

# ANTISEMITISM POLICY TRUST

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION:

### WHY IT MATTERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ANTISEMITISM

#### WHAT IS PSHE EDUCATION?

Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education is a non-statutory curriculum subject which develops the knowledge, skills and attributes all pupils need in order to keep healthy and safe and to prepare them for life and work in modern Britain. PSHE education provides a framework through which such key skills, attributes and knowledge can be developed and applied to some of the most pressing issues facing young people today. From mental health, to understanding the importance of staying safe online, healthy and safe relationships, making sense of media messages, challenging extreme views and having the skills and attributes to negotiate a potentially volatile labour market. Evidence shows that well-delivered PSHE programmes have an impact on both academic attainment and non-academic outcomes for pupils, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

#### THE MOVE TOWARDS STATUTORY PSHE EDUCATION

The PSHE Association is a charity, a membership body and the leading national membership organisation for PSHE education. The Association's campaign for statutory Personal, Social,

Health and Economic education aims to ensure the regular delivery of high quality PSHE lessons to all pupils across the UK. The campaign has gained significant support across multiple sectors of government and civic society, including from four committees of the House of Commons and the chairs of two more. The Children's Commissioner, the Association for Directors of Public Health, five leading unions, and over 100 expert bodies (including the NSPCC, Barnardo's) have also voiced support. A survey conducted by the PSHE Association further found that 92% of parents, 92% of pupils, 88% of teachers and 85% of business leaders, support the move towards statutory status<sup>1</sup>.

The initial appeal for statutory status was outlined in the House of Commons Education Committee's 2014 inquiry 'Life Lessons', examining the current state of national PSHE education. The report identified that "the Government's strategy for improving PSHE is weak... [t]here is a mismatch between the priority that the government claims it gives to PSHE and the steps it has taken to improve the quality of [its] teaching"<sup>2</sup>. This report was commissioned after Ofsted's 2013 'Not Yet Good Enough' report; following inspections of schools across England, Ofsted found that 40% of schools required improvement/were inadequate in their teaching of PSHE.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PSHE Association, 'A curriculum for life: The case for statutory Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education', June 2017 <<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/sites/default/files/psheall/Curriculum%20for%20life%20May%202017.pdf>>

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons Education Committee, 'Life Lessons', 11 February 2015 <<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/145/145.pdf>>

<sup>3</sup> Ofsted, 'Not Yet Good Enough', May 2013 <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/413178/Not\\_yet\\_good\\_enough\\_personal\\_social\\_health\\_and\\_economic\\_education\\_in\\_schools.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413178/Not_yet_good_enough_personal_social_health_and_economic_education_in_schools.pdf)>

In March 2017, Education Secretary, Rt Hon Justine Greening MP, announced that 'RSE' (Relationships and Sex education) and 'Relationships Education' would become compulsory within secondary and primary curriculum, respectively. The Children and Social Work Act provides for implementation of these provisions by the beginning of the 2019 academic year. Further, the 2017 Act confers upon the Education Secretary the power to make provisions requiring PSHE to form part of basic curriculum, generally. Whether such action is to be taken remains to be seen.

The PSHE Association's June 2017 report, 'A curriculum for life: The case for statutory Personal, Social, Health and Economic education' highlights the manifold inadequacy of existing PSHE education, insisting that "[n]on-statutory status is at the root of these problems".<sup>4</sup> Despite being widely recognised as significantly beneficial to pupils, PSHE unusually does not form part of national curriculum (alongside subjects such as maths and science) or basic curriculum (such as religious education). Lacking statutory status, and not constituting an examinable subject, results in PSHE being taught at a significantly lower standard than other subjects. PSHE is often neglected within schools, being taught by teaching assistants, or teachers with no formal training in PSHE education (Ofsted found that 20% of PSHE teachers had no training in the subject<sup>5</sup>). Further, PSHE lessons are often delivered infrequently and outside of regular timetable, and are typically allocated the smallest proportion of resources.

## THE CASE FOR STATUTORY STATUS

Regular timetabled teaching of discrete PSHE, delivered by teachers specifically trained in the subject, would ensure relevant knowledge is accumulated throughout pupils' school career. Further, providing the subject with recognition as core curricula sends the message to pupils that social sensitivity, cultural awareness and respect of ethnic difference is essential in the contemporary world.

Ofsted recognise that effective PSHE education can make a significant contribution to pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.<sup>6</sup> PSHE teaching ensures pupils comprehend diversity, prejudice and discrimination: a sensitivity which is increasingly vital. Ofsted's 2013 report included an online survey amongst pupils, revealing that almost two-thirds of pupils had covered racism in class, but less than 50% of pupils had learnt about faith discrimination.<sup>7</sup> Notably, Ofsted highlighted a school which had organised a visit from a Holocaust survivor, emphasising the beneficial impact this had had on pupils' empathy and awareness of discrimination.<sup>8</sup> The 2012 Department for Education 'Schools White Paper' similarly recognised that such teachings can "educate children about the differences between groups of people and create a culture of respect and understanding".<sup>9</sup>

A 2014 study carried out by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education found that 68% of the 7,952 students surveyed were unfamiliar with the term 'antisemitism' and were unaware of its meaning.<sup>10</sup> The National Union of Teachers (NUT) has issued guidance on dealing with antisemitism in schools, recognising schools' critical role in "helping dispel myths about Jewish communities and promoting social justice".<sup>11</sup> Statutory PSHE education could provide the necessary platform to ensure such teachings are delivered; this may contribute to a reduction of anti-Jewish prejudice and discrimination, and increased awareness of Jewish history among pupils. These potential positive impacts of PSHE education would of course apply in equal measure to addressing other forms of hate crime.

The NUT has particularly recognised the imperative to conduct lessons on antisemitism and Islamophobia, considering the ongoing Middle East and Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>12</sup> The NUT recommends that schools attempt to alleviate any tension or hostility between ethnic or religious groups through "curriculum opportunities", ensuring anti-racism is examined within formal classroom settings.

<sup>4</sup> PSHE Association, 'A curriculum for life: The case for statutory Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education', June 2017 <<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/sites/default/files/psheall/Curriculum%20for%20life%20May%202017.pdf>>

<sup>5</sup> Ofsted, 'Not Yet Good Enough', May 2013 <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/413178/Not\\_yet\\_good\\_enough\\_personal\\_social\\_health\\_and\\_economic\\_education\\_in\\_schools.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413178/Not_yet_good_enough_personal_social_health_and_economic_education_in_schools.pdf)>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Department of Education, 'The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010' <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/175429/CM-7980.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175429/CM-7980.pdf)>

<sup>10</sup> UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, 'What do students know and understand about the Holocaust?' <<https://www.holocausteducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/What-do-students-know-and-understand-about-the-Holocaust-2nd-Ed.pdf>>

<sup>11</sup> National Union of Teachers, 'Racism and Anti-Semitism: Issues for Teachers and Schools' <<https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/active/0/TacklingAnti.pdf>>

<sup>12</sup> National Union of Teachers, 'Conflict in the Middle East - issues for schools' <[https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/Gaza-6pp-A4-6289\\_1.pdf](https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/Gaza-6pp-A4-6289_1.pdf)>

Further, citizenship/religious education will help foster respect for different religious and ethnic communities, improving the attitudes held by many students and creating harmonious school environments.<sup>13</sup> PSHE lessons provide the ideal forum for such discussions and teachings, creating safe spaces where students can learn about the importance of equality and tolerance.

Granting statutory status to PSHE would require schools to ensure the subject is given parity to all other subjects, in terms of rigour, expectation and frequency. It relays an important message to the education community at large about the imperative to prioritise social education and foster awareness about the importance of anti-racism. The PSHE Association additionally recognises, as does the Antisemitism Policy Trust, that statutory PSHE compliments the government's existing aims to improve the character and British values of younger generations, promoting a culture of acceptance and respect.<sup>14</sup>

## THE CASE AGAINST STATUTORY STATUS

Some groups have opposed the granting of statutory status to PSHE. Opponents insist that conferring statutory status does not necessarily guarantee the quality of teaching, merely the provision of teaching. This 'tick-box' argument suggests that it will only be a requirement to ensure the teaching of

PSHE is carried out, rather than carried out well.

The Catholic Education Service has expressed concerns that such a move may decrease parental involvement in the subject, or diminish the community aspect or contextual relativity of the subject. If PSHE enters national curriculum, it is increasingly likely that the topics to be taught will become prescribed and rigid, disabling teachers to discuss issues which may be more immediately relevant to the specific class.<sup>15</sup> These are concerns which the Antisemitism Policy Trust hopes would be addressed as part of a move towards statutory PSHE education.

## CONCLUSIONS

The PSHE Association's campaign to confer statutory status to PSHE may prove pivotal to improving the social sensitivity and tolerance of younger generations. PSHE provides a setting for teachers to educate pupils in essential issues such as anti-racism, respect of difference and cultural awareness. Legally recognising PSHE as part of national curriculum would ensure that such lessons are conducted frequently, more effectively, and to an accountably high standard. The Antisemitism Policy Trust supports the PSHE Association campaign and urges parliamentarians to press the Secretary of State to confer statutory status upon PSHE education.

<sup>13</sup> National Union of Teachers, 'Conflict in the Middle East – issues for schools' <[https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/Gaza-6pp-A4-6289\\_1.pdf](https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/Gaza-6pp-A4-6289_1.pdf)>

<sup>14</sup> PSHE Association, 'A curriculum for life: The case for statutory Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education', June 2017 <<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/sites/default/files/psheall/Curriculum%20for%20life%20May%202017.pdf>>

<sup>15</sup> Commons Education Committee, 'Life Lessons', 11 February 2015 <<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/145/145.pdf>>

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