



**Catholic Education Service for England and Wales (CESEW) Response to  
Proposals to Make Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE)  
A Statutory Part of the National Curriculum**

1. Firstly, QCA should be aware that the CESEW broadly welcomed (subject to caveats – see below) Sir Alasdair MacDonald’s review of PSHE education, subject to public consultation and the hope that parents, governors and all other interested parties will make full use of this opportunity to share their views on the place and nature of PSHE in the future curriculum. We note that Sir Alasdair called for schools with a religious character to be able to deliver PSHE in line with their context, values and ethos; we welcome the various ministerial assurances on this point and expect to see them clearly reflected in the final requirements for statutory PSHE.
2. The CESEW’s support for statutory PSHE education is dependent on the continuation of the right of schools to ensure that what is taught upholds the ethos of the particular school. We look forward to governors’ continued role in determining their school’s approach to PSHE and the school’s Sex (and Relationships) Education policy. Catholic Schools are already places where there is often excellent provision for PSHE. This includes imparting facts, including those on Sex Education and learning the skills of good relationships, in age appropriate ways, as well as exploring the Church’s teachings on these matters. Any erosion of these rights would be unacceptable to the Catholic community.
3. Within the parameters of Catholic Schools being able to determine the detail of what they teach in PSHE and how it is taught, we support the principle of PSHE being a requirement for every pupil in maintained schools.
4. The CESEW remains firmly committed to ensuring that parents’ right to withdraw their children from Sex Education (beyond that which already takes place within the science national curriculum) be maintained. This is a crucial right in a community where parents are the first educators of their children and because parents are responsible for bringing up their children and not the State. We note that within the proposals to make PSHE statutory it is intended that it should form part of the National Curriculum (NC). We are concerned about this as a strategy because:
  - a) It is not a necessary approach, eg Religious Education is a statutory requirement but it is not part of the NC.

- b) There is currently no right to withdrawal from any part of the NC, therefore Sex Education would be an anomaly in this respect and we suggest that it would be more appropriate to make the requirement to provide PSHE statutory but outside the NC. This might also help to allay the fears of those parents who think that making PSHE statutory is a further attempt to undermine their rights and responsibilities.
5. The rights of parents, and young people as appropriate, in contributing to the development of the school's Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) policy will be important and we welcome its inclusion in Sir Alasdair's Macdonald's recommendations. However, we caution against a presumption that what young people want is necessarily what they need.
  6. The MacDonald Review recommended that the DCSF should offer faith school representatives support in ensuring that they have necessary supplementary resources and guidance before statutory PSHE Education comes into force. We urge that funding should be made available to faith communities to prepare such resources. Such materials and support should be developed through partnerships and respect and empowerment of those who lead schools with a religious character. In the case of Catholic Education, we are very anxious to secure resources to enable us (CESEW and diocesan colleagues) to draft guidance and protocols for schools to use in work with external agencies and re visitors to/working at the school.
  7. We welcome the expectation that DCSF will produce Guidance on PSHE Education. We ask that this involves faith communities and takes account of their distinctive needs.
  8. There should be no prescription as to how PSHE is taught although there should be an expectation that it will be adequately timetabled and taught by staff with the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence. Training will be imperative and it is essential that teacher training and professional development for PSHE be available through Catholic Higher Education/Universities and funded appropriately for diocesan officers to provide in-service training in their areas. We seek assurances that TDA will be required to provide Catholic routes for a cohort of specialist PSHE teachers and for the Master in Teaching & Learning and for the Advanced Skills Teachers' programmes. Continuous Professional Development should also be available, within the Catholic tradition for support staff and the wider Children's workforce working in Catholic settings.
  9. We request that Ofsted be asked to monitor and report on the implementation of statutory PSHE and that case studies of good practice be published; we feel confident that this will include Catholic schools. We also ask that we be funded to provide an evaluative report on PSHE based on S48 inspection evidence.

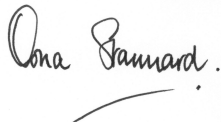
## **Comments and Requests on Existing and Proposed Programmes of Study and Their Explanatory Notes**

- i) Neither the Programmes of Study for Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 make reference to the importance of marriage for family life. Not to do so ignores the requirements of The Education Act 1996 which requires Local Authorities, Governing Bodies and Headteachers to ensure that Sex Education is given **“in such a manner as to encourage those pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life”**. Headteachers and school governors are also expected to “have regard to government guidance intended to ensure that children learn the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and the bringing up of children and that they are protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate having regard to the age and the religious and cultural background of the pupils concerned.” It is important for the continued confidence of parents, including those from Christian, Muslim and other faith traditions, that these expectations be rehearsed and upheld in the requirements for PSHE.
- ii) Both the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 Programmes of Study make similar references to challenging prejudice and discrimination assertively. In Key Stage 4 this is very strongly worded saying that “all forms of prejudice and discrimination must be challenged at every level in our lives”. This is simply misguided and wrong; there is prejudice and discrimination, for example, against paedophiles and this discrimination ensures that they are excluded from situations where children would be vulnerable to abuse. No reasonable person would expect this prejudice and discrimination to be challenged. Many other forms of discrimination are legitimate, for example, putting children first, giving the elderly some additional rights, making special provision for the disabled etc.
- iii) Both KS3 & 4 Programmes of Study would benefit from a requirement to further explore the source of values and to develop an understanding that the term ‘value’ does not of itself necessarily imply an automatic good, for example, the values of the BNP?
- iv) The Programmes of Study talk about risk and managing behaviour but there is little sense that pupils will learn that sexual intimacy can seldom be entirely free of risk, whether physical or emotional.

## **Comments on the ‘Understanding Physical Development, Health and Wellbeing’ Area of Learning/Programme of Study for Early Years and Primary School Pupils**

- i) In depicting the breadth of learning in this area it is stated that pupils should “learn about relationships and sex within the context of caring and stable relationships”. The explanatory text highlights that this should be age appropriate but at no point is there mention of marriage and family life (see above re Key Stage 3 & 4). We wish to see this rectified.

- ii) In personal wellbeing points M18 and L21 it is expected that pupils will learn how to form and maintain relationships with a range of different people (middle), and learn how to manage changing emotions in relationships and how new relationships may develop (later years). The explanatory notes point out that this includes “valuing relationships within their families and carers and with people different from themselves. This also includes changing relationships, marriage, civil partnerships, separation, loss and bereavement” (middle). **This is a source of some concern both as to the age appropriateness of this expectation and the weight and status of the explanatory notes.** We seek reassurance that schools would not be required to contrive to introduce pupils to the existence of civil partnerships or, for example, gay relationships at an inappropriately young age. Some children may be encountering such relationships through their home lives whilst others will not. For other children their awareness may be raised through the media but it should be left to the good judgement of the teachers, coupled with the implementation of the school’s Sex Education policy, to determine how and when such matters are best handled.
- iii) In both the Programmes of Study for Key Stages 3 & 4 and the area of understanding physical development, health and wellbeing for primary school pupils, ideas are given for sources of further information and resources. These are limited to the well known, large, national organisations, typically lobbyists for Sex Education such as Brook and FPA. If statutory PSHE is to be widely welcomed, including for example members of different faith communities, it would be reasonable to expect more reference to be made to contacting local groups such as the providers of schools with a religious character, faith organisations and Churches or diocesan authorities.



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