

Scottish Government submission of 6 March 2024

PE2077/A: Update Curriculum for Excellence to remove Personal and Social Education (PSE) from secondary schools

Thank you for your e mail regarding the petition on removing personal and social education (PSE) from the secondary school curriculum in Scotland.

Learning in PSE is designed to ensure children and young people develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. In secondary school, PSE is a taught subject which covers aspects of planning for choices and changes, substance misuse, relationships, sexual health and parenthood, in addition to aspects of physical activity, sport and health. There are six areas, noted below, which provide a holistic view of PSE.

- Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical Wellbeing;
- Planning for Choices and Changes;
- Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport;
- Food and Health;
- Substance Misuse; and,
- Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP).

Through Curriculum for Excellence, PSE is one of the key vehicles to apply learning on health and wellbeing. Health and Wellbeing is spread right across the curriculum, and it is one of the three core areas that are the responsibility of all staff in the school, the other two areas are literacy and numeracy. Schools are encouraged to develop the curriculum to suit their local context and meet the needs of children and young people. It is good practice for schools to consult with children and young people and respond to their views appropriately, to ensure this meets the needs of all children and young people in the school or educational setting. There is no specific guidance for local authorities for teaching of PSE; guidance is however made available on some of individual areas outlines above, such as RSHP.

In summary, PSE offers us an opportunity to ensure children and young people are prepared for the issues and challenges that life may bring. It is essential we equip our young people with these skills and understanding to enable them to deal with the fast changing culture and society that we live in. The Scottish Government has no plans to remove PSE from the national curriculum.

In May 2017, the Scottish Parliament's Education and Skills Committee published a report following work to examine PSE. The Committee's work included a number of focus groups with teachers, students and others during which, among other things, PSE was discussed. In addition to holding formal evidence and focus groups, the Committee asked online '*what should Personal and Social Education sessions be about?*' and how it should be delivered. There was a high level of engagement, and the Committee received hundreds of submissions, Facebook comments, short emails of around 100 words, and tweets. Through these responses, the Committee gathered a clear picture of how valuable good PSE is to young people. The Committee also noted it is also so important that young people experience a broad PSE curriculum to support the goals of the Curriculum for Excellence "*to help young people become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors*". The Scottish Government continues to take forward the Committee's recommendations to help improve learners' experience of PSE.

I hope the Committee finds this letter helpful in setting out the Scottish Government's position on PSE in Scottish secondary schools.

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