



Report/Briefing Note

Title of Briefing:

Preparing Nottinghamshire schools for the forthcoming changes to Personal, Social, Health and Economics, (PSHE) education and Relationships Education (RE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) from September 2020

SUMMARY

From September 2020 the government will be placing a statutory duty on all schools across England to deliver Relationships Education in primary schools and Relationships and Sex Education in secondary schools. There is also a requirement to deliver health education across all key stages which includes both physical and mental health. All independent schools must deliver a revised PSHE curriculum.

The government has encouraged schools to consider becoming early adopters although this work will not be inspected until the statutory duty comes into force in 2020. Locally no Nottinghamshire school has submitted an official expression of interest, but a number have indicated their intention to implement a revised curriculum from September 2019. The Schools Health Hub (SHH) and the Tackling Emerging Threats to Children (TETC), team are taking a lead on this work with Nottinghamshire schools.

Background

Prior to the current proposals, the DfE statutory guidance for schools around sex and relationships education was last released in 2000. In recognition that the world has moved on significantly during the intervening years, and in response to mounting pressure for change, the government agreed to revise the guidance and ensure the curriculum taught in all schools across England was fit for purpose and prepared pupils for life in the modern world. Following extensive consultation, the government has now released the specific detailed guidance for schools:- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>. This guidance will be reviewed every three years from 2020.

The focus of the new curriculum is very much on developing children and young people's understanding of relationships. Primary schools can choose whether to teach sex education, but should they decide to do so, they must consult parents/carers and publish details of what will be taught and when. They must also ensure parents/carers are aware of their right to withdraw from part or all of sex education. Pupils cannot be withdrawn from the relationships and health aspects of the curriculum. All schools have discretion to determine what will be taught in RE/RSE, but the guidance states this should be delivered in an age appropriate way. Schools must ensure that the curriculum also shows due regard for other legislations such as the Equality Act 2010 and SEND Code of Practice.

Schools will need to begin preparations for the implementation of the guidance during the coming year, and governors will need to ensure that sufficient time, resource and training has been invested in making such preparations. All schools must have in place a written policy for Relationships Education and RSE. They must consult parents/carers in developing and reviewing their policy. Schools should ensure that the policy meets the needs of pupils and parents/carers and reflects the community they serve. In developing the curriculum, schools are permitted to teach about different faith perspectives, but must make clear what is lawful and unlawful showing due regard for the Equality Act 2010.

As pupils navigate an increasingly complex world both on and offline, schools will need to ensure that they are taught about specific Public Health issues and threats to their safety and wellbeing, as well as how to seek help and support. This must be done in an age appropriate way and take account of the needs of pupils with SEND. Schools should be informed about local issues and the context of the community they serve when setting their curriculum intent. By involving all key stakeholders in developing the curriculum and policy content, schools will be less likely to meet with opposition or resistance to their plans. They will need to ensure sufficient information is published on the school website and that a culture of openness and transparency characterises its practice, particularly where there may be increased sensitivities around particular content.

Current Situation

Over the last 18 months the SHH and the TETC team have been accessing relevant training events and networking with specialist practitioners working in the field both locally and nationally, in order to ensure that Nottinghamshire schools are able to access high quality support, advice and training over the coming year. The teams have been developing a model curriculum framework designed to cover all key stages linked to age appropriate examples of curriculum resources and lesson plans which staff in schools can utilise. This work has been informed by consultation with pupils in primary, secondary and special schools, as well as through workshops with parents/carers and teaching and non-teaching staff in a number of settings across the county. In addition, the teams have made use of health and police data including school health profiles to support the individual schools' understanding of the context of the communities they serve.

Using co-production, engaging resource materials have been developed in partnership with young people on a range of topics including consent, mental health, bereavement, friendships, extremism, racism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, online safety as well as healthy lifestyles and many more subject areas. During the coming weeks, these resources will be uploaded to the SHH and TETC team's school portal pages as well as the team's own Youtube channel. Co-production will continue to be central to the team's approach as evidence based practice suggests young people are often more likely to take on board key messages when these are delivered by their peers rather than adults.

During the autumn term, there will be a number of central training courses offered to schools to support their preparations for 2020. Some schools have already accessed this training and will lead the way locally over the coming months, sharing their approaches through a variety of networks which promote best practice. Abbey Primary in Mansfield and Croft Primary in Sutton-in-Ashfield have already undertaken a significant amount of preparation with a number of other primaries also being able to demonstrate that their practice is already well-established. The Meden School in Warsop and All Saints RC Academy in Mansfield have engaged positively with the service with the latter seeking to work collaboratively with the teams in the autumn term. The West Bridgford School in Rushcliffe continues to review the effectiveness of its PSHE curriculum and is liaising closely with the teams about how to further improve its current provision. A number of other secondary schools have approached the Youth Service and SEXions for support. Both teams will be linking with the SHH and TETC teams in September to consider how we might collectively enhance the support available to schools over the coming months. In addition, they have been quality assuring a number of external providers and new resources/lesson plans in recognition that schools will take different approaches to meeting the statutory duty and one size will not fit all.

In November, the teams will be delivering workshops at the governor conference and articles will be submitted to the governor newsletter as the September 2020 implementation date approaches, in order to ensure that governors understand their responsibilities in respect of the statutory duty. Some work with governors has already been undertaken earlier in the year to alert governors to the forthcoming changes.

The School Health Hub Co-ordinators and other TETC staff have utilised opportunities when meeting school leaders for other purposes, to raise awareness of the revised framework and encourage schools to access the help and support available.

The teams have also kept abreast of public opinion locally and nationally with regards to how the media has reported on the changes and the concerns raised by certain campaign bodies such as has been the case in Birmingham and Nottingham City. Currently, there are no significant concerns being expressed in Nottinghamshire, but extensive work has been undertaken around the LGBT agenda and consent to ensure that school staff can feel confident in delivering on these issues in an age appropriate way which respects a variety of beliefs and faith perspectives. The team will continue to be vigilant with regards to any potential conflict and is currently working on developing some model policy guidance and information for parents' leaflets/posters which will be shared with schools over the coming months.

It would be helpful if the Health and Wellbeing Board could promote the work delivered over the coming months to ensure that all schools in the county are aware of the service offer in respect of RE/RSE. It would also be helpful to develop links with the respective Diocesan educational leads in order that we might collectively support faith schools particularly in relation to parental engagement.

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