



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

www.craigwhittakermp.co.uk

Response to PSHE and SRE addition to Children and Social Work Bill – January 2017

Thank you for contacting me about personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and sex and relationships education (SRE) being included in the Children and Social Work Bill.

Schools should be providing all young people with a curriculum that equips them for success in adult life. Part of that responsibility is to ensure every child has access to relevant, factually accurate and age-appropriate PSHE and SRE.

To allow teachers the flexibility to deliver high-quality PSHE education it is a non-statutory subject, and there is no specified programme of study. SRE is compulsory in maintained secondary schools, and academies and free schools are encouraged to teach SRE within their broad and balanced curriculum. However, the Government is taking action on PSHE and SRE teaching and has committed to exploring all options and opportunities for improving the provision of these subjects in schools.

I know that the Secretary of State is personally committed to ensuring that progress in improving the availability and quality of PSHE and SRE is made a priority. As the Children and Social Work Bill progresses through Parliament, the Department for Education will outline the steps the Government intends to take to ensure PSHE and SRE is fit for purpose, inclusive and supports all young people growing up in our country today.

It is important to make sure that our young people have the right information and right advice, and that SRE is fit for the world that children live in today. Starting at an early age so that children can understand relationships with one another, is sensible. However, I agree teaching must remain age-appropriate. I understand that the Secretary of State for Education has committed to looking again at how schools deliver this and is carefully considering all the options.

I appreciate that there are concerns from religious organisations about their right to maintain their own beliefs in religious schools. In fact, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 includes measures to protect and promote religious freedom by enabling religious organisations to act in line with their doctrines and beliefs. As with any other issue, teachers are entitled to express their own faith or beliefs as long as they do so in a sensitive, balanced and professional way. Teachers in religious schools already do this on a range of issues such as divorce and contraception, and the same guidance applies to same sex marriage. The Government remains committed to freedom of speech and has given firm assurance that being able to openly follow your faith is a vital freedom it will protect.

I will follow this matter with great interest and I look forward to hearing about the plans for the future.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whittaker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig Whittaker MP