

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



Department of

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Ms Koulla Yiasouma
NI Commissioner for Children and Young People
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c/o: Amber@NICCY.ORG

Your Ref: 20/AM/KY/074
Our Ref: CORR-1697-2020

2 July 2020

Dear *Koulla*

Re: RSE in the Northern Ireland Curriculum

Thank you for your e-mail of 23 June in relation to implementation of the C.E.D.A.W recommendations with regard to making relationship and sexuality education (RSE) compulsory within the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The legal minimum curriculum content taught by schools is set out in the Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007 ("the 2007 Order") as high-level areas of learning. RSE is a mandatory requirement for all pupils of compulsory school age and is included in the curriculum under the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) area of learning at primary school level and the Learning for Life and Work (LLW) area of learning at post primary level. At Key Stage 4, for example, young people have the opportunity to explore the qualities of a loving respectful relationship, the implications of maturing sexually and the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity.

The Department also requires all schools to have in place its own written policy on how it will address the delivery of RSE which should be subject to consultation with parents and endorsed by the Board of Governors to ensure it reflects the school's ethos.

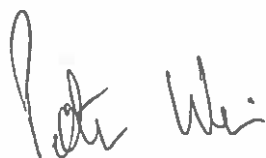
Before restoration of devolved government, officials held a number of discussions with officials in the Northern Ireland Office following their consultation on the recommendations contained within the NI (Executive Formation) Act 2019. In these discussions officials have explained how RSE is already covered within the curriculum and advised that any changes to the current NI curriculum would require a

legislative amendment to the 2007 Order, which would require consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders would of course include NICCY. I suspect however that consultation is likely to create further divergence in opinion. Additionally, there is no evidence that prescribing subject content produces better learning outcomes for young people; teachers here can adapt their approach to address current issues which means young people can relate teaching to their own experiences and contexts and critically evaluate the information they see and read today.

My Department has also made available funding to the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to develop a Hub to support a range of age appropriate material related to RSE. This includes links to external organisations which offer a range of advice on topics which are important to young people. I have now made further funding available this year for further development work in this area.

I have asked officials to continue their dialogue with colleagues in the NIO to ensure that the duty placed on the Secretary of State by the Act is not a variance with the approach to the curriculum here and my role in making education policy. I will also write to the Secretary of State outlining my views in due course.

I trust that this response addresses your queries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Weir', written in a cursive style.

**PETER WEIR MLA
MINISTER OF EDUCATION**