

Education Bill: Statutory PSHE



**NCB Briefing for Committee Stage in the House of Lords
June 2011**

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1. Summary

The National Children's Bureau (NCB) supports amendments 88, 89 and 90 to the Education Bill to introduce Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 as a foundation subject within the National Curriculum for England. They also make the teaching of PSHE education in Academies at these stages compulsory.

2. Introduction

NCB believes that the importance and benefits of planned learning in PSHE justify its place in the National Curriculum. In his 2009 review of whether PSHE education should be made statutory, head teacher Sir Alasdair MacDonald established that PSHE education could and should be seen as a distinct 'subject' with its own unique body of knowledge.¹ Many schools already provide good quality PSHE and fit it into their timetables without compromising other subjects, proving that it can be done.

We support the introduction of PSHE as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum because:

- 1. Children, young people and their parents want it;**
- 2. Making the subject statutory will improve quality and enhance parents' confidence by improving teacher training, assessment and inspection;**
- 3. It supports academic learning and develops through its own unique body of core knowledge the capabilities children and young people need to flourish in life and at work;**
- 4. It promotes health, well-being and personal safety;**

¹ MacDonald, Sir A (2009) *Independent review of the proposal to make Personal, Social, health and Economic (PSHE) education statutory*, pages 19, 37.

5. It helps schools promote the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of their pupils.

6. Making PSHE education statutory will improve access for all

3. Why does PSHE need to be a foundation subject in the curriculum?

3.1 Children, young people and their parents want it

Research shows children and young people want opportunities to discuss issues that are relevant to their lives and their well-being including emotions, relationships, health issues such as mental health, sexual health, diet and exercise, and transport.² Making PSHE statutory will also provide a stronger framework for parents to be consulted on, involved in and engaged with what is taught.

According to a 2009 Populus survey, 81% of parents agree that every child should attend sex and relationships education (SRE) as part of the national curriculum³, and a survey by Parentline Plus shows that 97% of parents believe that drugs and alcohol education should be delivered in schools.⁴

Furthermore, due to the nature of the topics covered, PSHE education gives schools an opportunity to better engage parents in their children's learning. For example, Sex Education Forum research into parents views of SRE showed that parents see school and home as the two main sources of SRE, with 84% of parents believing that school and home should both be involved⁵.

3.2 Making the subject statutory will improve quality by improving teacher training, assessment and inspection

Evidence suggests that whilst PSHE education is taught to a high standard in most schools, the quality of what is delivered is weaker in a significant minority of schools, meaning that pupil's access to good quality PSHE education is highly variable. Ofsted found that in a quarter of schools *"the lessons observed were inadequate or not better than satisfactory. In these lessons, many of them taught by form tutors, teachers lacked the necessary expertise to engage pupils and to challenge their misconceptions. In both the primary and secondary schools visited, assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in PSHE education were still the weakest aspects of provision"*.

² National Children's Bureau (2002) *Young at Heart – consulting with children and young people on health and well being*.

³ Sex Education Poll (October 2009) by Populus/Blue Rubicon for the DCSF

⁴ Chamberlain, H (May 2008) *Drugs and alcohol education report*. Parentline Plus.
http://www.drugeducationforum.com/images/dynamicImages/file/6814_868224.pdf

⁵ Emmerson, L (2011) *Parents and SRE: A Sex Education Forum evidence briefing*, London: Sex Education Forum http://www.ncb.org.uk/campaigning/media_news/2011/jan-jun/parents_want_support_with_sex.aspx

The MacDonald Review concluded that effective learning in PSHE is dependent on the quality of teaching. The preceding reviews into sex and relationship education (SRE)⁶ and drugs and alcohol education⁷ both provided evidence that the quality of PSHE education being delivered was too variable and was failing to meet children and young people's needs. In all cases, the conclusion of these reviews was that PSHE education should become statutory to compel schools to tackle this.

Research conducted by the Sheffield Hallam University concluded that "*The most effective PSHE education was delivered by well-qualified staff*". Whilst the PSHE Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme has gone some way to improving the skills of staff teaching PSHE, there are currently a limited number of specialist PSHE teachers. This, along with the low prioritisation of the subject in schools because it is not statutory, means that the quality of PSHE provision has remained unacceptably patchy for too long.

Statutory, foundation subject status will not only mean that the subject is prioritised in school curriculum planning – it will lead to an upsurge in teachers specialising in PSHE education through Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and other routes. We would particularly welcome the role of the new Teaching Schools in supporting the development of PSHE teaching through active practice.

Assessment of PSHE education is weak and Ofsted has been critical of this for some time. Their most recent report says that "*the assessment and tracking of pupil's progress in PSHE education were inadequate in 15 of the 73 secondary schools visited. The assessment of PSHE was ineffective in important respects in about half of the primary and secondary schools, although elements of it were in place.*" The report goes on to recommend that the Department for Education should "*support the development of good practice in assessing PSHE education, and publicise this widely to schools*" and that schools should "*implement systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in PSHE education*". Making PSHE education statutory would support progress in this direction.

3.3 PSHE education supports academic learning and develops the capabilities children and young people need to flourish in life and at work.

Educationalists recognise that many barriers to learning lie outside the classroom and that supporting children's personal development and well-being (in part through learning in PSHE education) impacts positively on standards of achievement in all subjects.⁸

⁶ DCSF (2008) *Review of sex and relationship education (SRE) In schools: a report by the External Reference Group*. London: DCSF. <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/13030/SRE%20final.pdf>

⁷ Advisory Group on Drug and Alcohol Education (2008) *Drug education: an entitlement for all*. London: DCSF. <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/13032/ACFE3AC.pdf>

⁸ National College for School Leadership (Nov 2005) *Every Child Matters: why it matters to leaders*. Nottingham: National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services.

In addition, the unique body of knowledge that children and young people can learn or develop through effective PSHE education can help them develop the personal capabilities and skills that are vital in life and work. These 'life skills' include: perseverance, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, self management, self respect, teamwork, time management, financial capability, risk competence and managing stress. The Tomlinson Report on the 14-19 curriculum⁹, the Steer Report on behaviour¹⁰ and Ofsted's report on PSHE education¹¹ have all emphasised the importance of children and young people developing life skills to help them learn, achieve and gain employment.

3.4 PSHE education promotes health, well-being and safety, helping schools to fulfil their duty to promote pupil well-being

The McDonald Review reported that "*PSHE education also makes a key contribution to the promotion of pupil well-being and, potentially, to wider well-being outcomes.*"¹²

PSHE education is crucial in safeguarding children. Good PSHE education helps children to learn about personal safety and improve their understanding of positive and respectful relationships. It can help pupils to recognise positive parenting and family relationships, as well as abusive, harmful or inappropriate behaviours. It can support children to develop the confidence to ask for help, which can contribute to a reduction in childhood abuse and neglect.¹³ Similarly, evidence shows that PSHE education is an important intervention for the prevention of bullying.¹⁴

Although slowly decreasing, teenage pregnancy rates in the UK are still the highest in western Europe. Countries like the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland which have widespread provision of sex education and have good access to sexual health services have seen a marked decrease in teenage pregnancy since the 1970s.¹⁵ The final report of the Teenage Pregnancy Independent Advisory Group warned that teenage pregnancy rates will rise again unless there is better provision of sex and relationships education. They reported that: "*Good SRE taught by trained professionals gives children and young people the knowledge and life skills to resist peer, partner and media pressures and to understand issues such as sexual consent and responsibility. We are left with*

⁹ Tomlinson, M (2005) *14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform*. London: Department for Education and Skills.

¹⁰ Department for Education and Skills (2005) *The report of the practitioner group on school behaviour and discipline*.

¹¹ *Personal, social and health education in secondary schools*, January 2005.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3828&type=doc>

¹² MacDonald (2009), page 18.

¹³ Harries, J (2007) *Promoting Personal Safety through PSHE*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

¹⁴ Office of the Children's Commissioner (2005) *Journeys: children and young people talk about bullying*. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

¹⁵ Parker, R and others (2005) *Teenage pregnancy strategy evaluation: final report synthesis*. London: DCSF. <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RW38.pdf>

*unequal provision of SRE around the country, with many young people missing out on their entitlement to good quality teaching of this critical issue.*¹⁶

Furthermore, a recent survey by the Sex Education Forum showed that one in four children are not learning about HIV and AIDs at school¹⁷ despite an existing legal duty that schools teach about HIV, AIDs and sexually transmitted disease. NCB therefore welcomes clarification of the legal position in amendment 90 by explicitly including HIV, AIDs and STD education within sex and relationships education.

3.5 PSHE education helps schools to promote the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of their pupils

Schools are required by law to provide a curriculum that promotes the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of their pupils¹⁸. In addition, under the proposed new Ofsted framework inspectors will be examining how well schools do this. PSHE education can help schools fulfil this duty. It enables children to learn about a range of social, moral and cultural issues; helps them understand and explore social values from a range of different perspectives; and gives them the knowledge and information they need to make informed choices. This learning is framed within the context of their community, by the ethos of their school and within the wider societal context.

PSHE education plays a key role in promoting inclusion and reducing inequalities¹⁹ and thereby helps schools to fulfil their duties under the Equality Act. It provides myriad opportunities to explore difference and diversity and learn skills for living in a multi-cultural and diverse society. Many schools recognise the important role that PSHE education plays in promoting respect for diversity and difference.

3.6 Making PSHE education statutory will improve access for all

The non-statutory status of much of PSHE education means that some schools are not prioritising the subject and not allocating sufficient curriculum time to it. Some schools are not delivering it at all.

Although recent reports from Ofsted^{20 21} suggests that while, on balance, provision for PSHE education has been improving, there is serious inconsistency in delivery. Last year they reported that "*Lack of discrete curriculum time in a quarter of schools visited,*

¹⁶ Teenage Pregnancy independent Advisory Group (2010) *TPIAG Final Report: Teenage pregnancy: Past successes – future challenges*

¹⁷ Emmerson, L (2011) *Young People's experiences of HIV and AIDS education*, London: Sex Education Forum http://www.ncb.org.uk/campaigning/media_news/2011/jan-jun/1_in_4_children_miss_hiv_educ.aspx

¹⁸ s.78 Education Act 2002

¹⁹ Blake, S and Plant, S (2005) *Addressing inequalities and inclusion through PSHE and Citizenship*. London: National Children's Bureau

²⁰ Ofsted (2007) *Time for change?: personal, social and health education*. London: Ofsted.

²¹ Ofsted (2010) *Personal, social, health and economic education in schools*'.

particularly the secondary schools, meant that programmes of study were not covered in full. The areas that suffered included aspects of sex and relationships education; education about drugs, including alcohol; and mental health issues". The Sheffield Hallam University research supports this, reporting that only a little over half of primary schools and a third of secondary schools said they covered all PSHE education elements. They particularly reported that the economic wellbeing elements were seldom given the same priority or prominence as other parts of the subject.

4. About NCB

The National Children's Bureau (NCB) is the leading support and development body for the children and youth sector in England. We bring together organisations from across the voluntary, statutory and private sectors through our membership scheme, and through the sector-led specialist networks and partnership programmes that operate under our charitable status. As part of this role, NCB hosts the Sex Education Forum, the Anti-Bullying Alliance, Play England, the Council for Disabled Children, the Early Childhood Forum and the Childhood Bereavement Network.