

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 1 May 2024
7th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

PE2077: Update Curriculum for Excellence to remove Personal and Social Education (PSE) from secondary schools

Introduction

Petitioner Thomas A Ross

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to remove PSE from the Curriculum for Excellence and stop it being taught in secondary schools.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2077>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 8 January 2024.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition can collect signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 28 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

6. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerks to the Committee
April 2024

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2077: Update Curriculum for Excellence to remove Personal and Social Education (PSE) from secondary schools

Petitioner

Thomas A Ross

Date Lodged

8 January 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to remove PSE from the Curriculum for Excellence and stop it being taught in secondary schools.

Previous action

I have emailed several local and high-level Scottish politicians about the removal of PSE. This includes Scottish Government officials, my local MP, Hannah Bardell, my local MSP, Angela Constance, the First Minister, Humza Yousaf, and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

Background information

In my view, PSE is a useless subject taking up the learning time of secondary school students from S1-S6.

We need to remove this subject as an early and first step to restoring the Scottish education system back to its former stature as the top education system in the UK.

Removing PSE will also help students as it will allow pupils to be more engaged and have more thorough classes, granting a higher standard of education.

I have met with my local MP, Hannah Bardell, and had an interesting and eye-opening debate about Scottish schooling.

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on petition PE2077



Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

This petition seeks to remove Personal and Social Education from the curriculum in secondary schools.

Personal and Social Education and Health and Wellbeing in the Curriculum

Personal and Social Education (PSE) is one of the ways in which schools support the health and wellbeing curriculum in schools.

PSE is a specific timetabled lesson which can cover: aspects of planning for choices and changes, substance misuse, relationships, sexual health and parenthood, in addition to aspects of physical activity, sport and health.

There are six areas of the health and wellbeing curriculum.

- Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical Wellbeing;
- Planning for Choices and Changes;
- Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport;
- Food and Health;
- Substance Misuse; and,
- Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP).

Health and Wellbeing is a key area of Curriculum for Excellence and is one of the three curriculum areas considered to be the responsibility of all practitioners (the other two are literacy and numeracy). CfE however is a broad and non-prescriptive framework and how schools would deliver education in these areas is to a large degree a matter for local authorities or schools. There is further guidance in some of these areas, such as statutory guidance on RSHP. PSE may also include other areas of learning, such as financial literacy.

The [Scottish Government's 2017 Mental Health Strategy](#) included the ambition that every child and young person should have appropriate access to emotional and mental wellbeing support in school. Following the strategy, the Scottish Government [undertook a review of PSE](#). This found that PSE/health and wellbeing was

undervalued in teaching and learning in schools, and it needed to be improved, particularly in upper secondary.

The review included recommendations on how to improve PSE or learning around health and wellbeing. One of the recommendations of is that there should be increased opportunities for children and young people to be involved in designing their PSE/HWB programmes.

Ned Sharratt
SPICe Researcher

18/01/2024

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C: Written submission

Scottish Government submission of 6 March 2024

PE2077/A: Update Curriculum for Excellence to remove Personal and Social Education (PSE) from secondary schools

Thank you for your e mail regarding the petition on removing personal and social education (PSE) from the secondary school curriculum in Scotland.

Learning in PSE is designed to ensure children and young people develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. In secondary school, PSE is a taught subject which covers aspects of planning for choices and changes, substance misuse, relationships, sexual health and parenthood, in addition to aspects of physical activity, sport and health. There are six areas, noted below, which provide a holistic view of PSE.

- Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical Wellbeing;
- Planning for Choices and Changes;
- Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport;
- Food and Health;
- Substance Misuse; and,
- Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP).

Through Curriculum for Excellence, PSE is one of the key vehicles to apply learning on health and wellbeing. Health and Wellbeing is spread right across the curriculum, and it is one of the three core areas that are the responsibility of all staff in the school, the other two areas are literacy and numeracy. Schools are encouraged to develop the curriculum to suit their local context and meet the needs of children and young people. It is good practice for schools to consult with children and young people and respond to their views appropriately, to ensure this meets the needs of all children and young people in the school or educational setting. There is no specific guidance for local authorities for teaching of PSE; guidance is however made available on some of individual areas outlines above, such as RSHP.

In summary, PSE offers us an opportunity to ensure children and young people are prepared for the issues and challenges that life may bring. It is essential we equip our young people with these skills and understanding to enable them to deal with the fast changing culture and society that we live in. The Scottish Government has no plans to remove PSE from the national curriculum.

In May 2017, the Scottish Parliament's Education and Skills Committee published a report following work to examine PSE. The Committee's work included a number of focus groups with teachers, students and others during which, among other things, PSE was discussed. In addition to holding formal evidence and focus groups, the

Committee asked online 'what should Personal and Social Education sessions be about?' and how it should be delivered. There was a high level of engagement, and the Committee received hundreds of submissions, Facebook comments, short emails of around 100 words, and tweets. Through these responses, the Committee gathered a clear picture of how valuable good PSE is to young people. The Committee also noted it is also so important that young people experience a broad PSE curriculum to support the goals of the Curriculum for Excellence "to help young people become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.". The Scottish Government continues to take forward the Committee's recommendations to help improve learners' experience of PSE.

I hope the Committee finds this letter helpful in setting out the Scottish Government's position on PSE in Scottish secondary schools.

JENNY GILRUTH MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills