

Sex and Relationship Education

Thank you very much for taking the time to email me about personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), and relationships education and relationships and sex education being included in the Children and Social Work Bill.

I also think that sex education should be compulsory. I believe that sex education has to be about more than 'plumbing and prevention' and I think that, once it becomes age appropriate, topics such as relationships and consent should also be discussed.

I am concerned about the extent to which young people are gathering information about sex from pornography, which is often violent and distorts understanding of what constitutes as consent. In addition, it is clearly of paramount importance that future generations understand the danger of sexually transmitted diseases and how they spread. After decades of highlighting this information to combat such diseases we do not want all the progress we have made to go to waste. I quite understand that many parents wish to broach these subjects with their children themselves. However, we should make sure all children receive the information they need. On the matter of reducing unplanned pregnancy at all ages, progress is being made on this and I do think that making sex education mandatory could be of further help.

I signed a letter to this effect to the Secretary of State for Education which you may be interested to view via the following link: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/Education/Correspondence/Chairs-letter-to-Secretary-of-State-re-PSHE-status-29-11-2016.PDF>

I hope the following information on this topic from the Department of Education is of interest:

Schools should be providing all young people with a curriculum that equips them for success in adult life, and that also addresses modern issues like cyber-bullying and internet safety. Part of that responsibility is to ensure every child has access to relevant, factually accurate and age-appropriate PSHE and RSE. The Secretary of State is personally committed to ensuring that progress in improving the availability and quality of PSHE and RSE is made a priority. The Government has introduced new clauses to the Children and Social Work Bill at Committee Stage which would require regulations to be made to require all secondary schools in England to teach relationships and sex education (RSE) and would introduce a new subject, 'relationships education' to be taught in all primary schools. Renaming the secondary school subject 'relationships and sex education' places emphasis on the intrinsic importance of healthy relationships and would deliver sex education within this context. The focus of relationships education in primary schools will be on building healthy relationships and staying safe. The Department for Education intends to engage with key groups to develop age-appropriate subject content that includes teaching on mental wellbeing, consent, resilience and keeping safe online. The clauses would continue to allow parents a right to withdraw their children from sex education and schools would be required to publish a clear statement of their policy and teaching content to ensure parents are engaged in the teaching throughout. It is important to make sure that our young people have the right information and right advice, and that what we teach them is fit for the world that children live in today. Starting at an early age so that children can understand relationships with one

another, is sensible. However, the Government is not proposing that sex education be compulsory in primary schools beyond what is already covered in the science curriculum. Teaching must remain age-appropriate. The clauses emphasise that relationships education content should remain appropriate and the Department for Education intends to work with key groups to develop age-appropriate subject content.