

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1096
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/06811/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

15 December 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter dated 30 November to inform me about a petition the Committee received which is currently collecting signatures regarding Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in which it is claimed "...that *RSE is part of a Global Roll out of Sexuality Education which is not appropriate for this country.*".

I can confirm that this claim is wholly inaccurate and false. As you will no doubt be aware, 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 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.

Relationships and sexuality education 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.

RSE will include the development of healthy relationships. Children begin to learn about relationships long before they start school. At a young age, learners will be focussing on developing positive relationships with their friends and family. The aim is to gradually empower learners (at developmentally appropriate stages) to build the knowledge, skills and ethical values to equip them with the tools to be able to understand how relationships, sex, gender and sexuality shape their own and other people's lives. It seeks to support learners' rights to enjoy equitable, safe, healthy and fulfilling relationships throughout their lives.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

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.

This includes the ability for learners to recognise, understand and speak out about discrimination and violence and know how and where to seek support and advice on a range of issues. At the age of five, the RSE guidance may well acknowledge learners' understanding appropriate and inappropriate touch, but not sexual consent.

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. This document is being referred to during the co-construction phase, however, I would like to reassure you that 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 are not involved in any international co-ordination of Relationships and Sexuality Education. We are also engaging with a diverse range of perspectives such as learners, parents, schools and wider stakeholders.

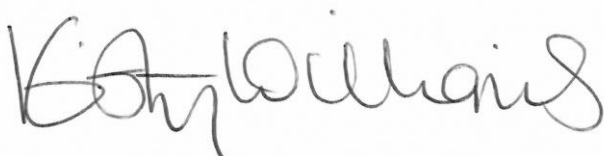
All the steps we have and will take to develop the statutory guidance and approach will be consulted on publically and transparently in order to ensure that people, particularly parents, are comfortable and confident that this provides a valuable contribution to their child's social, emotional, and physical development at the appropriate time

Going forward we are working with communities and all interested parties in co-constructing the learning and teaching for RSE, developing a shared understanding of the issues and the sensitivities. This is vital to enable everyone to have trust in how this will be implemented.

Finally, I have become increasingly aware of the misinformation circulating about RSE over recent months, and I recognise the need to urgently develop accurate and positive messaging highlighting the importance of RSE to counter this damaging misinformation.

I have committed to develop communication material and messages which will ensure that accurate information on RSE will be made available to schools, parents and communities across Wales to highlight the importance of RSE for the safeguarding and protection of children and young people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

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