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## **REVIEW OF PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION (PSHE)**

I write to inform you that I have today launched the review of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. The review was announced in the Schools White Paper, 'The Importance of Teaching', which set out our belief that all pupils should benefit from high-quality PSHE education. The aim of the review is to consider the essential knowledge and awareness that pupils need to be taught, so that they understand the world around them and are able to manage their lives, now and in the future.

Children can benefit enormously from PSHE education which helps them make safe and informed choices; it also can play a role in helping to tackle public health issues such as substance misuse and supporting young people with the financial decisions they must make.

In Ofsted's 2010 report PSHE education was judged to be good or outstanding in over three-quarters of the schools visited with many areas of good practice. However, the report also identified some weaknesses. The review will therefore seek to identify what the core body of knowledge for PSHE is, and how schools can improve the quality of PSHE education. The Government is already reviewing the National Curriculum so that it reflects the body of essential knowledge in core subjects, and we expect PSHE education to reflect and fit within this approach.

Organisations and individuals, including teachers, parents, young people, faith organisations and campaign groups are invited to submit evidence or provide examples of good practice at  
[www.PSHEEducation.Review@education.gsi.gov.uk](http://www.PSHEEducation.Review@education.gsi.gov.uk).

Once the review has considered the evidence, good practice and range of opinions, the Department will publish a summary of its findings and will make proposals for public consultation.

The review will be managed by the Department for Education and will report to the Secretary of State for Education. A copy of the remit for the review is attached, and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the House library.

With best wishes.

*Yours sincerely* 

**Nick Gibb MP**

## REVIEW OF PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION

1. The Government said in the Schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, that it would conduct an internal review to determine how to support schools to improve the quality of teaching of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, including giving teachers the flexibility to use their judgement about how best to deliver PSHE education.

### Background

2. PSHE education comprises a number of topics and is also taught as a subject in its own right. Although schools have been teaching PSHE education for many years, it was introduced in its current form in September 2008 with non-statutory programmes of study at Key Stages 3 and 4 (secondary age group). These programmes of study set out the concepts, skills, processes and opportunities that pupils should learn or experience by age 16, covering:

- Personal well-being: including sex and relationships; drugs, alcohol and tobacco; emotional health and well-being; nutrition; physical activity; and safety; and
- Economic well-being and financial capability: including personal finance; work-related learning; and careers.

There are also non-statutory PSHE education frameworks for Key Stages 1 and 2 (primary age group), which include many of the topics listed above, taught in an age-appropriate way.

3. PSHE education itself does not have any statutory basis and is not part of the National Curriculum, which means that schools are not required to follow the frameworks or programmes of study at either primary or secondary stages. Some compulsory subjects<sup>1</sup> are sometimes taught as part of PSHE education:

- Sex education: secondary schools must provide sex education, having regard to guidance from the Secretary of State<sup>2</sup>. The Government does not intend to change this legislation or parents' right of withdrawal.
- Careers education: secondary schools must currently provide careers education. The Government's Education Bill currently before Parliament seeks to remove this duty and instead introduce a new duty on schools to secure access to independent and impartial careers advice.

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<sup>1</sup> These subjects are part of the basic curriculum rather than the National Curriculum. They are compulsory for maintained schools, but the Department does not prescribe national programmes of study or attainment targets.

<sup>2</sup> "Sex and Relationships Education Guidance", DfEE, July 2000



- Work-related learning: secondary schools must also currently provide work-related learning at Key Stage 4. Following the Government's acceptance of Professor Wolf's recommendation, this duty will be removed, subject to Parliament's agreement. The Department will seek to achieve this in 2012.

4. In addition, there are elements within the statutory National Curriculum which some schools teach as part of PSHE education (at both primary and secondary stages). These include, for example in National Curriculum science, life processes and the reproductive cycle, and the effects of diet, drugs and disease.

### **Reasons for reviewing PSHE education**

5. The Government has set out in the Schools White Paper its aims for education and for the school curriculum. It envisages schools and teachers taking greater control over, and accountability for, what is taught in schools and how it is taught, and using their professional skills to provide the best education for all pupils. The Government can help by reducing unnecessary prescription, bureaucracy and central control throughout the system. PSHE education needs to reflect, and fit within, this approach.

6. The Government is already reviewing the National Curriculum, so that it reflects the body of essential knowledge in core subjects and takes up less teaching time in schools. This will allow schools the space to provide a rounded education, including PSHE education.

7. There is much of value that children need to learn and experience which sits outside the National Curriculum. Children can benefit enormously from PSHE education. Good PSHE education supports young people to make safe and informed choices. It can help tackle public health issues such as substance misuse and support young people with the financial decisions they must make. There needs to be room in the life of the school for an exploration of wider social issues which contribute to the well-being and engagement of all pupils. It should be for teachers, not government, to design the lessons and the experiences which will engage pupils. Different schools may want to cover different life skills, reflecting their pupils' interests and local circumstances.

8. In a report published in 2010<sup>3</sup> Ofsted found that PSHE education (provision, teaching and pupils' achievement) was good or outstanding in more than three-quarters of the schools visited, and that it had been improving for six years. Inspectors reported many areas of good practice, such as pupils' positive attitudes and the use of external agencies. Inspectors also identified issues: weaker areas of provision, such as education on sex and relationships, drugs, mental health, and financial capability; teachers with insufficient subject knowledge in about a quarter of lessons; ineffective

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<sup>3</sup> "Personal, social, health and economic education in schools", Ofsted, July 2010

assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in about half of schools; and too few schools consulting or involving parents.

## **Remit of the review**

### *Content of PSHE education*

9. The review will:

- a. consider the core outcomes which we expect PSHE education to achieve and the core of knowledge and awareness that the Government should expect pupils to acquire at school;
- b. look at whether the national, non-statutory frameworks and programmes of study are an effective way of defining content;
- c. explore how schools can better decide for themselves what more pupils need to know, in consultation with parents and others locally;
- d. consider whether elements of PSHE education should be made statutory within the basic curriculum (in addition to sex education); and
- e. consider how to simplify the statutory guidance on sex and relationships education, including strengthening the priority given to: teaching about relationships; the importance of positive parenting; and teaching young people about sexual consent.

The Government has already ruled out making PSHE education as a whole a statutory subject within the National Curriculum. It will only propose making new elements of PSHE education statutory (para 9.d. above), if there is clear evidence of the benefit to pupils of doing so and if, within the National Curriculum review's consideration of the overall statutory burden on schools, it is practical to do so. The Government has no plans to change the law on sex education or parents' right to withdraw their child from sex education.

### *Quality of PSHE education*

10. Building on Ofsted's findings, the review will:

- a. draw together evidence on improving the teaching of PSHE education, and ways of disseminating good practice;
- b. identify evidence-based interventions that are proven to get good results in achieving the outcomes we want from PSHE education and ways of promoting them;



- c. consider how PSHE education could be improved using levers proposed in the Schools White Paper, such as Teaching Schools;
- d. explore alternative methods of improving quality, including the use of experienced external agencies (public, private and voluntary) to support schools;
- e. look at good practice in assessing and tracking pupils' progress in PSHE education; and
- f. consider how schools might define and account for PSHE education's outcomes to pupils, parents and local people.

11. In addition to the PSHE education review, the Department is working with the Office for National Statistics on the development of national well-being indicators, including the possibility of a child well-being indicator.

### **Process for the review**

12. The review will be managed internally by the Department for Education and report to the Secretary of State for Education.

13. The Department will review existing national and international research evidence, and will also take representations from a cross section of interested and representative organisations, experts and individuals. A summary of the evidence considered in the review and of representations made to the review will be published. This will ensure that the review is transparent, rooted in evidence and that it proposes practical measures.

14. The review will take into account the emerging findings from phase 1 of the National Curriculum review to ensure that curriculum policy is joined up and reflects the Government's aims to reduce prescription and give teachers freedoms to design a curriculum that best meets the needs of their pupils.

15. After the review of PSHE education, the Secretary of State will publish proposals for public consultation.

16. In the meantime, schools should continue to provide PSHE education and should feel free to innovate and improve their teaching, for example in response to Ofsted's findings in 2010. The Department encourages schools or external agencies that are planning or working on PSHE education projects to continue them, so that they can be considered in the review, and not to delay their project until the conclusion of the review.

17. Further information about the review, including how to make representations, is available at

[www.PSHEducation.Review@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:www.PSHEducation.Review@education.gsi.gov.uk)

Updates on the progress of the review will also be posted there.