
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Dyddiad / Date:	16.07.21
Pwnc / Subject:	Curriculum for Wales guidance and code for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) guidance is generally clear and well aligned to the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. It references the four purposes well and makes suitable links to cross-curricular skills and cross cutting themes. This guidance provides enough autonomy to schools and settings to design their own curriculum whilst indicating important aspects that they should include as part of their design process.

In our response we have suggested some considerations for Welsh Government, to strengthen the guidance. These are:

- To alter the order of certain statements when defining and embedding RSE
- To revise the terminology used in relation to the three stages of learner development
- To revise terminology in relation to the school or setting's policy from 'recommended' to 'should' have a policy
- To revise terminology in relation to the school or setting's RSE policy being available for 'inspection' by parents and carers to 'viewed' by parents and carers
- To include guidance for schools or settings with a religious character

Consultation questions

Respondent type (please select one from the following)

Child or young person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employer/business representative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional body/interest group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schools governor or member of school management committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntary sector (community group, volunteer, self-help group, social or co-operative enterprise, religious, not for profit organisation)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mainstream school practitioner (head, teacher, teaching assistant, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional consortium	<input type="checkbox"/>

EOTAS provider (PRU staff, independent school staff, other provider, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher education (including universities/academic institutions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Further education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Politician (Senedd member, county councillors, MP, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other respondent group not listed above, please specify: Estyn	✓
Lobbyist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 1 – Do you agree that the explanation of the definition of RSE is clear?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	✓	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer:

The explanation for teaching RSE is clear in the guidance and references the legal status of the cross-cutting theme, particularly the removal of the former right to withdraw. This will support schools and settings to design their curriculum.

We suggest that the explanation of the definition would be better placed as the opening paragraph in this section, rather than, as the third paragraph.

Question 2 – Do you agree that the principles for embedding RSE are clear?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	✓	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer:

The guidance clearly states that RSE should be part of a whole school integrated approach. This is reinforced by stating, in point four of the list of principles, that all practitioners will contribute to its delivery and will require suitable professional learning. We suggest, for the purpose of clarity, that point four in the list is moved to be the second point. In points two and six, care should be taken to ensure schools do not interpret the requirement of 'specialist expertise, time and resources' to deliver RSE through external specialists at one-off events as this conflicts with a whole school approach to be delivered by all staff.

Current guidance clearly states that delivery should be inclusive, developmentally appropriate and place value on diversity in a curriculum that develops cyclically upon the lived experiences of its learners.

It may be useful to add a further point to the list of principles to capture that the language and behaviour of staff, and the content of teaching and learning resources used across the whole curriculum, must be consistent with the aims of RSE.

Question 3 – Do you agree that the structure and content of the guidance clear?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree		Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer:

The structure and content of the guidance is clear for schools and settings to develop their curriculum. Additional guidance for pupils with ALN and Voluntary Aided schools with a religious character is useful and clarifies the legal position of RSE. Additionally, the guidance reminds schools of their requirement to comply with the relevant requirements of the Equality Act, 2010.

Question 4 – We propose that the content set out in the three broad stages of the guidance will become mandatory as part of the RSE code. Do you agree that they encompass what is important about RSE for all learners' ages and developmental stages?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer:

Content within the three areas is clear and the three broad stages generally relevant to pupil development. This will enable practitioners to develop their curriculum in a 'developmentally appropriate' way. However, the three stages link to the current foundation phase, key stage 2 and secondary phases and may not always align with learners' physical, mental and emotional changes. In addition, reference is made to 'adolescence' at ages 12-16 for this 3-16 curriculum, yet it is generally considered that adolescence begins at the age of 10. Therefore, using this term as a reference point may cause confusion.

In general, the areas outlined in the mandatory code cover important areas within RSE and link clearly to the Statements of What Matters in the Health and Well-being area of learning and experience.

Question 5 – Do you agree that the RSE code section of the guidance is clear and appropriate?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer:

There is clear guidance for all schools to have a RSE policy in place, which can be shared with relevant stakeholders. However, the terminology should be more decisive and be altered from 'recommended' to 'should' given the legal status of compulsory RSE.

The roles of the governing body and headteacher are clear, as well as relevant staff, although it is not clearly stated here that all practitioners should be required to be involved in its delivery, regardless of subject specialism or the age-range taught.

There is a clear statement for schools to access high-quality professional learning for staff to enable them to deliver RSE and the cyclical themes, building up knowledge and activating prior learning and lived experiences.

On page 10 of the draft guidance the statement 'an up-to-date policy for parents and carers that is available for inspection by parents and carers' may cause confusion as to whom the policy is written. For example, the use of the word 'inspection' implies assessment and scrutiny, rather than using a term such as 'viewed'. Schools, settings and stakeholders may see the purpose of the policy to satisfy an inspection or inspectorate.

There is a correlation between the statutory guidance on policy content and Estyn's inspection guidance for care, support and guidance, emphasising that all aspects of school life are interrelated and that it is everybody's responsibility to keep learners safe.

On page 11 the principles of delivering effective RSE are clear in a whole school approach, integrated across the curriculum. The place for specialists in assisting its delivery, as well as the need for time and resources, are clearly stated with all practitioners contributing.

Question 6 – Do you agree that the mandatory elements of the guidance (the RSE code) are the right ones? Is anything missing that should be included?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer:

The mandatory content of the RSE curriculum, within its broad developmental stages, is appropriate to support the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales. However, the age range for the developmental stage and titling of each may need further consideration. In particular, the use of the term 'adolescence' for learners is currently assigned to 'age 12 and above' in this guidance, while adolescence is generally defined as starting at age 10 and continuing to age 24. Attaching adolescence to age 12 upwards may mislead practitioners and be inconsistent with professional learning on RSE.

In addition, the word 'approximately age ...' is used when relating to age in terms of development, whereas it may be better to refer to 'typically age ...'.

Question 7 – Do you agree that the guidance offers relevant information to support practitioners when designing their school curriculum for RSE?

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer:

The guidance offers suitable and relevant information practitioners may find helpful when developing their local curriculum for RSE. There is a clear emphasis on a whole-school approach, with all practitioners involved across the six areas of learning and experience. In particular, strong links with the Statements of What Matters within the Health and Well-being area of learning and experience are identified.

Question 8 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the RSE draft statutory guidance would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

The guidance supports schools in developing their provision for RSE in the language required. Welsh Government might want to consider making clear the requirement to ensure that advice and guidance is available bilingually. Practitioners should be mindful of a reduced capacity to provide resources in the Welsh language when drawing upon material not produced in Wales.

Question 9 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed RSE draft statutory guidance could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

To support the development of the Welsh language, this guidance should encourage English medium schools to support pupils to develop and improve their Welsh language skills through RSE. It will also be important to ensure any developed resources or

supporting materials are accessible in both Welsh and English. This will support schools to plan their RSE curriculum more effectively.

Question 10 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

It may be useful to include a section in the guidance for schools that teach denominational religious education that explores how these schools must deliver the universal entitlement to RSE for all learners and how this can sit alongside their religious character.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: