

Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	Relationships and Sexuality Education
Date of meeting	20 October 2022
Relevant Officer	Garem Jackson, Head of Education
Cabinet Member	Councillor Beca Brown

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- i) The purpose of this report is to respond to a request from members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee for an opportunity to examine the relationships and sexuality education in more detail, which is a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales Framework from September 2022.
- ii) This element has been mandatory in all primary schools since September 2022 and 6 of our secondary schools that present the curriculum to Year 7 in September 2022.

2. Background

- i) The curriculum of every school above must include the learning provision noted in the Relationships and Sexuality Education Code. [Relationships and Sexuality Education Code](#)
This is statutory guidance for headteachers, governing bodies and Local Education Authorities. There is a legal expectation for it to be used and implemented. Schools have a direct individual responsibility to operate as corporate bodies themselves.
- ii) In this change, Sex and Relationships Education is changing to 'Relationships and Sexuality Education' (RSE) in the new curriculum. The change in title is intentional - with a new focus on Relationships.
- iii) An extensive consultation was undertaken on the proposals and a draft Relationships and Sexuality Education Code was the subject of a public consultation between 21 May 2021 and 12 July 2021. Details about the consultation and its findings are included [here](#).
- iv) The Code has been developed by practitioners and is research and evidence-based. The statutory Code and guidelines were published in January 2022 after the Senedd passed the Relationships and Sexuality Education Code in December 2021.
- v) In accordance with the Act, the relationships and sexuality education provided by schools must be appropriate to learners' development. This means that schools must consider a variety of factors, including the learner's knowledge and maturity; their age; any additional learning needs and anticipate their physiological and emotional development. Relationships and sexuality education must be appropriate to the development of all learners, which means that the needs of learners of similar ages may differ.

- vi) There are legal requirements for Relationships and Sexuality Education to be appropriate in terms of development, including the resources used and implemented by schools.
Topics such as on-line safety, consent and sexual health are all included in the Code, but in appropriate development stages so that learners are not exposed to things that are inappropriate for their development and age.
- vii) Caution was taken to ensure that all learning within Relationships and Sexuality Education is appropriate in terms of development, and teachers, stakeholders and professionals involved with its development have ensured that this is reflected in the Code.
- viii) Education about relationships in early development will focus on building self-confidence by encouraging learners to appreciate themselves; identifying and communicating their feelings and forming friendships.
- ix) For example, at 5 years old, children who are currently in the Foundation Phase will learn about relationships with parents, family and friends - not romantic relationships. This is reflected in the new curriculum. The concept of general 'consent' is introduced in early development and the learning is outlined in the Relationships and Sexuality Education Code - 'awareness of asking for consent to share things, for example toys. Awareness of everyone's right to privacy, personal boundaries'
- x) Until the end of primary school, children will learn about the following, as noted in the Relationships and Sexuality Education Code:
- Develop empathy and kindness through positive interaction.
 - Promote an awareness of different types of families and relationships - and that everyone is unique.
 - Learn how human bodies change as they grow.
 - Recognise the importance of looking after yourself and personal hygiene.
 - Learn the correct terminology about all parts of the body.
 - Know the advantages of asking for help and who to ask for help.
 - Realise that everyone has the right to privacy and understand the general idea of consent in their daily involvement with others.
 - Can interact with others in a way that is fair and respectful for all.
- xi) Parents have a central role to play when supporting their children. Schools also have a crucial role - especially in a world where so much inaccurate and misleading information and harmful content is available on-line. Relationships and Sexuality Education plays a special role to safeguard and protect every learner in Wales.

3. Legal Context

- i) In accordance with the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021, the requirement to deliver the Relationships and Sexuality Education Curriculum is a Statutory duty, which falls on schools commencing on 1 September 2022 as the provisions come into effect. The Relationships and Sexuality Education Code represents statutory guidance for schools regarding the implementation of the Curriculum as noted in section 1 of this report. As a Local Education Authority, one of our main responsibilities is ensuring that Gwynedd schools operate in accordance with their legal duties.

4. Gwynedd Schools

- i) Given that Relationship and Sexuality Education only became a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales Framework in September 2022, it is premature to be able to scrutinize the provision of our schools in this area, together with the support that is available for them.
- ii) Gwynedd schools will operate the RSE code whilst adhering to relevant strands and everything will be developmentally appropriate.
- iii) When developing the Curriculum for Wales Gwynedd schools are supported by GwE. GwE's Improvement Support Advisers have supported all our schools to follow the RSE code. GwE have also been collaborating with the Healthy Schools network in order to develop an offer of professional learning in the field - which is currently underway, led by Gwynedd Healthy Schools in Gwynedd.
- iv) Schools are also supported by the local authority and the Welsh Government when responding to inquiries about the Relationships and Sexuality Education code.
- v) By ensuring a sufficient period for our schools to implement the new requirements (i.e. at the end of this academic year) it would be possible for the members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to pay attention to the following when considering the need to scrutinize the implementation of our schools in the field of Relationship and Sexuality Education in the future:
 - What is the provision of Gwynedd schools in the field of Relationship and Sexuality Education?
 - What resources are used by Gwynedd schools to meet the requirements of the Relationship and Sexuality Education code?

- What role have Gwynedd school Governors played in the context of providing the Relationship and Sexuality Education curriculum?
- How have Gwynedd schools included parents and guardians as key stakeholders?
- To what extent is the support given to schools by GwE and the Education Authority in the field of Relationship and Sexuality Education appropriate?

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to accept this report on Relationships and Sexuality Education.