

**Consultations on additional Curriculum for Wales guidance –  
Relationships and Sexuality Education  
13 July 2021**

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation on additional Curriculum for Wales guidance – Relationships and Sexuality Education.
2. NASUWT - The Teachers' Union, represents teachers and headteachers in Wales and across the United Kingdom.

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

3. The NASUWT maintains that securing high outcomes for all children and young people means that action is needed to:
  - a. provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum experience fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
  - b. ensure parity of esteem between academic and vocational pathways and the cognitive, emotional, cultural, creative, ethical and social dimensions of learning;
  - c. require all state-funded schools and colleges to work together to secure a comprehensive curriculum entitlement for all 14 to 19 year-olds;
  - d. equip children and young people to be research-driven problem solvers;
  - e. extend entitlements for all children and young people to high-quality academic and vocational education, coupled with

equality of access to high-quality, practical, hands-on, work-based learning opportunities;

- f. refocus the accountability system to reflect and support the expectation that all young people should remain in education and training until the age of 18;
- g. restore the morale of the teaching profession by tackling poor employment practices, including workload, securing professional entitlements and respect for teachers, and refocusing the efforts of teachers and headteachers on their core responsibilities for teaching and leading teaching and learning;
- h. establish a Masters-level profession and raise the pay of teachers in recognition of the increased knowledge and skills that they bring to the job; and
- i. ensure access to high-quality professional development for all teachers throughout their careers.<sup>1</sup>

- 4. It is clear that in many respects, the current curriculum framework does not meet these important tests. For this reason, the NASUWT supported the Welsh Government's decision to commission a fundamental review of curriculum and assessment arrangements.
- 5. In general, the report of the review of the curriculum undertaken by Professor Graham Donaldson, *Successful Futures*, set out a coherent and rational basis for the future development of the curriculum framework in Wales.
- 6. However, in a range of critical respects, the proposals for the curriculum published by the Welsh Government have failed to reflect many of the key principles articulated in *Successful Futures*.
- 7. In particular, the recommendation that the curriculum should be developed by the workforce, for the workforce, has not been given practical effect. The exclusion of the voice of the profession has resulted in a proposed

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<sup>1</sup> NASUWT (2013). *Maintaining world class schools*. NASUWT; Birmingham.

curriculum model that would, if implemented, generate significant workload burdens for teachers and undermine the ability of schools to secure for all children and young people their entitlement to a broad and balanced range of learning experiences.

8. The NASUWT continues to have profound concerns about current proposals for curricula reform. These concerns relate to critical aspects of the structure and content of the curriculum; its implications for the qualifications system and assessment practice; and the intention to proceed with implementation of the curriculum without a coherent evaluation of its workforce and resource requirements.
9. The NASUWT considers that the current health crisis and the recovery phase that will be necessary is the wrong time to initiate wholesale changes to, not only, the curriculum but also the accountability and assessment framework aligned to it. Space is needed to allow teachers and schools to recover from this time of extreme stress. Progressing at this time could lead to irretrievable mistakes being made.
10. The Union has also called on the Welsh Government to delay the implementation of the new curriculum in the face of the disruption to schools and the education system, stemming from the health emergency owing to the pandemic of COVID-19.
11. Teachers and teaching will remain disrupted for the foreseeable future, and teachers and schools have learnt a whole new way of working online and have poured their efforts into secure blended learning opportunities for pupils. The NASUWT considers that it is entirely unreasonable to place additional burdens on teachers at this time
12. The Union remains clear that in these circumstances, it would not be appropriate to proceed with implementation of the proposed curriculum by the start of the academic year 2022/23.

13. The NASUWT is therefore pleased by the Education Minister's recent decision to postpone the planned roll out of the New Curriculum for Year 7s in September 2022. This was the right decision given that the teaching profession continues to operate at full capacity providing education in the midst of a global pandemic. The Union remains concerned however at the Welsh Government's decision to retain the 2022 roll-out date for primary schools and the decision to require the New Curriculum for Year 7 and 8 to be introduced simultaneously in 2023.
14. The NASUWT is also very concerned regarding the offer of greater "flexibility" to secondary schools in deciding for themselves whether to delay the introduction of the new curriculum. The Union maintains that this is much too vague and leaves too much to the determination of individual school leaders. We are concerned some schools will choose to plough on regardless of whether they are ready for these changes.
15. This is not helped by the decision to make schools which do choose to delay roll out the new curriculum to both years 7 and 8 next year.
16. A universal and unified approach by the Welsh Government would have helped avoid a rushed and disjointed patchwork approach to the new curriculum which risks jeopardising its success, pushing up workload and stress for teachers and sowing confusion for pupils and parents."

### **SPECIFIC COMMENTS**

17. The following comments must be read in the context that the NASUWT continued concerns, set out above, regarding the delay in the implementation of the new curriculum and the associated assessment and accountability frameworks to allow for a period of sustained recovery from the crippling effects of the pandemic.
18. The NASUWT's response is informed directly by serving teacher and headteacher members and also by the work of its representative

committees and consultative structures, made up of practising teachers and school leaders working in the education system.

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

The explanation of the definition of RSE is clear.

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

The principles for embedding RSE are clear.

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

The structure and content of the guidance is clear. However, the elevation of RSE into a significant part of the curriculum – either under the Health and Well-being AoLE or as a cross-curricular subject, mean that corresponding guidance and exemplar material also needs to be improved so as to support staff at potential pinch-points such as the pluralistic requirement and the need for a RSE policy.

22. **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?

The NASUWT has no comment on this question

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

One of the principles of delivering effective RSE in the Code is that it requires specialist expertise, time and resources. This echoes the fact that RSE, compared to what used to be called Sex Education, is much more prominent and cross-curricular in the New Curriculum. To accommodate this change, schools would require a practitioner with these qualifications – something that may not currently exist. Centres would have to re-train staff so as to meet the needs of the statutory guidance, which would require extra funding. Conversely, centres may have to recruit new staff to undertake accountability and responsibility of this statutory role and NASUWT would have concern with how schools would approach this without, say, trimming the workforce elsewhere to accommodate.

NASUWT is be mindful that RSE provision may continue to be delivered using current Sex Education mechanisms and so any moves to evolve the provision would need to consider the impact of the increased workload on relevant staff.

24. **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?

The NASUWT has no comment on this question

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

Whilst the Content Tables are useful in setting out the overarching expectations for different age ranges, NASUWT believes that the guidance needs to be more detailed so as to support RSE planning in centres – and

in particular, to ensure consistency across the country. Whilst the provisions come under the Health and Well-being Area of Learning, the recognition that RSE:

- Requires specialist expertise, time and resources
- Requires all schools and sites to have a dedicated RSE policy
- Should be part of a whole-school approach
- Should be inclusive and inter-disciplinary

Means that RSE provision will be expected to be more visible within the curriculum rather than perhaps a small unit of work as part of PSHE. If that turns out to be the case, then schools will require to make changes in the workforce as previously mentioned in Answer 5 – changes which may require financial resources.

26. **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

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

It is essential that both languages of Wales are given parity so as not to disadvantage learners in either medium.

Historically, there have been issues with parity of resources. There has been a delay in, or lack of provision of Welsh-language resources in many subjects which has disadvantaged learners who study in their native language. In turn, this has created a workload burden on members who have to improvise to fill in these gaps so that the learners do not suffer because of it. NASUWT would expect this oft-repeated error not occur again.

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

- 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
- 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.

We refer you to the response to Question 8

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**General Secretary**

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