



Ein cyf/Our ref KW/01380/21

Kim Isherwood
Chair
Public Child Protection Wales
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5 March 2021

Dear Kim Isherwood,

I am writing to you following the recent campaign regarding Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) we have received on behalf of Public Child Protection Wales. I am responding to you as the campaign organiser, rather than to each individual letter.

The Curriculum for Wales has at its heart our aspiration for every child and young person in Wales as defined by the four purposes of the new curriculum. Two of these purposes are 'healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society' and 'ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.' Mandatory RSE will enable learners to embody these purposes at 16.

In line with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), all children and young people have the right to receive high quality, holistic and inclusive education about relationships and sexuality. High quality and inclusive RSE plays an important role for the safeguarding and protection of all learners in Wales. Parents, of course, have a central role to play in this, but there is also a crucial role for schools - and a role which is now more important than it has ever been. Schools will have the potential to create safe and empowering environments that build upon learners' own formal and informal learning and experiences, offline and online. This is why Welsh Government is making RSE a statutory requirement in the new curriculum in Wales, which will be introduced from 2022.

As you will be aware, the statutory guidance for RSE is currently being co-constructed to ensure that learning is developmentally appropriate, drawing on a range of evidence and expertise, such as the UNESCO International Technical Guidance of 2018. This document, alongside other expert evidence is being referred to during the co-construction phase, but decisions about the content of RSE are being taken in Wales in collaboration with teachers who are making their judgements in view of their extensive experience of the learner at different development stages.

We have always maintained that RSE lessons will need to be **developmentally appropriate** for children and young people – for example at age 5 children currently in the Foundation

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Phase learn about relationships with parents, family and friends. This will be mirrored in the new RSE statutory guidance and RSE Code.

We are not aware of the concerted global rollout you mention and nor are we part of any such an approach. Like the rest of the curriculum, the RSE guidance and code is being developed in Wales in co-construction with Welsh teaching professionals. We will, however continue to engage with a diverse range of perspectives such as learners, parents, schools and wider stakeholders here in Wales.

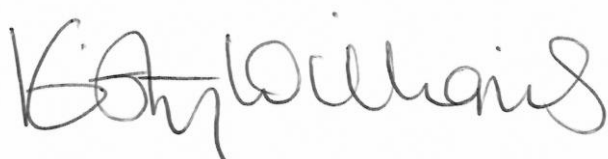
Together with the RSE Working Group we are ensuring that learner and staff safety and well-being is always at the forefront of our decision making. We will be reviewing learning resources with specialist practitioners against the ethos and philosophy of the new curriculum to ascertain whether they are appropriate to promote to schools in Wales. The practitioners will also be making suggestions for the development of new resources to support the teaching of this new area in Wales.

We will continue to review professional learning resources currently available to support teaching across the areas of learning; advising on the commission of new learning resources; and reviewing and building on existing professional learning provision. We recognise additional investment will be required to commission robust and purposeful professional learning resources and constructive support for teaching practitioners to increase their skills in this very important new area of learning.

Provision in the Bill requires the Welsh Ministers to ensure that the core learning set out in the RSE code is to be suitable for pupils at different ages, and stages of their emotional and behavioural development. Whilst there is a general requirement throughout the proposed Bill that teaching and learning should be appropriate to learners' "age, ability and aptitude", it is intended that it be explicit in relation to RSE in order to support and reassure teachers, parents/carers and learners that the curriculum will be developmentally appropriate.

I hope this clarifies our position in Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education