

PSHE education Strategic Partners Group: shared briefing on PSHE and RSE

The PSHE education Strategic Partners Group comprises representatives of national organisations with strategic responsibilities related to PSHE education.

Membership

- British Heart Foundation and St John Ambulance (Every Child a Lifesaver coalition)
- Brook
- Career Development Institute
- Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition
- Economic, Business and Enterprise Association (EBEA)
- Barnardo's
- Economy
- Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH)
- Mentor UK
- National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
- National Education Union (NEU)
- NSPCC
- PSHE Association
- Sex Education Forum
- Young Enterprise (incorporating Young Money, formerly pfeg)

To inform legislation and guidance relating to PSHE education and relationships and sex education, the group has put together this statement to communicate our shared position on a number of key areas. We have outlined the necessary steps which are integral to capitalising on the historic opportunity to improve this area of the curriculum for all.

PSHE education must be made a statutory curriculum subject in its entirety

PSHE education is an effective and proven approach to teaching about a range of distinct, but linked, issues. As an established curriculum subject it has an existing, well evidenced, pedagogy.

Statutory status should apply to the whole of PSHE education, not just individual components. The evidence in prevention education is clear that a programme which only focuses on one domain of life will be less effective in changing behaviours. Programmes which develop generic personal and social skills, explore social influence and provide an opportunity to link learning from different areas of life have been shown to be most effective in keeping children safe, healthy and prepared for life.

Whilst the subject covers a number of key topics, it is best expressed through three core themes – relationships, health and wellbeing and living in the wider world – within which there is broad overlap and flexibility. In each of these pupils learn specific knowledge, as well as skills which can be applied and developed across all three areas. Managing risk and taking responsibility is stressed throughout as is the development of critical thinking skills, digital literacy and resilience. PSHE is best delivered using a 'spiral curriculum' structured around these three core themes with content and complexity reflecting pupils' age and stage of development; themes should be revisited and built upon as pupils progress through school. Pupils should leave school with an understanding of broad concepts relating to each theme including:

- **Health and wellbeing:** how to maintain physical, mental and emotional health (including sexual health at an appropriate stage); manage risks to health and safety, including online; learn how to administer basic first aid; make healthy and informed choices about drugs, alcohol, tobacco and other risks to health; recognise when and how to seek help for themselves or others.
- **Relationships:** how to develop and maintain different types of positive relationships in different settings, including online, understanding how to deal with risky or negative relationships (including

all forms of bullying and abuse, sexual and other violence and including sexual consent); recognise when and how to seek help for themselves or others; how to manage loss (bereavement, separation and divorce).

- **Living in the wider world:** Economic wellbeing including financial capability, careers education and work-related skills, this includes how to manage personal money, understanding budgeting, saving and borrowing, managing financial risk (both positive and negative), planning for the future and preventing as well as dealing with debt, a basic understanding of the key economic influences that shape their lives, and developing employability and enterprise skills such as leadership and communication skills as well as understanding the full range of careers available.

RSE and relationships education must continue to be taught within PSHE education

Relationships and sex education is a fundamental component of PSHE education, not a separate subject. It should be delivered within a comprehensive programme of PSHE education for reasons of effectiveness and implementation.

Effectiveness:

- **RSE benefits from being part of broader PSHE, and its educational effectiveness will suffer if removed from this context.** Relationships are greatly influenced by other areas of PSHE education – from online behaviours to self-esteem, mental health to susceptibility to persuasion, drug and alcohol use to financial literacy – and therefore cannot be treated in isolation. The complexity of keeping children safe means a holistic approach is required.
- **RSE must be taught through regular, timetabled lessons** within the broader curriculum subject of PSHE education. This ensures developmental learning can take place that is monitored and assessed. There is significant risk that if RSE alone is made statutory it will be delivered through tokenistic and ineffective models, such as a few drop down days a year.

Implementation:

- **Introducing statutory PSHE will be easier for schools to implement than RSE on its own.** Schools that are currently delivering RSE well, do so within a broader PSHE programme. Teaching RSE and PSHE separately would create a burden on schools regarding planning and resourcing, and schools may think they have to ‘unpick’ what they do well now. It will be far more effective to build on what is working well now and ensure it is universal.

Schools and practitioners require training and support to implement changes effectively.

The effectiveness of PSHE education is, inevitably, affected by the quality of delivery. It is essential that any change to statutory status for PSHE and RSE comes with funding, resources and a strategy for teacher training and CPD.

- There should be a clear plan of action from the DfE on how practitioners and schools will receive adequate training and can be supported to implement changes introduced in new legislation and guidance.
- Expert organisations are ready to work alongside the DfE on the design and delivery of this training and support.
- Adequate funding must be made available to deliver such training and support to all schools and the sector is ready to work with government to identify cost effective yet quality solutions.
- The sector is ready to work with government to help highlight the opportunities provided by the introduction of statutory status of RSE within PSHE.