

NSPCC Cymru/Wales

Response to:

**Independent Review of Assessment and the National
Curriculum Wales**

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NSPCC Cymru/Wales, Diane Englehardt House, Treglown Court, Dowlais Road, Cardiff,
CF24 5LQ

Tel: 02920 108 081 Email: Cecile.Gwilym@nspcc.org.uk



About us:

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) is the UK's leading children's charity specialising in child protection. Our vision is to end cruelty to children in the UK and we make a difference for all children by standing up for their rights, listening to them, helping them when they need us and by making them safe.

The NSPCC runs projects and services across the United Kingdom and Channel Islands to help vulnerable children. We also provide ChildLine, the UK's free, confidential 24-hour helpline and online service for children and young people and a helpline for adults who are worried about a child or want advice.

Q1a. Besides qualifications, what are the three most important things young people should gain as a result of their time in school? Please give a reason(s) for your answer

NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels that time at school should:

- Give children and young people information about **how to keep safe; develop knowledge of abuse and neglect, and of where to go for help and advice.**
- Give young people a **safe space to explore identity, equality and safe relationships.** NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes that an approach which allows children to learn about, explore, and develop safe and healthy relationships will have a positive impact on preventing domestic violence and other forms of abuse. Young people themselves are asking for more information about what relationships within a school context. For example, in surveys carried out by school staff with students in Ysgol Glyn Derw and Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer, 38% and 48% of respondents wanted to learn about safe relationships. In addition, family relationships are the second main concern that children and young people contacted ChildLine about in 2012/13. ¹ChildLine has also created an additional category of calls on teenage intimate partner violence due to the increase in calls on this issue.
- Help young people **become active and engaged citizens:** this involves teaching them about their rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and skills such as financial literacy. This will help fulfil young people's health and emotional wellbeing, by providing them with skills for living well.

Q1b. Do you think these things will remain important in ten years? Please give a reason(s) for your answer

Yes, they will be important to the health, wellbeing and success of future generations. Each generation of children will need to learn these skills for themselves. Delivering keeping safe messages within school settings will improve safeguarding, which will in turn have a positive impact on children and young people's attainment. The Pembrokeshire Director of Children and Schools was a key note speaker at the recent National Social Services Conference and made clear that high performing schools are also good safeguarding schools. Ensuring that the culture, ethos and values in each school promotes the child's voice will also help children and young people speak out about any issues they may have witnessed or experienced.

In relation to delivering education on safe relationships, it will take several generations to achieve the kind of cultural change desired to end violence against women and domestic abuse. Children have a right to be safe and explore what makes a relationship safe or unsafe.

The NSPCC's ChildLine School Service is a free service that is provided in primary schools and aims to increase primary school pupils' knowledge of abuse and neglect and where to turn for help. We feel it is important that this service is delivered in all primary schools in Wales and would welcome any support to promote it.

Q2a. What are the three best things about education in Wales? Please give a reason(s) for your answer

NSPCC Cymru/Wales welcomes rights-based approaches in schools which seek to strengthen participation and pupil voice. The establishment of school councils and the

¹ Can I tell you something? ChildLine Review of 2012/13 http://www.nspcc.org.uk/news-and-views/media-centre/press-releases/2014/childline-report/childline-report_can-i-tell-you-something_wdf100354.pdf?format=browser

pupil participation project are good examples of how article 12 of the UNCRC (right to express an opinion and to have that opinion heard in matters which affect children and young people) is being put into practice.

We are also supportive to the approach to wellbeing which is currently being developed in schools in Wales and of initiatives such as the school-based counselling strategy. We welcome the development of a holistic PSE framework for Wales, although we feel this now needs refreshing, and its status (statutory/non statutory) needs to be looked at.

Q2b. What are the three main things that we need to change to improve education in Wales? How would you change them? Please give a reason(s) for your answer

Healthy, happy children learn better. **It is crucial to maintain a focus on improving pupil wellbeing as well as looking at attainment and results.** This has been clearly demonstrated by three large scale reviews of research on the impact of social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes on elementary and middle-school students in the United States.² This research shows that *“SEL programmes improved students’ social-emotional skills, attitudes about self and others, connection to school, positive social behaviour, and academic performance. (...) SEL programming improved students’ achievement test scores by 11 to 17 percentile points, indicating that they offer students a practical educational benefit.”*

It is NSPCC Cymru/Wales’ view that the **PSE framework should be refreshed, and its content be made statutory** to ensure greater consistency in key skills taught in different schools across Wales. There is also a need to develop underpinning resources and training for the workforce.

We are also aware of the challenges of poverty/deprivation which are impacting on children's ability to learn. **There is a need to build on the current tackling poverty work to ensure that children can achieve their full potential.** A recent report by Save the Children, *A Fair Start for Every Child* shows how poverty is affecting the lives of children in the UK today – their physical health, emotional well-being, cognitive development and educational achievement.³ In addition, research by the NSPCC shows the more disadvantaged you are, the more likely to be at risk of abuse you become.⁴

NSPCC Cymru/Wales and Action for Children are currently delivering the Welsh Neglect Project, which aims to improve responses to child neglect in Wales. A key area for the Neglect Project is providing best practice advice to **teachers/schools so that they can best support and provide early help to children experiencing neglect through to poor parenting.** There is a need to look at how teachers’ role is more than just "recognise/refer" but to provide support to children and signpost children and parents to other forms of support than social services. This is particularly relevant within the context of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act, which seeks to direct more people to early intervention services through Information, Advice and Assistance. NSPCC Cymru/Wales will be carrying out a research project on this issue in 2014/15.

Q3a. How much freedom should schools be given to decide for themselves what they should teach? Please give a reason(s) for your answer

² Durlack, A. et al. (2008) The positive impact of Social and Emotional Learning for Kindergarten to Eighth-Grade Students.

³ http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/A_Fair_Start_for_Every_Child.pdf

⁴ Wood, M; Barter, C and Berridge, D. (2011): Standing on my own two feet: disadvantaged teenagers, intimate partner violence and coercive control. (London): NSPCC
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/standing_own_two_feet_PDF_wdf84557.pdf

We believe that the PSE framework in Wales **should be statutory and rights-based with clear information on the subject areas which must be taught, for example healthy, safe relationships.**

The freedom should be in relation to the way subjects are taught and ability to make it relevant to children within their communities.

Q3b. Is it important that all children in Wales learn the same thing as each other until the age of 16?

Yes

Children should be given the opportunity to develop the same skills and understanding of key subjects.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales is of the view **that there should be statutory requirements to teach key subjects and topics whilst giving schools the flexibility to work with pupils on how to deliver education that is relevant to them.**

Q5. Should any subjects be added to or removed from the curriculum?

NSPCC Cymru/Wales firmly believes **that education on healthy relationships and Violence against Women and Domestic Abuse should be a mandatory part of the PSE curriculum in Wales. This should be taught from an equalities and human rights perspective.**

This should form part of mandatory PSE age-appropriate content on keeping safe, in particular on-line, how to recognise abuse and neglect, and where to go for help.

We would like to see:

- **Healthy relationship education delivered by practitioners with specific expertise in gender and equality issues, including violence against women and girls.**
- **The content of the PSE curriculum relating to healthy relationships to be informed by children’s own experiences (“things that are going on for us”) and where children can learn from each other.**
- **Healthy relationship education to be developed with children and young people in a way that is relevant to their local community and experiences.**
- **Robust training and clear guidance for professionals delivering healthy relationship education on dealing with disclosures.**
- **Provision for children and young people outside school settings with a specific focus on vulnerable and hard to reach groups.**

We are basing these comments on the findings of research carried out on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales Cross Party Group on Children’s Sexuality-Sexualisation and Equalities, and funded by the NSPCC, Cardiff University and the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales.⁵ The research involved 125 children and young people from five secondary schools and three primary schools in Wales. As part of the research, most children and young people reported struggling to live with gender stereotypes and “everyday sexism”, and experiencing verbal sexual and gender-based harassment. This is why we believe that education on healthy relationships, which focusses on tackling gender

⁵ Renold, E (2012) Boys and Girls Speak Out, a qualitative study of children’s gender and sexual cultures
NSPCC & Office of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/boys-and-girls-speak-out_wda100425.html

stereotypes and equalities, is vital to ensure safer futures and well-being for young people in Wales.

Q6. Children come from different backgrounds and have different talents and abilities. How can we make sure that their education helps all of them to achieve the best they can?

Developing an equalities framework is key to ensuring all children can achieve the best they can in education settings. This would involve developing whole-school strategies and pedagogic practices on personal, social and structural discrimination which recognises difference and diversity, both within and across social and cultural groups.

We also believe that schools should allow active engagement through co-production/participation: this would ensure that education (particularly PSE) is relevant to children in different communities.

Finally, a rights-based approach should underpin the delivery of education to ensure that all children can achieve their full potential.

Q7. What information do you need to know about children's educational achievement as they progress through school? Please give a reason(s) for your answer

We would want data to capture a child's individual journey and record of achievement.

Schools should collect more data on children's wellbeing, including data on all forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment and bullying, as this has a considerable impact on their achievements.

Titles of additional information, evidence and research that you are submitting with this response.

Renold, E (2012) Boys and Girls Speak Out, a qualitative study of children's gender and sexual cultures: NSPCC & Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/boys-and-girls-speak-out_wda100425.html

Barter, C. et al. (2009) Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships (London): NSPCC
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/partner_exploitation_and_violence_report_wdf70129.pdf

Ringrose, J. et al. (2012) A qualitative study of children, young people, and "sexting": NSPCC
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/resourcesforprofessionals/sexualabuse/sexting-research_wda89260.html

Wood, M; Barter, C and Berridge, D. (2011): Standing on my own two feet: disadvantaged teenagers, intimate partner violence and coercive control. (London): NSPCC

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/standing_own_two_feet_PDF_wdf84557.pdf

Save the Children (2014): A Fair Start for Every Child:

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/A_Fair_Start_for_Every_Child.pdf

Durlack, A. et al. (2008) The Positive Impact of Social and Emotional Learning for Kindergarten to Eighth-Grade Students.