

Personal, social, health and economic education

Curriculum reform consultation report to the DCSF

September 2009

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Background to the consultation

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education helps children and young people deal with some of the issues they face as they grow up. The aspects covered by PSHE education are central to a person's wellbeing and include nutrition and physical activity; drugs, alcohol and tobacco education; sex and relationships education; personal wellbeing; safety and risk; careers education; work-related learning; and economic wellbeing and financial capability.

Sir Alasdair Macdonald's independent review into the provision and status of PSHE education recommended that it become part of the statutory national curriculum at all key stages. It was suggested that this will raise its status as a subject, improve provision and underline its key role in supporting children and young people's personal wellbeing and development needs. This view is supported by previous reviews of sex and relationships education and drug and alcohol education, and in reports by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), Ofsted and others.

The government acknowledged that making PSHE education statutory raises a number of areas of concern for schools, parents and young people. These key concerns include pressures on the curriculum, the role of governing bodies and the parental right of withdrawal from sex and relationships education. These were all considered as part of the consultation.

QCDA was asked by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to manage this consultation and report on the outcomes. The survey questions were designed by the DCSF and QCDA, and Ipsos MORI was commissioned to process data from the survey. The consultation was open to any member of the public wishing to respond between 30 April and 24 July 2009. A range of conferences, focus groups and engagements was also organised during this consultation period. This report contains the outcomes of the public consultation.

Composition of the responses

This report is based on the following evidence at the end of the consultation period:

- 6,433 responses to the consultation survey – 2,636 completed the survey online, and 3,797 were received on hard copy questionnaire. At least 19 per cent of these responses were identified as coming from one of the several organised campaigns on this issue (see appendix 1 for further information)
- a launch conference on 13 May for 160 delegates who discussed PSHE education, among other topics
- 561 attendees at 34 focus groups of headteachers, initial teacher education providers, system leaders, local authority advisers, professional associations, unions, interest groups, a group representing different diversity organisations, and focus groups of children and of parents
- 507 online responses from children to a separate, child-friendly consultation
- 375 online responses from parents to a separate, parent-friendly consultation
- verbal and written comments made at a variety of meetings attended by QCDA advisers
- emails, letters and petitions received during the consultation period.

Consultation format

Statements were developed about the proposals to make PSHE education statutory, and respondents were asked about the strength of their agreement with these statements.

Part 1: The status of PSHE education

- *PSHE education should become a statutory part of the national curriculum*
- *Parents, carers and guardians should be allowed to maintain the right to withdraw their children from the sex and relationship education element of PSHE education*
- *A school's governing body should retain the duty to prepare, in consultation with parents, and publish its policy on sex and relationship education*
- *A school's governing body should consult pupils, at secondary level, when developing its sex and relationship education policy*
- *Personal, Social, Health and Economic education is the best title for this subject at secondary level*
- *PSHE education should be excluded from having any attainment targets.*

Part 2: PSHE education at key stage 3 and 4

- *The programme of study for personal wellbeing at Key Stage 3 meets the needs of all learners*
- *The programme of study for personal wellbeing at Key Stage 4 meets the needs of all learners*
- *The programme of study for economic wellbeing and financial capability at Key Stage 3 meets the needs of all learners*
- *The programme of study for economic wellbeing and financial capability at Key Stage 4 meets the needs of all learners.*

This report summarises the quantitative data for each section as a result of the online questionnaire. 'Agree' and 'disagree' responses (and not usually 'don't know' responses) have been reported and so numbers do not always add to 100.

In conferences and focus groups QCDA requested participants to suggest alterations and improvements to the proposals, some of which are quoted after the quantitative data for each section.

Analysis of the data

Part 1: The status of PSHE education

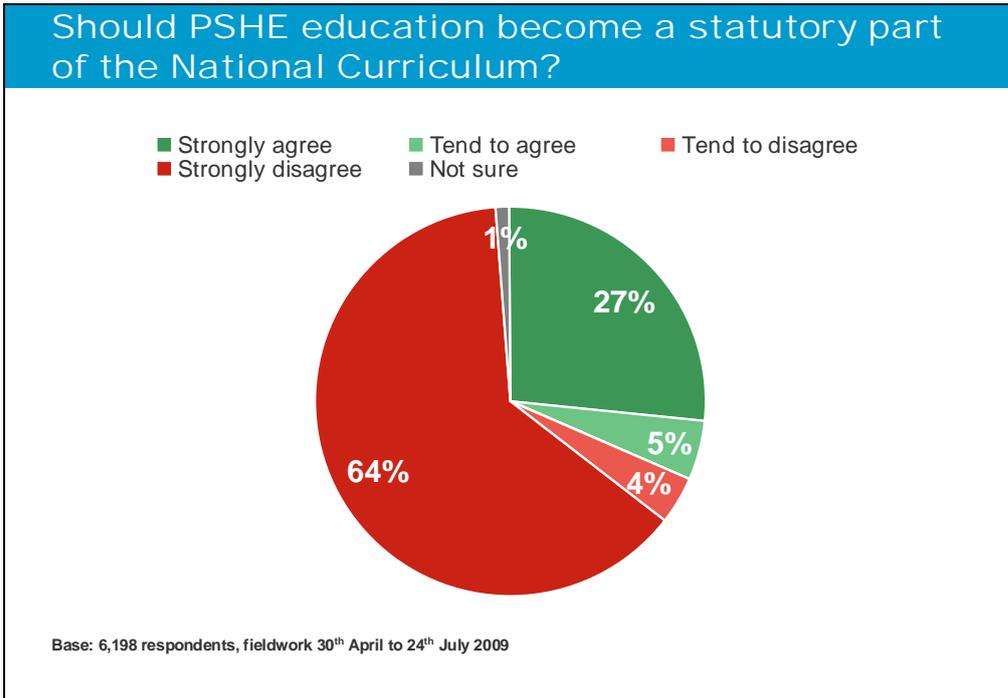
This section is based on the responses given to the following six statements:

- *PSHE education should become a statutory part of the national curriculum*
- *Parents, carers and guardians should be allowed to maintain the right to withdraw their children from the sex and relationship education element of PSHE education*
- *A school's governing body should retain the duty to prepare, in consultation with parents, and publish its policy on sex and relationship education*
- *A school's governing body should consult pupils, at secondary level, when developing its sex and relationship education policy*
- *Personal, Social, Health and Economic education is the best title for this subject at secondary level*
- *PSHE education should be excluded from having any attainment targets.*

From the online survey

Nearly one in three respondents (32 per cent) agreed that PSHE education should become a statutory part of the national curriculum. Over two thirds (68 per cent) disagreed.

Agreement was higher than average among those whose responses were identified as part of a campaign, with 57 per cent agreeing that PSHE should become a statutory part of the National Curriculum. Among non-campaign respondents, however, agreement was very similar to the average (30 per cent compared with 32 per cent overall).



Nearly four out of five respondents (79 per cent) agreed that parents, carers and guardians should be allowed to maintain the right to withdraw their children from sex and relationships education. Just more than one in five (21 per cent) disagreed.

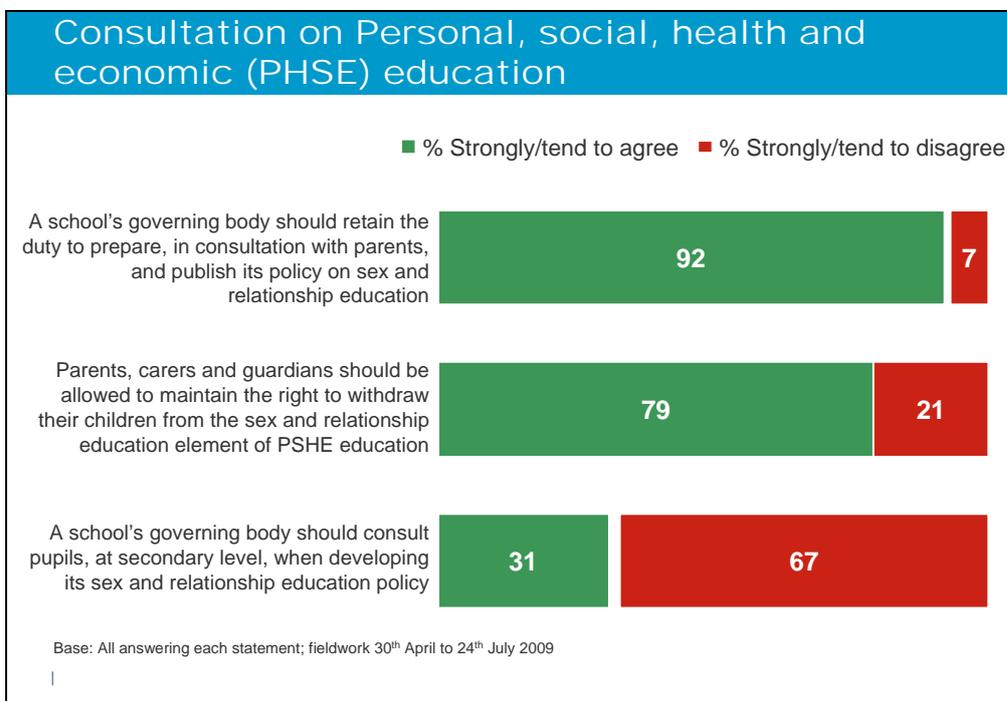
Among those who responded as part of a campaign, agreement was lower than for non-campaign respondents. 48 per cent agreed that parents' right to withdraw their children from the sex and relationship education element of PSHE education should be maintained, compared with 81 per cent of those whose responses were not identified as being part of a campaign.

More than nine out of ten respondents (92 per cent) agreed that a school's governing body should retain the duty to prepare, in consultation with parents, and publish its policy on sex and relationships education. Fewer than one in ten (8 per cent) disagreed.

Agreement fell slightly among those whose responses were identified as part of a campaign. 83 per cent agreed that school governors should retain the duty to prepare and publish sex and relationship education policy, compared with 92% among non-campaign respondents.

Nearly one third (31 per cent) of respondents agreed that a school’s governing body should consult pupils when developing its sex and relationships education policy. Two thirds (67 per cent) disagreed.

Looking at responses among those identified as part of a campaign, agreement rose somewhat. Nearly three in five campaign respondents (59 per cent) agreed that a school’s governing body should consult secondary pupils when developing its sex and relationship education policy, compared with 31 per cent of those not responding as part of a campaign.



One third (33 per cent) of respondents agreed that 'Personal, social, health and economic education' was the best title for this subject at secondary level. Nearly half (45 per cent) of respondents were unsure if this was the best title and just over one in five (22 per cent) disagreed that this was the best title.

Among those whose responses were identified as part of a campaign, disagreement was higher. 52 per cent disagreed that Personal, social, health and economic education is the best title for the subject at secondary level, compared with 22 per cent overall.

Nearly nine out of ten respondents (86 per cent) agreed that PSHE education should be excluded from having any attainment targets. Just over one in ten (11 per cent) disagreed.

Opinion on the suitability of attainment targets did not differ noticeably between non-campaign respondents and those whose responses were identified with a campaign.

From free text responses, conferences, focus groups and written submissions

At QCDA's consultation conferences, delegates were asked to vote on the PSHE education proposals. In contrast with the online survey, nine out of ten respondents (90 per cent) supported the government's proposals to make PSHE education statutory. Also, over one third (34 per cent) supported the proposal to allow parents the right to withdraw from sex and relationships education. In line with the online survey, over six out of ten respondents (61 per cent) supported the government's proposal of exemption from attainment targets. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of respondents thought that PSHE education was the best title for this subject at secondary level. Nearly a third (31 per cent) were not sure.

Responses were also gathered from the survey free text box, focus groups and written submissions.

One group of comments concerned the status of PSHE education in the curriculum. Comments included the following.

- ~ *All children should have the same access to PSHE education - so it should be statutory.*
- ~ *PSHE education as a statutory subject is a really positive move and one that is integral to improving outcomes and aspirations of young people.*
- ~ *Better communication is needed between school and parents about the content of the PSHE education curriculum.*
- ~ *PSHE education should be the domain of the parent to teach, not the schools.*

Another group of comments concerned sex and relationship education. Comments included the following.

- ~ *The teaching of sex and relationship education should be done in accordance with the values of the parent.*
- ~ *I disagree with teaching young children sex education as the content is too detailed and encourages inappropriate behaviour.*
- ~ *We are strongly in favour of retaining the governing body duty to prepare and publish its policy on sex and relationships education.*
- ~ *It should be made clear that the school governors' right to prepare and publish the sex and relationships education policy relates to how rather than whether individual schools should deliver sex and relationships education.*
- ~ *Schools should be teaching abstinence until sex within marriage.*
- ~ *If parents are allowed to withdraw their children from sex and relationships education this will disadvantage the children and deny them an essential part of their education.*
- ~ *Parents need to retain the right to decide on how and when they tackle the issues of sex and relationships with their own child.*
- ~ *If the right to withdraw is retained, it is essential that there is clarity about what aspects the right covers and that schools must work with parents to guarantee their children's entitlement.*
- ~ *Secondary pupils should be consulted when developing a sex and relationships education policy as should primary children in years 5 and 6.*

A third group of comments concerned the title for PSHE education. Comments included the following.

- ~ *The current title is not properly understood outside schools as it doesn't adequately describe the subject or its aims.*
- ~ *This title is recognised and understood by teachers and pupils, so a change of name is unnecessary and potentially expensive.*
- ~ *Changing the name will cause more confusion and not necessarily lead to improvements in teaching and learning or improved wellbeing for children.*
- ~ *The name is less important than the moral framework of the subject.*

Suggestions for alternative names included (in order of frequency of occurrence):

- ~ *Life skills/skills for life*
- ~ *Personal development/personal education*
- ~ *Life Education/Preparation for Life*
- ~ *Personal, Social and Health Education*
- ~ *Health and wellbeing education*
- ~ *Citizenship Education*
- ~ *Sex Education*
- ~ *Personal and Economic Education/Wellbeing*
- ~ *Personal, social and moral education*
- ~ *Emotional and social education*

The final group of comments concerned the assessment of PSHE education. Comments included the following.

- ~ *I value the end of key stage statements as guidance.*
- ~ *You can't put targets on values so individual assessments and monitoring is better.*
- ~ *A proper and rigorous assessment of PSHE education would help to underpin learning and emphasise the subject's value and importance to learners, their teachers and their parents, whilst helping schools to demonstrate progression.*
- ~ *There are elements of PSHE education that can and should be assessed. It is important for children to know what the next steps are.*

QCDA also commissioned a consultation with school students, including those with special educational needs. Nearly two thirds (65 per cent) of these students agreed that PSHE education should become statutory and nearly one third (32 per cent) were in favour of parents having the right to withdraw their children from sex and relationships education. Nearly half (45 per cent) of the young people felt that they should have the right to withdraw themselves from sex and relationships education and two thirds (66 per cent) agreed with consulting pupils when developing a sex and relationships education policy.

Part 2: PSHE education at key stage 3 and 4

This section is based on the responses given regarding the following four statements:

- *The programme of study for personal wellbeing at key stage 3 meets the needs of all learners.*
- *The programme of study for personal wellbeing at key stage 4 meets the needs of all learners.*
- *The programme of study for economic wellbeing and financial capability at key stage 3 meets the needs of all learners.*
- *The programme of study for economic wellbeing and financial capability at key stage 4 meets the needs of all learners.*

From the online survey

Nearly one in five respondents (18 per cent) agreed that the programme of study for personal wellbeing at key stage 3 meets the needs of all learners. Over two thirds (69 per cent) disagreed.

Among those whose responses were identified with a campaign, however, opinion was evenly divided. Nearly the same number of campaign respondents agreed that that the programme of study for personal wellbeing at key stage 3 meets the needs of all learners as the number who disagreed (49 per cent compared with 47 per cent who disagree).

Nearly one in five respondents (18 per cent) also agreed that the programme of study for personal wellbeing at key stage 4 meets the needs of all learners. Over two thirds (69 per cent) disagreed.

Those responding as part of a campaign or petition were more likely than those who were not to agree that the personal well being programme of study at key stage 4 meets the needs of all learners (50 per cent compared with 16 per cent respectively).

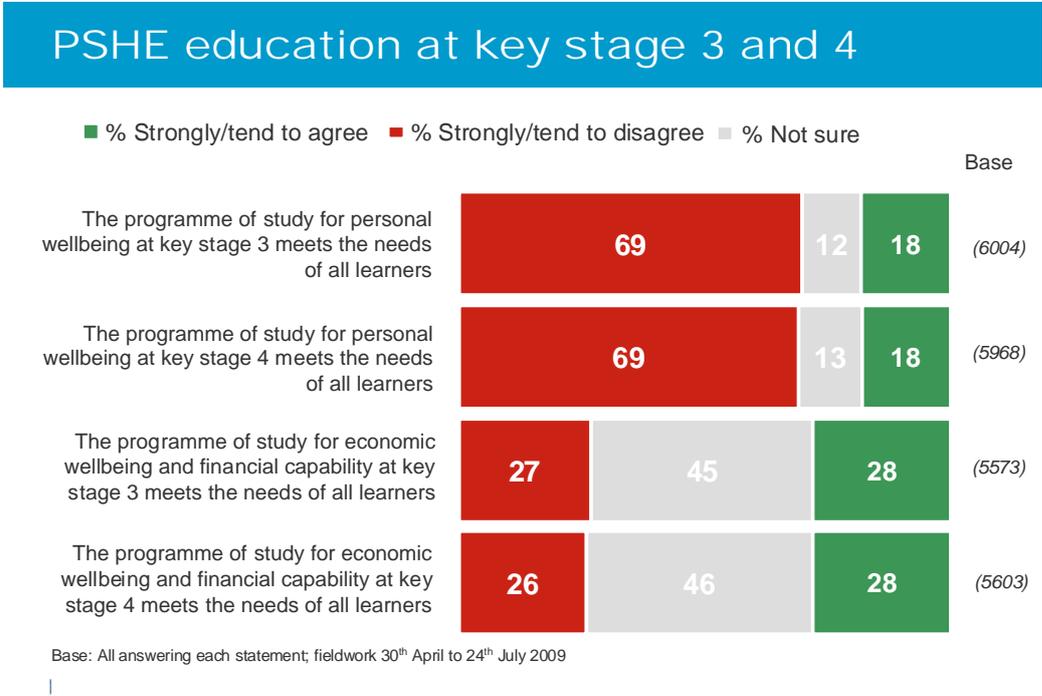
Nearly three in ten respondents (28 per cent) agreed that the programme of study for economic wellbeing and financial capability at key stage 3 meets the needs of all learners. A quarter (26 per cent) disagreed.

Agreement rose somewhat among campaign respondents of whom a third (34 per cent) believed the programme of study for economic wellbeing and financial capability at key

stage 3 meets the needs of all learners (compared with 28 per cent of those whose responses were not identified with a campaign). Disagreement, in contrast, was roughly the same (27 per cent of campaign respondents versus 26 per cent for those not identified with a campaign).

Nearly three in ten respondents (28 per cent) also agreed that the programme of study for economic wellbeing and financial capability at key stage 4 meets the needs of all learners. A quarter (25 per cent) disagreed.

There are few significant differences between the views of campaign and non-campaign respondents on this question.



From free text responses, conferences, focus groups and written submissions

Responses were gathered from the survey free text box, focus groups, conferences and written submissions. A wide range of views were expressed, and an illustrative range of comments included the following.

- ~ *Schools have the flexibility to take the core and adapt it to meet the needs of their students.*
- ~ *It is important for children to learn about life skills e.g. social skills, economic and financial skills.*
- ~ *Different schools and pupils have different needs - a 'one size fits all' approach will not work.*
- ~ *It needs to be taught by specialists.*
- ~ *I am concerned that content is too explicit for my children.*
- ~ *The programme emphasises the pursuit of careers but should also recognise the value of being a full-time parent.*
- ~ *We note a lack of content in the area of disability, which is disappointing.*
- ~ *Both personal wellbeing programmes set an inappropriately liberal tone regarding sexual activity, infections, orientation and same-sex relationships.*
- ~ *The relationship between the programmes of study and statutory frameworks (e.g. the career, work-related learning and enterprise framework) needs clarifying.*
- ~ *The section on discrimination needs to be changed to unjust discrimination.*
- ~ *Child maintenance should be included.*
- ~ *Personal wellbeing at key stage 4 does not go far enough in addressing the needs of children and young people affected by HIV. The social aspects of HIV, such as stigma and discrimination, should be taught.*

Appendix 1

Respondent demographics

This consultation sparked interest from several groups related to particular communities. As such, many of the responses received were the result of campaigns run by organisations which had encouraged their members to complete the survey.

All data for this consultation should therefore be considered with this in mind. The proportion of respondents from particular communities may not reflect the makeup of the population as a whole when compared with the 2001 census data.

In some cases, organisations provided template responses, and where there was an opportunity to provide comments as part of the consultation, members sometimes copied responses verbatim from these templates. Where this happens this is highlighted in the report.

When the wording used in a response was identical, either entirely or in part, to a known campaign or several other responses received, that response was considered to be part of a campaign. Other responses that expressed similar views to a specific campaign, but did not use identical wording, were not classified as campaign responses.

At least nineteen per cent of responses to the consultation were related to campaigns.