



Education Committee

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Rt Hon Justine Greening MP
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
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29 November 2016

Dear Secretary of State,

On 7 January 2016, the Chairs of the Education, Business, Innovation and Skills, Home Affairs and Health Committees wrote to your predecessor as Secretary of State to call on the Government to address the widespread concern within Parliament and public life at the Government's approach to personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and sex and relationships education (SRE).

The Government's reply, although accepting that "making PSHE statutory would give it equal status with other subjects", declined to take that simple first step.

However, much has happened since then, not least the findings of the Women & Equalities Committee in its Report on *Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools*, which made for troubling reading. The Committee concluded that:

[...] sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools is having an impact on young people and school life. Consequences include: physical and emotional harm, including teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases; girls feeling unable to fully participate in educational and extra-curricular opportunities; teachers spending valuable time dealing with incidents of sexual harassment and bullying; and young people developing a sense that sexual harassment and sexual violence are acceptable behaviours and learning social norms that are carried through to adult life.

The Committee recommended that:

Every child at primary and secondary school must have access to high quality, age-appropriate relationships and sex education delivered by well-trained individuals. This can only be achieved by making SRE a statutory subject; investing in teacher training; and investing in local third sector specialist support.

We regret that the Government's response to that Report failed to seize the opportunity of announcing plans to introduce a statutory status for PSHE. However, a Private Member's Bill—the *Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (Statutory Requirement) Bill*—is currently before the House, presenting another opportunity. As you will recall, this Bill was introduced in the previous Session but made no progress. An opportunity therefore presents itself for the Government to engage constructively in the progress of this Bill and use the process to actively support the Bill or, alternatively, bring forward proposals of its own.

When you came to the Education Committee on 14 September, you indicated that you were indeed looking at the question of statutory status, alongside existing plans to improve the quality of PSHE. We ask that you give serious thought to this proposal and the benefits that would arise from it. We also ask you to consider the consequences of failing to act; not only for the quality of education in England, but also for the lifelong consequences which can result from patchy or inadequate access to PSHE and SRE.

Yours sincerely,



Neil Carmichael MP
Education Committee



Rt Hon Maria Miller MP
Women & Equalities Committee



Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Affairs Committee



Dr Sarah Wollaston MP
Health Committee



Iain Wright MP
Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy Committee