

## PE1820/A

Scottish Government submission of 3 September 2020

Thank you for your e-mail of 4 August 2020 regarding the petition on Compulsory Bereavement Education in Schools. I am replying as I have policy responsibility for personal and social education (PSE) in the Scottish curriculum.

It may help if I set out the basis of Scotland's curriculum framework, the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). CfE is a broad framework at national level, it is not a statutory curriculum prescribed to the level of individual courses that must be followed by each individual school. Instead, the framework of "[experiences and outcomes](#)" and "[benchmarks](#)" are available for schools and local authorities to adapt at individual school level as appropriate and in response to the needs of each individual school.

PSE is a taught subject, within CfE, 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. PSE learning is delivered in primary schools through health and wellbeing. There are six areas which provide a holistic view of PSE/health and wellbeing:

- 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 CfE, PSE/health and wellbeing is spread right across the curriculum and is one of the three core areas that are the responsibility of all staff in the school, the other two areas being literacy and numeracy. Schools are encouraged to develop the curriculum to suit their local context and meet the needs of children and young people, this can include delivering learning on bereavement. 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/health and wellbeing, guidance is however made available on individual areas explained above and is updated regularly. For example, there are resources on Education Scotland's website to support teachers to deliver learning on bereavement:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/resources-for-school-staff-to-support-positive-mental-wellbeing-of-children-and-young-people/>

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/additional-support/specific-support-needs/social-and-emotional-factors/bereavement/>

In addition, the Scottish Government welcomed the [Review of PSE](#) as another critical measure to strengthening our excellent education system for children and young people. The Review recommended a number of new measures to provide

schools with the resources and support to address issues facing children and young people today. The recommendations will ensure a high standard of consistent learning and support in PSE. Good and relevant PSE is a major factor in providing the foundations of successful learning. The Review has 16 recommendations outlining how we can, in cooperation with our key partners, improve the delivery of PSE. This will help to provide every child and young person with the opportunity to grow, achieve and succeed as individuals.

[‘The Compassionate and Connected Classroom’](#) is part of a wider set of resources entitled ‘The Compassionate and Connected Classroom and Community’ which consists of a curricular and professional learning resource. This suite of resources aims to raise awareness of the potential impact of adversity and trauma in shaping outcomes for children and young people and provide support that can help mitigate the impact of these experiences.

More widely, matters relating to beliefs and practices around death are also referenced within the [CfE Experiences and Outcomes \(Es and Os\) for Religious and Moral Education \(RME\)](#). The Es and Os document refers to the role RME can play in exploring issues such as, ‘What is life for?’, ‘Is there a God?’, and, ‘What happens after death?’. The RME curricular area encourages learners to investigate, reflect upon and understand the responses which religious and non-religious views can offer to questions about the nature and meaning of life.

Beyond education policy, we know the experience of death and bereavement can have long lasting negative effects on children and young people’s lives. In partnership with Young Scot, we commissioned the informative “Death Tings” report (<https://youngscot.net/news-database/death-ting>) to identify the main issues of importance to young people around death and dying. This report told us we must do all we can to support young people who are experiencing death and bereavement by ensuring information and support is available when needed. The report also highlights the need to ensure we encourage young people to talk about death and bereavement amongst peer groups and in school settings which would help to challenge our culture around death and bereavement, making Scotland a better place to grow up.

In March 2020, a contract for a National Childhood Bereavement Coordinator for Scotland was awarded to Includem. The role of the coordinator is to have strategic oversight of childhood bereavement support services in Scotland and act as a national champion. The aim is to improve the capacity and capability of families and the children’s sector workforce to respond appropriately to children and young people’s needs.

I hope the Committee find this information helpful.