



Lord Nash

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Baroness Hughes and Baroness Jones
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Dear Bernard and Maggie,
Follow up from PSHE roundtable

We had an extremely useful roundtable discussion on PSHE at the House on Wednesday. I promised that I would write an open letter to all peers to set out clearly what actions we have taken since Grand Committee on PSHE and what we are still planning to do to help improve the outcomes in PSHE. I will also set out some of the key existing requirements about PSHE. However first I would like to convey my thanks for all the insightful contributions throughout the passage of the Children and Families Bill. I am especially grateful to Baroness Massey for her well-informed and constructive contributions and for meeting with me to share her thoughts.

The debates have been effective in highlighting the important role of PSHE in children's development, and the specific importance of sex and relationships education (SRE) and parenting skills. The international evidence shows that social skills such as resilience and teamwork are important for children's achievement and successful participation in education, employment and adult life more generally. Ofsted's report on PSHE, in 2013, found that all but two of the schools achieving an outstanding judgement on inspection were also outstanding for PSHE education – with the other two schools having good PSHE.

DfE research, in 2012, found that children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, and social well-being, on average, have higher levels of academic achievement. This is supported by international evidence on the links between success at school and social skills including resilience, emotional intelligence, and teamwork. Good schools understand this and therefore give PSHE a clear place in the school curriculum. However our discussions and debates have highlighted to me that not all schools fully appreciate its importance. It is therefore important for my Department to remind schools of our high expectations in this area, and to offer ideas and inspiration by highlighting examples of good practice.

I am personally committed to making sure that schools meet our expectations of high quality PSHE teaching. There are a number of things my Department is already doing or plans to do:

- We reaffirmed our expectations in the **introduction to the new national curriculum**. We reminded all schools that they should make provision for PSHE, and that every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based; which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and which prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.
- The Department's **spring term email to all schools**, issued on 15 January this year, included this very prominent reminder with links to the resources mentioned:

"All schools must publish their school curriculum by subject and academic year, including their provision of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). To support schools in doing this, the PSHE Association has published its own guidance on drafting and reviewing a school's sex and relationship policy and a suggested programme of study for PSHE. Academies and free schools are also required to publish information similar to that required by the regulations relating to their curriculum through their funding agreements."

You can see the full text of the email at this [link](#). The PSHE Association welcomed with enthusiasm the emphasis that PSHE had been given.

- We have identified actions we will take to make sure schools have the support, information and resources they need. To support teachers we are establishing a **new expert subject group on PSHE and SRE**. The expert group will comprise lead professionals in the field of PSHE practice, and will be chaired by Joe Hayman, Chief Executive of the PSHE Association. They will clarify the key areas on which teachers most need further support, and identify the topics that can present the greatest challenge when discussing with pupils, engaging their interest and enabling their understanding. The expert group will then liaise with relevant specialists and providers to commission or develop and produce new resources where necessary. This means that we are now taking the same approach to supporting schools on PSHE as we have been for national curriculum subjects
- I will ensure that my department continues to make full use of digital channels, including the Times Educational Supplement website, to steer teachers towards high quality resources that underpin excellent PSHE teaching and leadership.
- I am also pleased to announce that we will be funding the PSHE Association for a further financial year, and that they have agreed to produce a set of case studies to illustrate excellent PSHE teaching. I know that Baroness Massey has visited a very good example of a whole school approach to and teaching PSHE well at Goose Green primary school in East Dulwich. Providing information through case studies of such schools will inspire teachers and provide further impetus to improvements across the school landscape.

I thought it might be helpful to list some of the key existing PSHE requirements and guidance:

- Schools are already required to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSCD), which is relevant to subjects across the

curriculum and explicit opportunities to promote pupils development in these areas are provided in PSHE. SMSCD should also underpin the school's ethos and inform relationships and activities throughout the school. As part of its inspections, Ofsted evaluates schools' performance on this requirement. Governors also have a role, and the governors' handbook, published this month, suggested questions they might ask teachers and school leaders about pupils' well-being.

- Schedule 4 of the School Information Regulations 2012, which requires schools to publish, in addition to a behaviour policy and a statement of ethos and values, the curriculum for each subject and details of how more information relating to the curriculum may be obtained. As I have already mentioned, in the introduction to the national curriculum and our termly email to all schools we reaffirmed that all schools must publish their school curriculum by subject and academic year online; this must include clear information about their PSHE provision.
- Organisations such as the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency (CEOP), and the NSPCC, have published guidance on protecting children from the risks of digital communications, including the dangers of sexting. My department is preparing revised statutory guidance on Safeguarding Children in Education, which will clarify schools' statutory responsibilities concerning using opportunities in the school curriculum, for example through PSHE, to teach children about safeguarding and personal safety ensuring that there is a culture of safety, and that children stay safe, including online. It will also include signposting to other sources of advice.
- Finally, I welcome the work of the PSHE Association, the Sex Education Forum, and Brook, on new supplementary guidance which is designed to complement the SRE statutory guidance and will address changes in technology and legislation since 2000, in particular equipping teachers to help protect children and young people from inappropriate online content, and from online bullying, harassment and exploitation. I look forward to its publication and will make sure that we draw it to schools' attention.

Once again, thank you very much for your contribution to debates on these amendments, and the time you have invested in working to make sure that children and young people get the PSHE teaching they need, and I look forward to being able to further expand on these points during the debate on Tuesday.

I am copying this letter and attachments to all peers who have expressed an interest in the Bill. It will also be available on the Children and Families Bill webpage (on the Department for Education's website) and be placed in the House Library. If noble Lords would like to speak to officials about any of the issues in this letter, please can they contact my office or the Bill Team (TheBillTeam.Mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk)



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