

# A curriculum for life

## The case for statutory Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education

“There is much more to be done by the Government to deliver ‘a curriculum for life’. By making PSHE education a statutory entitlement, with an expectation that schools will incorporate local issues of key importance to their pupils, we believe that schools would re-prioritise PSHE education and retain the flexibility to meet pupils’ needs.”

**Young People’s Select Committee *Curriculum for Life* report, January 2014**

“PSHE education requires improvement and the situation appears to have worsened. This would not be tolerated in other subjects. We accept the argument that statutory status is needed. The statutory requirement should have minimal prescription of content to ensure schools have flexibility to respond to local needs and priorities.”

**Commons Education Committee *Life Lessons* report, February 2015**

# Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	4
Evidence of potential impact	5
Online and offline safety	5
Physical health and risk-taking behaviours	6
Emotional health	7
Building character and key skills for life and work	8
Academic success	8
Employability and social mobility	9
The state of current provision	10
The case for statutory status to improve provision	11
Support for statutory status	13
Key principles for statutory status for PSHE education	14
Conclusion	15
Appendix	16
References	18

# Executive summary

Today's children and young people are growing up in a rapidly changing world, full of opportunities but with few guarantees. PSHE education is the school subject which prepares them for life and work in this changing world, helping to keep pupils safe and boosting their life chances. There is strong evidence that, when delivered by trained teachers in line with best practice, this 'curriculum for life' is popular with parents and helps children and young people to protect themselves and others both online and offline, improves their physical and emotional health, and develops character, resilience, academic attainment and employment prospects, with the greatest benefits experienced by the most disadvantaged pupils.



Yet this potential to boost life chances is unfulfilled: Ofsted's 2013 report on PSHE education, tellingly entitled *Not Yet Good Enough*, highlighted the need for major improvements in provision and suggested that lack of teacher confidence means that the subject is not taught rigorously, with topics such as mental health, online safety and abuse left off the curriculum altogether by many schools at a time when the public profile of these issues has never been higher. Ofsted's report suggests that millions of pupils miss out each year on high-quality lessons and the Department for Education's own data suggests that the picture has rapidly deteriorated since 2013.

Non-statutory status is at the root of these problems. As a non-statutory, non-examined subject, PSHE education is not held to the same standards of rigour as other subjects and PSHE teachers are not given the curriculum time or training they need to deliver to the standards we should expect. Ofsted has highlighted that lack of clarity on the status of the subject is used by external organisations seeking to undermine schools' provision on subjects like sex and relationships and equality. Statutory status for PSHE education would protect against this and ensure that teachers are given the training and curriculum time they need to realise the subject's potential. It would also bring expectations on state schools into line with their independent sector counterparts.

Statutory status for PSHE education is supported by 85% of business leaders, 88% of teachers, 92% of parents, 92% of pupils, the Children's Commissioner, the Chief Medical Officer and the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for child sexual abuse, Public Health England, 100 leading organisations including the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the NSPCC, the Children's Society, Barnardo's and a host of leading Parliamentarians from across the political spectrum, including the Commons Education, Home Affairs and Women and Equalities Committees, the Joint Committee on Human Rights and the chairs of Commons Health and Business, Innovation and Skills Committees. Robust safeguards exist to ensure provision is planned in partnership with parents and that teaching is in line with the school's ethos and appropriate to the age and maturity of pupils.

This document sets out the urgent case for statutory status for PSHE education, drawing on the views of experts, parents, teachers and pupils. We make reference throughout to a 'curriculum for life', the term the Members of the Youth Parliament have used when calling for improvement in PSHE provision for all pupils nationally. The time has come for their voices, and the voices of professionals, parliamentarians and parents across the country to finally be heard.

**Joe Hayman, PSHE Association Chief Executive, September 2016**

# 1. Introduction

Today's school pupils are growing up in a world full of opportunities but with many risks and anxieties too. While some risk-taking behaviours, such as substance misuse, appear to be in decline, others are emerging, particularly in relation to pupils' mental health, relationships and safety, both offline and, increasingly, online.<sup>1</sup> PSHE education is the school subject which addresses pupils' personal safety and their mental health while preparing them for life and work in a changing world. As set out in this document, there is huge demand for this kind of 'curriculum for life' from pupils, parents and business leaders and strong evidence that it boosts attainment and life chances, particularly amongst disadvantaged pupils.

## **PSHE pedagogy**

PSHE education covers core knowledge relating to issues such as online and offline safety, relationships, health and careers, taught in a way which is appropriate to the age and maturity of pupils. The subject is tied together by the development of the key skills and attributes (often termed 'character') which pupils need to thrive both in their childhood and throughout their adult lives. These key skills and characteristics – such as self-management, empathy, critical thinking, communication, resilience, teamwork and negotiation – are crucial to pupils' life chances, and the PSHE Association recently launched resources funded by the Department for Education's character education grant programme to help schools place even greater emphasis on them.

The PSHE Association's Programme of Study for PSHE education<sup>2</sup> sets out how schools should link their PSHE provision to citizenship, religious education and other subjects so that PSHE lessons complement the whole school curriculum. It shows how schools they can tailor their provision using local data, engagement with parents and community leaders and consultation with pupils. This means that while the pedagogy of PSHE education should remain the same wherever the subject is taught, the issues covered and the way the timetable is arranged will be based on local circumstances and will therefore vary from school to school and from key stage to key stage.

## **The current status of the subject**

Unlike in the independent sector, where delivery of the subject is a core expectation, PSHE education is currently a non-statutory subject in state schools: this means that do not have to teach it, and when lessons are provided they are often not as rigorously planned or delivered as other subjects. The status of PSHE is different from all other subjects as it is neither part of the national curriculum – like subjects such as maths or science – nor part of the basic curriculum, like religious education. While assessment of pupil progress is a core part of PSHE pedagogy, it is usually undertaken informally during lessons; PSHE education is not a formally examined subject.

## **The case for statutory status**

As demonstrated in the next section, there is strong evidence that when delivered by teachers trained in the subject in line with best practice principles, PSHE education can have a significant impact, for individual pupils, schools, and the wider economy. The document goes on to show that this potential is not being fulfilled and sets out how statutory status would help to improve provision, bringing PSHE education into line with the high standards expected for other subjects.

## 2. Evidence of the potential impact of PSHE on pupils' life chances

As set out below, when it is delivered by trained teachers in line with best practice principles,<sup>3</sup> PSHE education has significant potential to boost pupils' life chances, helping them to **stay safe both online and offline, improve their physical and emotional health and develop the character, resilience and skills they need to succeed academically and in the workplace.**

### Pupil safety online and offline

**PSHE education is an important response to parental fears about child safety online and offline. When pupils receive lessons on healthy relationships, their first sexual activity occurs later and they are more likely to report abuse and exploitation. Experts see PSHE education as the best way to promote the safe use of technology and address online abuse.**

*There is no question PSHE should be on every curriculum as it is at the frontline of child protection.*

*Peter Wanless, Chief Executive, NSPCC, August 2015*

*A key part of preventing child sexual exploitation is teaching pupils how to spot the signs of grooming. It is vital the government prioritises lessons about healthy relationships.*

*Javed Khan, Chief Executive, Barnardo's, August 2015*

Parents' fears about issues such as sexting and online pornography have had significant recent media coverage.<sup>4</sup> PSHE education, a core component of which is sex and relationships education, teaches pupils to challenge unhealthy and exploitative relationships, both to safeguard them from being abused and prevent them from engaging in abusive behaviours themselves. A series of recent inquiries into cases of child sexual exploitation (CSE),<sup>5</sup> as well as Nus Ghani MP's inquiry into harmful sexual behaviour amongst children,<sup>6</sup> have recommended that all schools should teach pupils about consent and healthy relationships.

PSHE education also teaches pupils about other issues which can contribute to exploitation, such as drug and

alcohol misuse and online safety. The report of the inquiry into CSE in Oxfordshire,<sup>7</sup> for example, recommended that universal drug and alcohol education should be provided to secondary school pupils to help protect children from exploitation. The National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre has noted that education on online exploitation '*most effectively sits within a PSHE programme*',<sup>8</sup> while the national police lead for child protection, Chief Constable Simon Bailey, has called for PSHE education to be taught to all pupils to prevent sexual exploitation<sup>9</sup>.

The evidence of the impact of this learning is significant. A recent international Cochrane Study<sup>10</sup> suggests that when pupils receive lessons on sex and relationships, disclosures about abuse and exploitation increase significantly. Recent surveys involving 15,000 British adults<sup>11</sup> suggest that those who cite school lessons as their main source of sex and relationships education were less likely to have had first intercourse before age 16 and say that both partners were consenting. A series of international studies<sup>12</sup> show that school lessons reduce unplanned pregnancy rates.

Statutory status for PSHE education is backed by the NSPCC, Barnardo's, The Children's Society, the Association of Independent Local Safeguarding Children Boards Chairs, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the Children's Commissioner and many other child safety experts.<sup>13</sup> It was also backed by the Commons Home Affairs Committee after its inquiry into female genital mutilation<sup>14</sup> and the Commons Women and Equalities Committee after its inquiry into sexual harassment in schools, while a parliamentary inquiry into preventing violence against women and girls<sup>15</sup> stated that Britain would be better placed to meet its obligations under the Istanbul Convention on preventing violence against women and girls if PSHE was statutory.

## Physical health and risk-taking behaviours

### **Educating pupils about their health reduces risk-taking behaviours such as drug or alcohol addiction and improves diet and exercise levels, in turn boosting long-term life chances.**

There is strong evidence of the health impacts of the kind of learning provided by PSHE education: a recent Cochrane Review<sup>16</sup> demonstrated that health education programmes like PSHE education, as part of a whole-school approach, can improve pupils' health behaviours, positively affecting their diet and lifestyle (in line with Government efforts to reduce obesity) and reducing substance misuse; it also showed promising results in relation to reducing bullying and violence. A DfE review of PSHE education provision<sup>17</sup> also found a range of positive outcomes from PSHE provision, including improved attitudes to health, being able to deal with personal difficulties and improved behaviour. A

Cochrane review of universal preventative programmes<sup>18</sup> shows that such programmes are connected with reductions in the use of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis by young people.

A 2014 British Medical Journal editorial recommended statutory PSHE education as a means to improve pupil health,<sup>19</sup> while the Chief Medical Officer's 2015 Annual Report<sup>20</sup> states that PSHE should be a routine part of pupils' education. Statutory status is backed by Public Health England, six medical royal colleges, the Faculty of Public Health and the Royal Society for Public Health.<sup>21</sup>

There is also good evidence to suggest that emergency life-saving skills programmes delivered through PSHE education could have a significant impact on survival rates from cardiac arrest. In Norway, where first aid has been a compulsory part of the curriculum for decades, survival rates for cardiac arrest outside hospital are 52%; in the United Kingdom, that figure is 12%.<sup>22</sup>

*PSHE should be a routine part of all children's education*

*Chief Medical Officer, 2015*

*There should be a universal requirement for schools to teach age appropriate PSHE... The evidence, along with the views of pupils, teachers and parents, supports this position*

*Public Health England, July 2014*

*The evidence shows that PSHE education can improve the physical and psychosocial well-being of pupils. A virtuous cycle can be achieved, whereby pupils with better health and well-being achieve better academically*

*PSHE Education: A Review of Impact and Effective Practice, DfE, 2015*

# Emotional health

**There is growing evidence that, when delivered well, PSHE education can promote positive outcomes relating to emotional health while reducing stigma and helping pupils learn where to go if they have mental health concerns. This all helps to boost pupils' life chances, but there are risks related to lessons about mental health delivered by untrained teachers.**

Poor mental health is the key emerging risk for children and young people according to recent research (SHEU, 2015; Cabinet Office, 2015). PSHE education is the school subject through which mental health is addressed, with three key areas of focus:

- promoting positive mental health among pupils through evidence-based programmes
- giving pupils information on where to go if they are worried about their own mental health or that of a friend or family member
- reducing mental health stigma by teaching about the issue openly and honestly.

In its 2015 *Inquiry into Parity of Esteem for Mental Health*,<sup>23</sup> the All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health recommended that '*mental health education should form a core part of the PSHE curriculum, to promote wellbeing and resilience in children and young people and prevent mental health problems developing*'. Recent research<sup>24</sup> suggests that 93% of universal mental health programmes in schools are delivered through PSHE education, and statutory status for PSHE education is supported by expert bodies including the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

There is good evidence of the impact of this kind of learning. According to a meta-analysis<sup>25</sup> of 75 studies on universal school-based social, emotional and/or behavioural programmes, these lessons could benefit pupils in seven outcome measures including social skills, antisocial behaviour, positive self-image, mental health, and prosocial behaviour. A Cochrane Review of the Health Promoting Schools programme<sup>26</sup> also identifies an impact on bullying.

While there is strong evidence of the potential positive impact of high-quality PSHE teaching on pupils' mental health, there is also clear evidence of the dangers of poorly taught lessons on the subject. There are particular risks in relation to lessons on eating disorders and self-harm which, when taught by inexperienced or untrained teachers, could prove 'instructive' to vulnerable pupils (Knightsmith, 2015<sup>27</sup>). Due to its non-statutory status, responsibility for teaching PSHE education is often given to untrained, unprepared and inexperienced teachers, potentially putting vulnerable pupils at risk. Statutory status would ensure high-quality training in the subject for teachers and increase the number of lessons taught by more experienced teachers, reducing the risks and increasing the potential for positive impacts on pupils' emotional health.

# Building character and key skills for life and work

**The non-academic skills and attributes acquired through PSHE education – often termed ‘character’ – have a positive impact on academic performance and life chances as well as being key to boosting the employability of school-leavers and improving social mobility.**

Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman has demonstrated the impact of non-cognitive skills on academic attainment and employability.<sup>28</sup> An evidence review<sup>29</sup> by Heckman and others concludes that these skills and attitudes are malleable into adolescence (and comparatively more so than cognitive skills), with teachers playing a measurable role in their development. Research suggests that the kind of classroom-based learning delivered through PSHE education can develop these social and emotional skills: reviews by the Department for Education<sup>30</sup> and the Education Endowment Foundation<sup>31</sup> have concluded that there is strong evidence that these programmes have a significant impact on attitudes, skills and emotional outcomes.

In 2016, the PSHE Association worked under funding from the Department for Education’s character education grant programme to redevelop the PSHE education curriculum to focus more on key skills and attributes. The revised curriculum was trialled by 12 schools (both state and independent) and was launched in summer 2016<sup>32</sup>.

## Academic success

**There is strong evidence to suggest that the focus of PSHE education on health, wellbeing and key skills has the potential to significantly aid academic attainment.**

The academic benefits of PSHE education in terms of improved attainment are significant: a group of leading academics in an editorial in the British Medical Journal recommended statutory status for PSHE education,<sup>33</sup> noting that *‘education and health are synergistic ... students in better health do better academically’*, and identifying countries such as Finland and Singapore which have better academic success than England and place a greater emphasis on pupil health. This finding is backed by a DfE-commissioned report which found that pupils with higher levels of emotional wellbeing have higher levels of academic success,<sup>34</sup> and is further emphasised by Ofsted’s finding that outstanding schools almost always have outstanding PSHE education.<sup>35</sup>

Research also suggests that programmes to build the non-cognitive skills set out above impact on pupil attainment, attendance and behaviour: an analysis of over 200 social and emotional skills programmes<sup>36</sup>, predominantly delivered through PSHE education, demonstrated improved attitudes and behaviour in pupils and an 11% improvement in academic achievement. Similarly, a study of emotional resilience programmes found short-term improvement in attainment rates, particularly amongst those eligible for free school meals and pupils who had been performing at below national average in maths and English.<sup>37</sup> The Education Endowment Foundation<sup>38</sup> recommends such programmes as a way to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

A recent study by the University of Hertfordshire found significant correlations between high-quality PSHE lessons, reduced levels of bullying and increased feelings of school belonging.<sup>39</sup>

# Employability and social mobility

**The Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the British Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors have all called for an education system that provides school-leavers with key skills and characteristics to thrive in the world of work. Studies suggest these skills could have a £100bn impact on the UK economy and PSHE education could be a key subject in which these skills are developed.**

PSHE education gives pupils information on the world of work, challenges stereotypes about different careers and helps pupils to develop the skills they need to succeed in the workplace. As set out above, there is strong evidence that these skills can be developed through classroom-based activity such as PSHE education. The impact of improving employability skills in schools could be significant, not just for individual pupils but for the whole economy: according to a CBI-backed study, such skills could make a £109bn contribution to the UK economy over the next five years.<sup>40</sup>

*PSHE education provides an opportunity to provide or enhance skills such as perseverance, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, self-management, self-respect, team work, locus of control, time and stress management.*

*PSHE Education: A Review of Impact and Effective Practice, DfE, 2015*

A 2011 study showed that such skills are more important in determining life chances at age 30 than academic qualifications.<sup>41</sup> Businesses want such skills too. As Neil Carberry, CBI Director for People and Skills, puts it: *“the right attitudes and attributes in people such as resilience, respect, enthusiasm and creativity are just as important as academic and technical skills”*.<sup>42</sup>

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission has recommended ‘*purposive*’ action to develop these non-academic skills and attributes to tackle intergenerational disadvantage.<sup>43</sup> More recent research from the Commission into non-educational barriers to top jobs demonstrates how important employability skills are to employers, and how disadvantaged pupils have fewer opportunities to develop these skills.<sup>44</sup> Independent schools, in which PSHE education is already an expectation, recognise the importance of these skills and place a much greater emphasis on the subject: 30% of the demand for training from the PSHE Association comes from the independent sector in spite of that sector serving just 7% of the population.

There is, therefore, an imperative for state schools to ensure that their pupils have the same opportunities to develop these crucial skills as their independent school counterparts. However, PSHE Association research shows that just one in three business leaders think schools are doing enough to equip pupils with skills for work.<sup>45</sup> The CBI,<sup>46</sup> the British Chambers of Commerce,<sup>47</sup> the Institute of Directors<sup>48</sup> and the Federation of Small Businesses<sup>49</sup> have also made this point. According to a PSHE Association/YouGov survey, 85% of business leaders would support a move to statutory status for PSHE education to ensure that all pupils develop these key skills.<sup>50</sup> The PSHE Association is calling for education and business leaders to come together to develop and accredit a PSHE curriculum framework for schools to use which focuses on these skills, a move supported by 77% of business leaders according to the same YouGov survey.

Leading figures have emphasised that this learning should start early. For example, an inquiry led by Suella Fernandes MP recommended statutory personal finance education from key stage 1.<sup>51</sup>

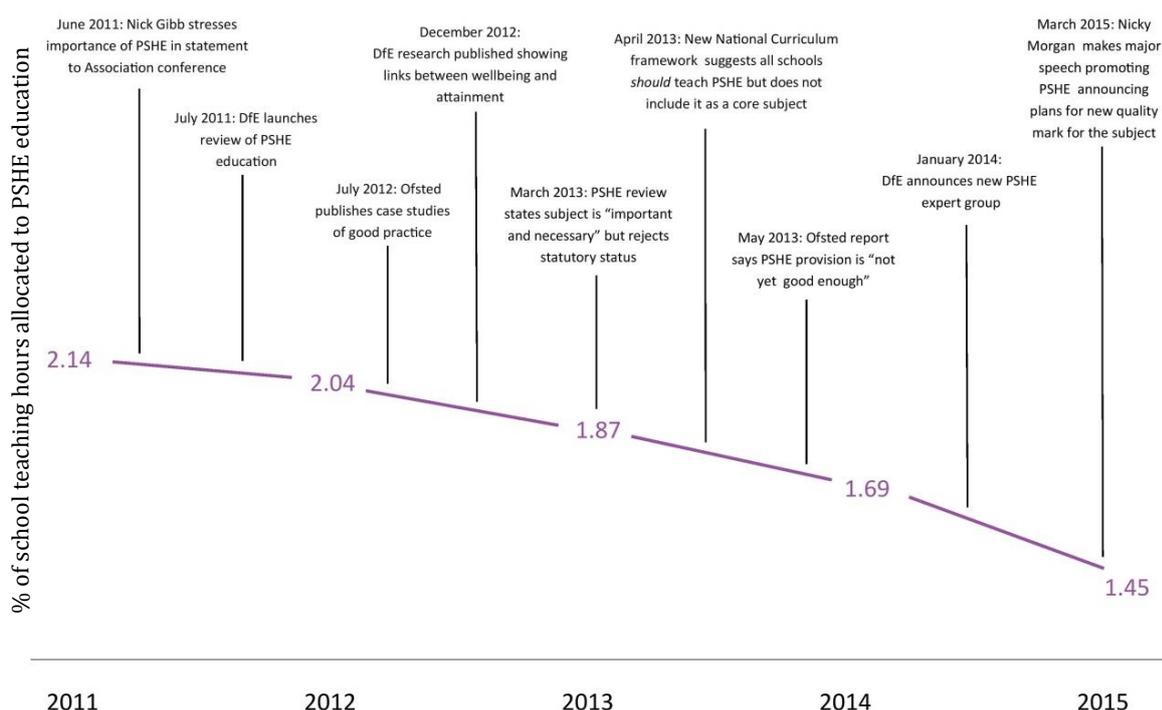
### 3. The state of current provision

This section explores how the huge potential of PSHE education set out above is not being realised, with provision at all key stages ‘not good enough’ according to Ofsted and the situation ‘deteriorating’ according to the Commons Education Committee.

In 2013, Ofsted published a report into current PSHE provision. Entitled *Not Yet Good Enough*,<sup>52</sup> the report suggested that while provision was outstanding in 20% of schools (almost all of which were schools rated outstanding by Ofsted in their most recent whole-school inspection), provision needed improvement in at least 40% of schools, with lessons too often delivered by teachers with insufficient training and curriculum time. As a result, key issues such as mental health and prevention of abuse were left off the curriculum altogether by some schools. Following on from the so-called ‘Trojan Horse’ affair in Birmingham, Ofsted has also identified concerns about external groups undermining schools’ PSHE lessons on issues such as equality<sup>53</sup>.

The Commons Education Committee has concluded that PSHE provision is ‘deteriorating’,<sup>54</sup> an assessment backed by Department for Education data which suggests that provision decreased by over 32% at key stages 3 and 4 between 2011 and 2015, demonstrating the urgent need to act.

Figure 1: DfE data showing the proportion of curriculum time schools give to PSHE at key stages 3-4



The impact of these trends is directly felt by pupils. According to a recent report, only around 23% find lessons on emotional health quite or very useful, while just 43% of Year 6 pupils report that teachers have talked to them about changes to the body as they grow up<sup>55</sup>. The Health and Social Care Information Centre’s 2015 report into *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England*<sup>56</sup> suggests that over 40% of pupils do not feel they get enough information in school on smoking, alcohol or drug use. Girlguiding’s 2015 Girls’ Attitudes Survey found that fewer than half of young women had talked about mental health in lessons at school (44%).<sup>57</sup>

## 4. The case for statutory status to improve provision

**As set out in the previous section, PSHE education provision is not good enough in schools despite the importance of the issues it covers. Here we set out the case for statutory status in order to ensure that all pupils receive the ‘curriculum for life’ they need and deserve and to ensure that all teachers are trained and supported to teach it to a high standard.**

The links between non-statutory status and reduced quality of provision have been made by leading education unions including the National Association of Head Teachers,<sup>58</sup> the Association for Teachers and Lecturers,<sup>59</sup> Voice,<sup>60</sup> the National Union of Teachers<sup>61</sup> and the NAHT Edge,<sup>62</sup> as well as the National Governors Association.<sup>63</sup> PSHE Association members working in schools directly link non-statutory status to a number of trends which limit the quality of provision, including:

- learning delivered through occasional off-timetable ‘drop-down’ days rather than regular timetabled lessons which build learning week by week
- schools giving responsibility for PSHE lessons to teaching assistants or teachers with spare lessons, rather than teachers with training in the subject
- PSHE leads having fewer resources and lower status in schools than other subject leads/departments
- perhaps most worryingly, pupils believing that the subject is not valued by their school.

### The view from teachers

*“I don’t understand why PSHE is not statutory but yet we are required to meet outcomes that only it can meet. I understand the reservations about having a nationally imposed programme but I don’t see why we can’t adopt a locally agreed syllabus.”*

*“If PSHE was to become compulsory it would raise its profile among staff and pupils. At present it is often seen as a timetable-filler which creates an ‘It’s just PSHE’ mentality.”*

Initial teacher education at present places little emphasis on PSHE education, and uptake of the national PSHE CPD programme has fallen by 90% since 2010.<sup>64</sup>

### The view from the Commons Education Committee

In 2015, having examined the status of the subject in a thorough inquiry which took over 400 evidence submissions, the cross-party Commons Education Committee concluded:

*“PSHE requires improvement in 40% of schools. The situation appears to have worsened over time ... this situation would not be tolerated in other subjects .... This must change, and we accept the argument that statutory status is needed for PSHE ... The statutory requirement should have minimal prescription to ensure that schools have flexibility to respond to local needs and priorities”*

The implications of a move to statutory status on standards of provision are set out below.

# The potential impact of statutory status

*PSHE is the subject that prepares children for the rest of their lives yet it's often cut from the timetable to make space for other subjects. This is why statutory status is so important.*

**Julia Peters, Girlguiding Young Advocate**

*Parents have never needed their children to have excellent teaching in PSHE as much as they do now. They are faced with the reality of having to talk to their children about pornography, sexting, cyberbullying and all of the other risks that the online world includes. Parents accept their responsibility to guide their children with these issues as a core part of parenting but they can't be expected to do it alone. They need all schools to be offering excellent PSHE lessons.*

**Vicki Shotbolt, Founder and CEO, Parentzone**

In addition to guaranteeing PSHE education lessons for all school pupils, statutory status would send a clear message to schools about the high standards of provision expected. As a non-statutory, non-examined subject, PSHE education is uniquely vulnerable to falling off the curriculum in schools with other subjects taking priority. Statutory status would ensure that every pupil received regular PSHE education lessons from trained teachers, giving it parity with other subjects in relation to expectations of rigour and frequency.

## **Maintaining flexibility for schools**

A statutory entitlement to PSHE education would be fully compatible with flexibility for teachers to continue to tailor their PSHE provision to the needs of their pupils (based on local data, consultation with pupils, parents and communities) and freedom for heads to be able to fit the PSHE curriculum into their timetable arrangements and ensure teaching is in line with the school's ethos. While not dictating the content of lessons to schools, statutory status would provide clarity that PSHE is a subject which needs to be held to the same high standards as other subjects, taught through regular lessons in adequate curriculum time by trained teachers.

## **Wider benefits**

Statutory status would send a message to the whole education community, including teacher training providers, that the subject should be prioritised. It would also bring the statutory curriculum into step with government aims to deliver positive outcomes on life chances, employability, character, British values, preventing radicalisation and, crucially, safeguarding.

Finally, statutory status would provide crucial balance in school accountability: ministers have raised the stakes in terms of performance in academic subjects, driving for higher standards for all pupils. If this isn't balanced by raised expectations for PSHE education, standards of provision and frequency of provision will continue to decline. Statutory status would ensure that lessons were taught with greater rigour by trained teachers, in line with expectations for other subjects. As set out below, such a move would be hugely popular with teachers, pupils and parents.

## 5. Support for statutory status

**Support for statutory status from respected public figures, expert bodies, business leaders, teachers, parents and children and young people is overwhelming.**

### Public support for statutory PSHE education

Statutory status for PSHE education is supported by:

- **Parents:** 92% of parents say that all schools should teach PSHE education.<sup>65</sup> Statutory status is supported by leading parent bodies including Mumsnet, Mothers' Union, PTA UK (the national body for parent-teacher associations) and the National Governors Association.<sup>66</sup>
- **Pupils:** 92% of young people receiving PSHE lessons say that all pupils should receive them.<sup>67</sup> The UK Youth Parliament has made '*a curriculum for life*' a campaign priority for four years in a row.<sup>68</sup> Statutory status is backed by Girlguiding, the British Youth Council and UK Youth.
- **Teachers:** an NUT survey showed that 88% of its members want PSHE to be statutory<sup>69</sup> and teaching unions NUT, NAHT, NAHT Edge, Voice and ATL have all called for statutory status.
- **Business leaders:** 85% of business leaders support statutory status according to a recent YouGov survey undertaken on behalf of the PSHE Association.<sup>70</sup>
- **Media:** the statutory PSHE campaign is endorsed by the Times and Daily Telegraph newspapers and has been responsibly reported by tabloids including the Daily Star and Sun.

### Political support for statutory status

As set out above, the Commons Education Committee called in February 2015 for statutory status for PSHE education at all key stages.<sup>71</sup> This echoed an earlier call for statutory status from the Home Affairs Committee after its inquiry into female genital mutilation in June 2014,<sup>72</sup> while the Parliamentary inquiry into the UK's efforts to prevent violence against women and girls stated that Britain would be better placed to meet its obligations to prevent gender-based violence if PSHE education was statutory.<sup>73</sup> In September 2016, the Commons Women and Equalities Committee recommended statutory status in order to help prevent sexual harassment in schools.

Statutory status has also been backed by the chairs of the Commons Health and Business, Innovation and Skills Committees and by senior figures and former Ministers from across the political spectrum<sup>74</sup>. Parliamentary supporters include former education secretaries Lord Blunkett and Baroness Morris, former Children's Minister Tim Loughton<sup>75</sup>, former Health Secretary Lord Fowler and 15 all party parliamentary group chairs<sup>76</sup> as well as leading backbenchers including Neil Carmichael, Ben Howlett, William Wragg and Michelle Donelan.

### Experts calling for statutory status

The campaign for statutory status is backed by over 100 expert bodies including two royal societies, five leading education unions, six royal medical colleges, the NSPCC, Barnardo's, Stonewall, the British Red Cross, the Children's Society, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the Association for Chairs of Safeguarding Children Boards, the Children's Commissioner, the Chief Medical Officer, Public Health England, the Faculty of Public Health and the national police lead for child protection, Chief Constable Simon Bailey<sup>77</sup>.

## 6. Key principles for statutory PSHE

**The PSHE Association has developed a set of recommended principles to apply to statutory PSHE to ensure high standards of rigour, balance and parent and community involvement.**

In campaigning for statutory status for PSHE education, we and our partners are calling for:

- An entitlement which applies to all school pupils at key stages 1-4 in all state schools, whether they are academies or maintained schools
- A duty on all state schools which gives PSHE parity of status with existing statutory subjects and which applies to the whole of the subject, not any single component of it

Best practice dictates that this provision should be:

- **Designed and delivered by teachers to meet their pupils' and community's needs:** this should include early consultation with parents and community leaders, and teaching which is in line with the ethos of the school. Any statutory provision must recognise the need for schools with a religious character to teach the subject in the context of the school's foundation, while ensuring that lessons reflect a reasonable range of religious, cultural and other perspectives.
- **Taught by teachers who have had training in the subject:** this means ensuring the subject is a key part of all initial teacher education routes and that there are high-quality CPD opportunities available for existing teachers.
- **Informed by a range of best practice models:** expert bodies and teacher unions should be consulted, taking full account of the need for sustainable workloads for teachers. The emphasis should be on improving quality of provision without increasing the burden on teachers or, necessarily, the number of teaching hours each week in every school (acknowledging that some schools give PSHE education time on the curriculum, but because teachers are not trained, the lessons are not as effective as they could be).
- **Taught in regular timetabled lessons:** providing an opportunity for developmental learning, with clear cross-curricular links made with other subjects as part of a curriculum planned by the school. Curriculum content should be determined by schools using best practice guidance, local data and assessment of pupil need in consultation with pupils, parents and community leaders. This localised approach, based on pupil need, parental consultation and the professional judgement of schools, is preferable to a rigid curriculum set nationally.
- **Balanced, factually-accurate and appropriate lessons:** learning in PSHE education should be balanced, factually accurate, always cover the law and a range of views and beliefs on a given issue, while being appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils and respectful of their religious and cultural backgrounds.
- **Avoid a 'parade of topics' approach:** teaching resources produced by the PSHE Association under a Department for Education character education grant recommend that schools should focus on the key skills and characteristics they want pupils to develop..

As set out above, it is critical that parents are involved when a school's PSHE curriculum is being developed. While there is widespread consensus amongst parents, governors and parent-teacher associations about the need for PSHE education, it is understandable that parents will want to ensure that a school's programme is appropriate for their children. Ofsted has found no evidence of inappropriate teaching, but we should not be complacent and statutory duties to ensure that schools engage parents as they develop their PSHE programme should be maintained. Statutory status for PSHE education could be supported by enhanced statutory guidance for schools relating to parental involvement and more frequent monitoring of provision by Ofsted.

## 7. Conclusion

*There is an overwhelming demand for statutory PSHE education – from teachers, parents and young people themselves. It's important that school leaders and governors take PSHE seriously and improve their provision by investing in training for teachers and putting PSHE lessons on the school timetable. Statutory status will help ensure all of this happens.*

Commons Education Committee, February 2015

*Schools should ensure every pupil has the opportunity to develop and thrive. That can only happen if they are prepared with the right amount of time set aside for PSHE education. Young people are calling on the Government to do the right thing – ensure PSHE education is statutory.*

Mita Desai, Chair, British Youth Council, June 2015

When delivered by trained teachers in partnership with communities, parents and pupils, PSHE education can contribute to a range of positive outcomes for children and young people: keeping them healthy and safe, both online and offline, improving their academic performance, preparing them for the workplace and building the character and resilience they will need to thrive in a changing world. There are significant potential social and economic benefits of this kind of education too, yet this potential can only be fulfilled by raising the status of the subject.

Raising the status of PSHE education would send a clear message about the importance of a subject currently in the uniquely vulnerable position of being both non-statutory and non-examined. It would not only persuade schools but also the whole education system, including teacher training providers, that the subject should be at the core of learning. It would send a message to schools about parity of budgets and status for PSHE leads and it would bring statutory duties on schools into line with government ambitions to deliver positive outcomes on social mobility. It would also send a clear message to parents that their concerns about child safety were being heard and would send an equally important message to those external groups seeking to undermine schools' PSHE provision on matters like equality and sex and relationships education.

The government has raised the stakes in terms of school performance in academic subjects, and if this is not balanced by raised expectations for PSHE education, standards of provision will continue to be unacceptably low, leaving millions of young people without the skills to thrive in the modern world. The Ofsted *Not Yet Good Enough* report was based on visits to schools in 2012. Four years later, evidence suggests that the position is rapidly deteriorating. Statutory status would arrest this decline and be a catalyst for positive change: initial teacher education providers, CPD providers, headteacher trainers, local authorities, academy chains and others would have to respond. The support for statutory status from such organisations demonstrates that the education system stands ready to respond to leadership from government.

The campaign for statutory status is supported not only by professional bodies but also by pupils, parents and teachers across the country. Teachers and parents are calling for a partnership between home and school to support pupils' personal and social development, while '*a curriculum for life*' has been a campaign priority for the UK Youth Parliament two years in a row, in a process involving hundreds of thousands of young people. 88% of teachers, 92% of parents and 92% of pupils who have received PSHE education believe that it should be an entitlement for all. It is time that these calls for a rigorous curriculum for life are finally heard.

# Appendix: Calls to raise the status of PSHE education, May 2013 to present

**May 2013: Ofsted report sets out that PSHE education provision is “not good enough”. The report states:**

*“Lack of high-quality, age-appropriate PSHE education... is a concern as it may leave children and young people vulnerable to inappropriate sexual behaviours and sexual exploitation.”*

**October 2013: UK Youth Parliament publishes landmark report calling for ‘a curriculum for life’, stating:**

*“The need for education and discussion of issues such as pornography, body image and online grooming and abuse is greater now than it was a decade ago... By making PSHE education a statutory entitlement, with an expectation that schools will incorporate local issues of key importance to their pupils, we believe that schools would both prioritise PSHE education and retain the flexibility they need to meet pupils’ needs.”*

**June 2014: Home Affairs Committee report on preventing female genital mutilation (FGM) highlights the scale of FGM in the UK, estimating that 65,000 girls aged under 13 were at risk of FGM, and stated:**

*“It is important that teachers and pupils have an opportunity to discuss issues such as FGM, especially where a proportion of the school population may come from a practising community ... Empowering children to discuss the issue openly will increase the likelihood of breaking the inter-generational cycle of FGM, and will also increase the level of reporting, in so doing helping to ensure the safeguarding of at-risk girls. We recommend that PSHE be made compulsory, including teaching pupils about FGM in high-prevalence areas.”*

**August 2014: Jay report on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham states that survivors were “scathing” about the “out of touch” sex education they received.** The report recommended that all children receive sex education and that it needed to be updated. Subsequent reports on CSE in Oxfordshire, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and Birmingham all stress the important role of education in keeping children safe. The report on CSE in Greater Manchester highlights the vulnerability of primary school pupils and states:

*“Because PSHE education is not compulsory, there is a piecemeal approach in Greater Manchester with a huge variation in the information that schools are giving to children. Some schools don’t teach about CSE for fear about reputational damage if they are seen to have a problem. We need to campaign for the Government to make PSHE compulsory so that all children in Greater Manchester schools are better safeguarded from CSE.”*

**October 2014: National Crime Agency submission to Education Committee PSHE inquiry states:**

*“Online safety is not primarily a technology issue but about behaviour, communication and relationships... While some aspects of the topic can be addressed through computing lessons... other topics such as sexting or online pornography are more appropriately addressed within PSHE lessons... It is not simply technical mistakes such as ‘sharing personal information’ or young people failing to ‘think before they post’ which makes them vulnerable. Rather, it is child sex offenders’ exploitation of young people’s expectations, natural naivety, impulsivity, curiosity and inexperience which can enable sexual abuse. As a result the CEOP Command’s developing understanding of the threat suggests that sex and relationships education is essential”*

**January 2015: Joint Committee on Human Rights in its report on the UK’s efforts to meet its obligations on preventing violence against women and girls, stating:**

*“The UK would be in a stronger position to say that it is fulfilling the requirements of Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention if all schools were required broadly to teach the same curriculum in relation to PSHE and we believe that this national curriculum should include issues relating to violence against women and girls.”*

**February 2015: Commons Education Committee landmark ‘Life Lessons’ report on PSHE education states:**

*“Young people ... have a right to information that will help keep them healthy and safe. We accept the argument that statutory status is needed for PSHE, with sex and relationships education as a core part of it ... Better PSHE has the potential to help efforts to address many problems in society, including teenage pregnancy, STI rates, drug and alcohol abuse, cyberbullying, and child sexual exploitation.”*

**February 2015: 15 All Party Group Chairs, including former Conservative Health Secretary Lord Fowler, support Commons Education Committee call for PSHE to be statutory, stating:**

*“PSHE education has the potential to have a positive impact on academic success, safeguarding, physical, mental and sexual health... Yet according to Ofsted, more than 40 per cent of schools do not have good PSHE education. This means millions of pupils are not getting appropriate teaching that prepares them for life.”*

**March 2015: At Downing Street child sexual exploitation summit, Sarah Champion MP sets out the case for PSHE, calling for statutory status from key stage one in order to keep children safe.**

**March 2015: Barnardo's, NSPCC, Children's Commissioner, two former education secretaries, former Children's Minister Tim Loughton and other leading figures issue joint call for PSHE to keep school pupils safe from risks like child sexual exploitation, stating:**

*"The Prime Minister referred to CSE as a national threat; he must now act. We urge the government to make PSHE education statutory on the curriculum, so that all pupils learn how to protect themselves and others."*

**November 2015: Children's Commissioner report "Protecting children from harm" on child sexual abuse in England sets out the scale of abuse suffered by children across the country and states:**

*"The Commissioner recommends that all schools equip all children, through compulsory lessons for life, to understand healthy and safe relationships and to talk to an appropriate adult if they are worried..."*

**November 2015: Government expert panel on preventing children viewing pornography online says:**

*"We believe... that careful attention should be paid to the findings of the House of Commons Education Committee who concluded that "PSHE requires improvement in 40% of schools. The situation appears to have worsened ... and young people consistently report that the education they receive is inadequate."*

**December 2015: In her 2015 annual report which focuses on women's health, the Chief Medical Officer recommends that the Department for Education makes PSHE "a routine part of all children's education".**

**January 2016: Joint letter from four select committee chairs makes the case for statutory PSHE education:**

*"PSHE is a crucial part of preparing young people for life. It can provide them with the knowledge and confidence which will affect their health, wellbeing and relationships, now and in the future..."*

**March 2016: In a Times interview, former Culture Secretary Maria Miller becomes the fifth serving Select Committee chair to call for statutory status, in order to address the "appalling" impact of sexting:**

*"The way the internet is impacting on young people's lives — and particularly young girls — leaves them in need of far greater support. We have to make sure that we tackle it properly."*

**April 2016: Norfolk Chief Constable Simon Bailey, the national police lead for child protection, calls for statutory PSHE education in the context of growing fears on child sexual exploitation, stating:**

*"Once police become aware a child has been abused it is too late; they have already been harmed... compulsory PSHE would ensure all children get the information to help themselves so they can stay safe."*

**April 2016: Report from the House of Lords Social Mobility Committee argues that key "life skills" such as communication, team working, resilience and self-management should be embedded in the school curriculum, arguing that "preparation for the workplace needs to begin as early as possible" in schools.**

**July 2016: Report into harmful sexual behaviour amongst children chaired by Conservative MP Nusrat Ghani recommends that all children should have access to high quality, age-appropriate information and advice about healthy relationships, their rights and responsibilities and how to seek support, noting:**

*"Children [are] being exposed to a vastly greater volume of sexualised content at far earlier ages... It is increasingly important that they have access to information from responsible authorities. If it is not available they will seek information anyway, but are more likely to receive this from less reliable sources."*

**August 2016: Chair of the Association for Police and Crime Commissioners (APPC), Vera Baird QC, stresses the importance of statutory PSHE in helping children and young people to recognise and stay safe from child sexual abuse, stating:**

*"Taught well, PSHE would give children who are victims of abuse the education to judge earlier that it is wrong and develop the confidence to report" and that "reports into abuse in Oxford and Rotherham both concluded that good-quality PSHE keeps children safe, and polls suggest overwhelming parental support for it to be taught in schools".*

**September 2016: The Commons Women and Equalities Committee recommends statutory status for PSHE education, with sex and relationships education (SRE) as a core component, in order to help to prevent sexual harassment in schools. It states:**

*"Excellent resources to teach pupils about gender equality, relationships, sex and consent, in age appropriate ways, already exist. But only a minority of schools are delivering good teaching. The Government must take a lead in ensuring that all children have access to high-quality SRE and it does not remain the privilege of a few."*

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