

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-636
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/00875/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

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Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 11 May on behalf of the Petitions Committee seeking my views on the inclusiveness of sex and relationship education in schools.

The Welsh Government recognises that sex education is an important part of growing up and that all young people need to understand the physical and emotional aspects of sexual relationships and clearly, schools play a central role in providing this. Since 2008, Sex and Relationship education (SRE) has been a statutory part of the curriculum in Wales.

Primary schools must provide sex education as contained within the national curriculum in Wales, for example in the science subject order. Primary schools can provide a broader SRE programme but whether they do so is at the discretion of the school's governing body. Whether or not schools decide to deliver a broader SRE, they must have in place a SRE policy that is accessible by parents and carers.

In secondary schools and other settings that cater for learners of secondary school age, sex education forms part of the basic curriculum for all registered pupils at maintained schools who are of compulsory school age.

SRE programmes must be relevant to learners and sensitive to their needs. Equally it is important that young people recognise diversity and show respect for others regardless of their sexual orientation. Therefore I would expect that teachers should deal with matters of sexual identity or sexual orientation honestly, sensitively and in a non-discriminatory way, providing factual information.

Some parents/carers might have concerns about the inclusion of sexual identity and sexual orientation within a SRE programme and how these are taught in schools. Equally, some parents/carers may find it difficult to accept their children's emerging sexuality. Schools should liaise closely with parents/carers when developing their sex education policy to reassure them of the content of the SRE programme and the context in which it will be presented.

In his report, 'Successful Futures' Professor Donaldson has recognised the integral role that health and wellbeing, including sex and relationship education, plays in enabling learners to make positive, informed life choices and understand and respect the choices made by others.

Following the publication of the report, I launched a 'Great Debate' for people across Wales to consider whether the vision and purposes of education suggested in the report are right for our children and young people. Though the first phase of the Great Debate reached its conclusion on 8 May, there will be further opportunities for stakeholders to engage with the development of the new curriculum as work progresses.

I will be responding formally to Successful Futures later in the summer.

Finally, in October 2011, the Welsh Government published 'Respecting Others', a suite of comprehensive anti-bullying guidance covering 5 key areas – bullying on the basis of race, culture and religion; sexist, sexual and transphobic bullying; homophobic bullying; bullying involving pupils with SEN and disabilities; and cyber-bullying.

We are currently developing lesson plans on gender and transgender-based bullying which we will be publishing in the summer.

Yours sincerely



Huw Lewis AC / AM
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