

Curriculum For Life Report

By

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Consulted with West Sussex Youth
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Background & Introduction

The 'Curriculum for Life' campaign was started in 2013 by the UK Youth Parliament and then adopted by the West Sussex Youth Cabinet (WSYC), a group of youth representatives from across the county, in 2015. It's initial aim was to increase the amount of content covered in PSHE lessons. After a rethink in late 2016, the focus of the campaign shifted onto the consistency and quality of teaching. Due to the education budget cuts, it became inconsistent how young people were being taught, as this subject was deemed non-vital. Over the last two years, we have found that young people disagree and believe PSHE and learning a curriculum to prepare us for life is incredibly important. Our WSYC members noted that PSHE lesson quality was a lottery based on which school you went to.

To understand this further, we commissioned a survey which was sent out to 44 schools in West Sussex. Young people responded brilliantly, the survey then allowed us to see what young people genuinely thought of PSHE, and by extension how it could be improved. We then analysed the results and decided on the best way to feed this information back. As you can see, a report was to be sent to the Governors of the same schools, on what we have found. What we would like the Governors to do is to complete a short survey, to aid us to understand which schools would like to engage with us in youth voice, and if there would be any alterations to how PSHE programs work.

Methodology

Earlier this year, we commissioned a survey to establish how young people felt about PSHE. As this was a very broad and complex subject, we worked with the WSYC to come up with questions we thought would be relevant. We then consulted a local school, which for the purposes of this report shall remain anonymous. This was to make the questions 'school friendly', the questions were then adapted, and wording changed as a result of the consultation feedback.

By this point we finally had some questions we could use, then the discussion took place around which would be the most appropriate method of distributing the survey. This was then decided as being an online survey, through the approved partner Survey Monkey, the link was to be distributed to the Head Teachers of 44 specifically selected schools, these schools were selected based on their active involvement in Youth Voice, and in particular with Make Your Mark.

A test version was sent to IPEH workers and the Youth Cabinet, around early April. Once everything had been finalised, the survey went live on the 27th of April. However, this survey was completely voluntary, this meant that our predicted yield was incredibly low.

Survey Results & Analysis

Firstly, we'll cover the limitations to these results. As afore mentioned, the voluntary nature of the survey did severely damage our turnout, in addition to this we didn't collect any data on which school's students were from, as per the feedback from the consultation. This does mean that we cannot determine if certain schools had a higher turnout, and therefore must assume this is representative of the county. Finally, this survey was sent out at the very beginning of exam season, due to our time constraints, therefore the turnout for Years 10/11 was reduced.

We have selected four questions we believe represent the survey, but the full results are still available on the email. A 'light' version is available as well.

Question 2 – Do you think there are enough PSHE lessons?

36% - Yes 42% - No 22% - Unsure

This question highlights that many of West Sussex students believe that their school doesn't devote enough time to PSHE, which we believe exacerbates the somewhat variable quality in W. Sussex schools. If students are allocated the legal minimum, then they are less likely to engage in the subject.

Question 5 – How in depth would you say your PSHE teacher's subject knowledge is?

24% - 1 (Adequate) 14% - 2 29% - 3 24% - 4 10% - 5 (Excellent)

We considered this question to be split at 3, this is because at 1 and 2, this is fairly negative. Under consultation from the anonymous school, we chose to select adequate as the lowest value as, this would be considered a very contentious question. This shows us that subject teacher's knowledge may potential be impacting on the overall impression of PSHE to students. It became clear after consulting students as well, that they feared having PSHE teachers who also teach another subject in school may impact on the quality of their lessons.

However, not to be critical of schools, many have also done a very good job, as 63% of students felt the knowledge was average to excellent. This demonstrates that only a minority of schools should consider looking into this.

Question 7 – How important do you feel PSHE is?

13% - 1 (No all all) 15% - 2 28% - 3 24% - 4 19% - 5 (Very)

For me this was one of the most fascinating questions, a couple of years ago I looked into the PSHE program at my school. This research concluded that students didn't enjoy the unit but found it important, this in essence is the same on a county scale too. From this question, we can see that 71% of students agree that PSHE is important. This reiterates the findings from the UKYP's national campaign. From our findings, it shows us that schools should devote more effort or time into PSHE and treat it as an equal subject.

Question 8 – How much do you enjoy PSHE?

25% - 1 (Not at all) 22% - 2 32% - 3 15% - 4 6% - 5 (Highly Enjoy)

Question 8 gives an overall evaluation of PSHE. We understand this can be incredibly subjective, but a very broad picture can give schools the indication that the majority of students agree that they need this form of education, but quality has suffered somewhere along the process. Only 21% of W. Sussex students enjoyed their PSHE lessons, this indicates a subject rethink should be considered.

Our Recommendations

Due to the limitations mentioned with our survey, we highly recommend that each school carry out their own survey to establish how well their PSHE programs are working. The WSYC recognise that PSHE is a vital subject to schools, but is highly variable in the quality it is taught in.

In addition to this, we would suggest that allocated lessons are devoted to the PSHE curriculum and all-round 'citizenship' education. As proven from many BYC (British Youth Council) projects, Britain's young people don't feel prepared for life or to leave education. PSHE is in its infancy when it comes to gaining traction to be a vital academic subject, we would also ask schools to consider the viability of PSHE gaining an official qualification, as this has become the UKYP (United Kingdom Youth Parliament) devolved England only campaign.

It is also worth schools noting that at the time of publication, this report was submitted to the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement. As we believe that well thought out PSHE courses will lead to young people becoming better citizens, and instil a greater sense of community in the local area. This is why it has also been passed onto Rachel North, the West Sussex County Council's Director of Communities, and also to Deborah Myers the WSCC Director of Education & Skills.

The Governors of each school have a duty of care and commitment to their students, so we recommend that this subject is treated in the same light as others already on the curriculum. In addition, as the survey suggested, to employ outside speakers to deliver some lessons, taking the burden off a single teacher, engaging students and increasing the school's role in the community all in one go. It might be worth school's outsourcing PSHE lessons to the local community.

Summary & Future Actions

The WSYC acknowledges and appreciates that Governors are incredibly busy this time of year, and that this report is a lot to cover. As before mentioned, a light version of the report is available as well.

In summary, this report is as a result of the West Sussex Youth Cabinet's Curriculum for Life campaign. The analysis and recommendations of this report resulted from the survey, as this involved many young people from across West Sussex. This additionally provides an insight into how united and consistent young people's views are.

We reiterate that we believe individual schools should create their own surveys to ascertain whether the schools PSHE program is working. In addition to this, we can confidently say that from our survey we have found outside speakers and a variety of teaching techniques will engage students in the course.

We would like the Governors to complete a very short survey for us, just to confirm they have read the report, and if there will be any alterations or considerations in the school. This will also help us understand which schools wish to engage with the WSYC, UKYP & WSCC in terms of youth voice.

Accreditations & Thanks

Special Thanks to the (Anonymous) school for engaging in the consultation,
West Sussex Youth Cabinet for co-authoring the report,
MYPs for Chichester & West Arun, and for East Arun, Adur & Worthing,
WSCC Voice and Participation Workers & Press Officers,
IPEH Team,
House of Lords Select Committee officer,
The 44 schools who engaged with the survey,
Most importantly, the young people who took part.

Light & Full Report Editions, and full survey results all available.

For more information on the UKYP, or WSYC visit [West Sussex Yourspace](#).