

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in the Curriculum for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 26 Ionawr 2021
Petitions Committee | 26 January 2021

Reference: RS21/14886-10

Petition Number: P-05-1096

Petition title: Remove RSE from the mandatory element of the Curriculum Bill 2020

Text of petition: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is part of a Global Roll out of Sexuality Education which is not appropriate for this country. It sexualises children, fails to safeguard, read's like models of offending, has barriers to disclosure, and the local authority departments involved lack adequate training to spot the signs of Child Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, Harmful Sexual Behaviour, And much, more! In addition to that we have evidence those involved in the Welsh Curriculum lack knowledge of this global roll out.

Additional information submitted alongside the petition:

We are fighting the legislation not an education. No safeguarding measures in place. The research is wholly inadequate throughout. Here are some links to articles, websites and some suggested research topics which are about sexuality education:

- World Health Organisation- Standards in sexuality Education 2010
- UNESCO- International technical guidance on sexuality education 2018

Others who campaign against sexuality education in schools are:



- The Scottish Family Party
- Family Watch
- School gate campaign, England

1. Summary

- RSE will be a mandatory element of the new Curriculum for Wales, subject to the passage of primary legislation currently under consideration by the Senedd.
- It will be required to be taught to 3 to 16 year olds in a way that is 'developmentally appropriate'.
- The Welsh Government states that the purpose of RSE will be to educate and safeguard children and young people. It has accepted a recommendation by the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee to explain clearly the purpose of RSE, reassure parents that it will be developmentally appropriate and challenge what both have referred to as 'misinformation' which is currently circulating.

2. The Curriculum and Assessment Bill

Under the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill, currently proceeding through the Senedd's legislative process, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) will be a mandatory element of the new Curriculum for Wales. Subject to the successful passage of the Bill, the new curriculum will be phased in from September 2022 under the Welsh Government's current timescale for implementation. The Bill is currently at Stage 2.

Provision of RSE will be guided by a **statutory code** which the Welsh Ministers will be required to issue under the Bill. The Welsh Government consulted in February 2019 on draft guidance for schools on provision of RSE.

At present, parents have the right to withdraw their child from sex education that is not part of a national curriculum subject. There is **no equivalent parental right of withdrawal** in the Bill. The Welsh Government consulted in autumn 2019 on the implications of not including a parental right of withdrawal under an approach to 'ensure full access to the curriculum'.

3. The Welsh Government's rationale for RSE

RSE will replace sex education. At present, sex education is a compulsory part of the basic curriculum in secondary schools, while primary schools have the opportunity to teach it but are not obliged to. The Welsh Government issues non-statutory guidance on how 'sex and relationships' education should be taught.

A review by the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel, published in 2017, found that the current law and guidance was outdated and that provision under existing arrangements was limited, unrepresentative and inconsistent. Following the review, the Minister for Education announced in 2018 that the **current requirement to teach sex education in secondary schools would be extended to primary schools** but that this be 'age-appropriate' and under the revised focus on 'Relationships and Sexuality Education'.

The Welsh Government's intention is that, through RSE, learners will learn about more than sex in a biological sense but a broader concept of sexuality and what constitutes a healthy (and an unhealthy) relationship. The Curriculum and Assessment Bill requires that RSE must be taught in a way that is '**developmentally appropriate**' for pupils and children. The Welsh Government's intention is that RSE will gradually educate children and young people to protect themselves against abuse and harm, thereby **increasing safeguarding, health and well-being**.

RSE will be taught across the whole curriculum and is described by the Welsh Government as 'an important element in creating a whole school approach to supporting overall physical, mental and emotional health and well-being' (para 352, Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill).

4. Senedd Committee recommendations

In its Stage 1 report on the general principles of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill, the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee highlighted the importance of the draft RSE Code being made available as soon as possible to provide clear details of what RSE will cover. The Committee also highlighted the importance of professional learning for teachers.

In its response to the Committee's report, the Welsh Government accepted the Committee's recommendation that the Welsh Government, as a matter of

urgency, launch a ‘**myth-busting campaign**’ about the RSE that will be delivered as a result of this Bill’, in order to:

- ‘**challenge the misinformation**’ currently circulating about RSE;
- seek to **reassure parents** about RSE’s developmentally appropriate content and approach; and
- explain **why it is important** for all children and young people to be taught RSE.

The Welsh Government also accepted the Committee’s recommendation that the Code be made under the Senedd’s affirmative procedure for subordinate legislation rather than the negative procedure, to provide for greater scrutiny.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.