Anti-Bullying Alliance (12.02.18)

Response to the Department for Education PSHE/RSE call for evidence

Anti-Bullying Alliance response

Introduction

You can read the Government call for evidence questions and further info here: https://consult.education.gov.uk/life-skills/pshe-rse-call-for-evidence/

Question 1: Thinking about relationships education in primary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for different age groups/key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.

Bullying behaviour can be displayed by children as young as 3 years old[1]. Bullying/cyberbullying is in the top three reasons that children call Childline[2]. The impact of bullying on a child is significant and lasts into adulthood. It includes missing school, barriers to learning, exclusion and mental health issues (including self-harm).

We support the Sex Education Forum's consultation response that relationships education covers their relationship with self, safety and risks and relationships with others. Vital to providing good quality relationships education is pupils understanding of the definition and impact of bullying and cyberbullying.

UNESCO (2018) said learners (9-12 years) should be able to understand and demonstrate:

- It is disrespectful and hurtful to harass or bully anyone on the basis of their social, economic or health status, ethnicity, race, origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other differences

- Bullying (including cyberbullying) is harmful and it is important to seek support if experiencing it

- There are different sources of help and support in school and the wider community[3]

UNESCO also said that learners from 5-8 should be able to understand and demonstrate a recognition of bullying and violence, an understanding that these are wrong, and an understanding that every human being is unique and has a right to be respected.

250 words

Question 2: Thinking about relationships and sex education in secondary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for

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[1] Vlachou, M., Andreou, E., Botsoglou, K., & Didakalou, E., (2011). Bully/victim problems among preschool children: a review of current research evidence Educational Psychology Review. 23(3). 329

[2] https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/annual-reports/not-alone-anymore-childline-annual-review-2016-17.pdf

[3] UNESCO (2018) International technical guidance on sexuality education; an evidence-informed approach (Revised edition) http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf

different age groups/key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.

United Nations (2016) UN Committee on the Rights of the 'Child's Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report[4]' was concerned that 'bullying, including cyber bullying, remains a serious and widespread problem, particularly against LGBTI children, children with disabilities and children belonging to minority groups, including Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children'.

We support the Sex Education Forum's response that secondary school pupils should cover positive relationships, safety and risk and sexual health. Under positive relationships we believe that covering bullying and cyberbullying is vital to providing good quality SRE.

UNESCO (2018) 'International technical guidance on sexuality education; an evidence-informed approach' said learners aged 12-15 years old will be able to understand and demonstrate that:

- Bullying is a violation of human rights.

- Stigma and discrimination on the grounds of differences (e.g. HIV, pregnancy or health status, economic status, ethnicity, race, origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other differences) are disrespectful, harmful to well-being, and a violation of human rights[5].

The same report said that learners aged 15-18 years old will be able to understand and demonstrate that:

- It is important to challenge stigma and discrimination and promote inclusion, nondiscrimination and diversity

- Everyone has a responsibility to advocate for people's health and well-being free from violence

249 words

Question 3: Are there important aspects of ensuring safe online relationships that would not otherwise be covered in wider Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education, or as part of the computing curriculum? What do we want to say about RSE that is specific to digital context?

Cyberbullying is a significant problem facing children today. Warwick University in 2017 found that the vast majority of cyberbullying incidences occur originally at school by pupils the child knows[6]. This shows how important it is that all types of bullying behaviour, including cyberbullying, is covered in the wider relationships education/RSE curriculum.

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[4] United Nations (2016) UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland http://www.crae.org.uk/publications-resources/un-crc-committees-concluding-observations-2016/

[5] UNESCO (2018) International technical guidance on sexuality education; an evidence-informed approach (Revised edition) http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002607/260770e.pdf

[6] https://warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/cyberbullying_rarely_occurs/

An analysis of data from 2014 by the Department for Education[7] showed that whilst school, parents and carers and how pupils felt about their community had a significant impact on their likelihood of being cyberbullied; by far the most contributory factor was their relationship with school and the quality of the PSHE they received.

The House of Commons Education Committee in 2015 found that parents were unsure how to support their children around the issue of cyberbullying[8]. The same report said: 'Better PSHE and SRE has the potential to help efforts to address many 'problems' including … cyberbullying.'

It is vital that teaching relevant to relationships and sex is provided by educators trained in RSE and PSHE, and it is not appropriate for much of the above to be addressed in computing. In order for statutory RSE to have full impact and effectiveness it is essential that PSHE is made statutory too. In PSHE wider issues such as media literacy, identity, privacy and the impact of time spent online on other aspects of life would be covered.

246 words

Question 4: How should schools effectively consult parents so they can make informed decisions that meet the needs of their child, including on the right to withdraw? For example, how often, on what issues and by what means?

We support the Sex Education Forum's answer to this question.

Young people prioritise school as their preferred main source of information about relationships and sex, but want their parents to take a greater role than they currently do (Tanton, 2015).

7 out of 10 parents would welcome help and support from their child's school about how they can talk to their child about growing up and related issues (Independent poll of 1000 parents commissioned by SEF, 2014).

77 words

Question 5. Thinking about PSHE in primary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught and why? Please include your reasons for choosing each subject area or evidence to support your suggestions.

Relationships and sex education is an essential component of PSHE, and should be an identifiable part of planned, timetabled PSHE education. PSHE must be made statutory. RSE is best delivered as part of a wider curriculum promoting health, resilience, confidence, respect, and personal safety, both online and offline. It also mitigates the risk that relationships education and RSE will be delivered by some schools purely through 'drop-down' or off-timetable days, which Ofsted has highlighted as problematic.

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[7]

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/621070/Health_behaviour_in_school_age_children_cyberbullying.pdf

[8] House of Commons Education Committee (2015) Life lessons, PSHE and SRE in schools
https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/145/145.pdf

An analysis of data from 2014 by the Department for Education showed that good quality PSHE was a protective factor in the likeliness of a pupil being cyberbullied[9].

Many schools recognise the important role that PSHE education plays in promoting respect for diversity and difference. This role is vital for preventing bullying of vulnerable groups such as children with special educational needs and disabilities, children from ethnic and religious minorities and young people that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Ofsted 'Not yet good enough' found that in good and outstanding primary schools they had anti-bullying peer support strategies outside of the classroom[10]. The same report found that in good and outstanding schools they covered 'the impact of bullying, including the casual use of racist, disablist, sexist or homophobic language, why it is damaging and how to deal with it'.

221 words

Question 6. Thinking about PSHE in secondary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught and why? Please also include your reasons for choosing each subject or evidence to support your suggestions.

RSE is an essential component of PSHE, and should be an identifiable part of planned, timetabled PSHE education. PSHE must be made statutory and must be delivered by well - trained and confident practitioners. RSE is best delivered as part of a wider curriculum promoting health, resilience, confidence, respect, and personal safety, both online and offline. It also mitigates the risk that relationships education and RSE will be delivered by some schools purely through 'drop-down' or off-timetable days, which Ofsted has highlighted as problematic.

An analysis of data from 2014 by the Department for Education showed that good quality PSHE was a protective factor in the likeliness of a pupil being cyberbullied[11].

Many schools recognise the important role that PSHE education plays in promoting respect for diversity and difference. This role is vital for preventing bullying of vulnerable groups such as children with special educational needs and disabilities, children from ethnic and religious minorities and young people that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Ofsted 'Not yet good enough' found[12] that in good and outstanding schools they covered 'the impact of bullying, including the casual use of racist, disablist, sexist or homophobic language, why it is damaging and how to deal with it'.

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/621070/Health_behaviour_in_school_age_children_cyberbullying.pdf
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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413178/Not_yet_good_enough_personal__social__health_and_economic_education_in_schools.pdf
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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413178/Not_yet_good_enough_personal__social__health_and_economic_education_in_schools.pdf

206 words

Question 7: How much flexibility do you think schools should have to meet the needs of individual pupils and to reflect the diversity of local communities and wider society in the content of PSHE lessons in schools?

All children and young people have an entitlement to a comprehensive programme of RSE, as set out by UNESCO (2018), and is highlighted by the United Nations (2016) as a shortcoming in the current education system in England. The Anti-Bullying Alliance supports the Sex Education Forum submission on this question.

50 words

Please provide a summary of how your organisation is currently involved with Sex and Relationships Education and/or Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) is a coalition of organisations and individuals with one aim: to unite against bullying. Our membership is made up of over 120 organisations from across England. Our advisory group consists of the Diana Award, Stonewall, NSPCC, Ditch the Label, Oxfordshire County Council, Childnet, Mencap and the National Children's Bureau.

ABA has a growing network of schools and colleges feeding into our work and runs an anti-bullying programme, All Together, that works with over 1,000 schools in England to reduce bullying of disabled children and those with SEN.

ABA coordinates Anti-Bullying Week each year in England with roughly 75% of schools in the country participating. ABA is based at leading children's charity the National Children's Bureau.

119 words