



Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards

Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

16 June 2020

Colleagues,

I would like to thank you for your continued interest in the development of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education. The historic introduction of these subjects will put into place the building blocks children need to develop healthy, positive, respectful, and safe relationships of all kinds; as well as reinforcing whole school approaches to teaching healthy lifestyles, promoting positive wellbeing and mental health.

As we look to September 2020, the Department remains committed to supporting all schools in their planning to deliver these subjects and has been working to assess the immediate and long-term impact of coronavirus on education. We know this process has been of interest to you, so I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the Department's expectations for implementation.

The knowledge pupils will gain from these subjects will be particularly important given the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on many children and young people's lives. For example, Health Education has a strong focus on mental wellbeing and will provide pupils with the knowledge to recognise and seek help in cases of poor mental health, but also support them to promote positive mental health and thrive, both at school and beyond. An understanding of the symptoms, simple self-care techniques and the support services available will benefit pupils as they return to school. Health Education also covers important topics such as personal hygiene and germs including bacteria, viruses, and the importance of handwashing, which will support schools in their measures to create safe environments for their pupils.

Therefore, we believe that it is important that the statutory duty to implement the new subjects still comes into force from September 2020. However, considering the current circumstances faced by our schools we will reassure them that they have flexibility over how they discharge their duty within the first year of compulsory teaching. We have consulted extensively on this issue with the sector through our RSHE Working Group, and there is a strong consensus on this approach.

Schools that are ready to teach these subjects and have met the requirements set out in the statutory guidance, including those relating to engagement with parents and carers, are encouraged to begin delivering teaching from 1

September 2020, or whenever is practicable to do so within the first few weeks of the new school year.

Schools that are not ready to teach RSHE or unable to adequately meet the requirements because of the challenging circumstances presented by coronavirus should aim to start preparations to deliver the new curriculum and commence teaching the new content by at least the start of the summer term 2021.

To ensure teaching begins as soon as possible, schools are encouraged to take a phased approach (if needed) when introducing these subjects. Schools should consider prioritising curriculum content on mental health and wellbeing, for the reasons outlined above.

The Department will also be publishing a new online service to help all schools increase their confidence and quality of teaching practice. This will feature innovative training materials, an implementation guide, case studies and support to access resources. The service has been developed extensively with schools and teachers and will be available this term, with additional content added in the following months.

The Department on Monday 8 June published the first of the training modules for teachers to support them in preparation to deliver content on mental health and wellbeing. The training module which has been developed with clinical experts and schools, will improve teaching confidence in talking and teaching about mental health and wellbeing in the classroom. It is being published early given the important of supporting pupils' mental health at this time.
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-mental-wellbeing>.

Alongside this, on Sunday 7 June the Government announced further support for schools to help pupils and staff with their mental wellbeing
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-mental-health-support-for-pupils-and-teachers>.

This support and the introduction of these subjects is a significant step in helping children and young people adapt to different ways of living and learning in these unprecedented times.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the House libraries, and I have circulated it to all colleagues and peers who have expressed an interest and shown support in the implementation of these subjects.

With best wishes.



Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards