

We believe that all children have a right to full, comprehensive, objective SRE that promotes equality and encourages acceptance of diversity. We believe this not only as a matter of principle but because of the proven benefits of such teaching to the health, well-being and safety of children and young people.

We want any revised and updated curriculum and guidance to be entitlement-based, which would prevent individual schools from teaching SRE in ways that are not objective or evidence-based.

- Q7) Have you got any examples of case studies that show particular best practice in teaching PSHE education and achieving the outcomes we want for PSHE education?
Your answer should be evidence based and provide details of real-life case studies.**

Comments:

- Q8) How can PSHE education be improved using levers proposed in the Schools White Paper, such as Teaching Schools, or through alternative methods of improving quality, such as the use of experienced external agencies (public, private and voluntary) to support schools?**

Comments:

The best way that PSHE could be improved is through making it statutory, as we discuss in our response to question 3.

Beyond that, we would simply like to emphasise the need for having proper mechanisms in place to stop groups with religious or political agendas from being invited to teach SRE in schools. Education for Choice have highlighted the dangers of allowing groups such as the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) into schools, which present a distinctly subjective position, often without evidence, on abortion and other issues as fact. That kind of 'education' can be greatly damaging to young people.

Q9) Have you got any examples of good practice in assessing and tracking pupils' progress in PSHE education?

Your answer should be evidence based and provide details of real-life case studies.

Comments:

Q10) How might schools define and account for PSHE education's outcomes to pupils, parents and local people?

Comments:

We support the Sex Education Forum's position, but would further emphasise the focus must be on prioritising, promoting and protecting the rights of children and young people to high quality, objective and comprehensive SRE.

Q11) Please use this space to provide us with your views and any other comments about PSHE.

Comments:

We refer to our position statement under question 1, and would like to re-emphasise our point in question 3 about Academies and Free Schools not having the same legal requirements on teaching sex education as maintained schools.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations and reviews are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, Tel: 01928 438060 / email: carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this request for representations

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 30 November 2011

Send by post to: Department for Education, Consultation Unit, Area 1C,
Castle View House, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2GJ

Send by e-mail to: PSHEEducation.review@education.gsi.gov.uk