



EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

Ref: M24-32

18 April 2024

Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Education

Review of how RSE is currently taught and how well it meets the needs of students, expectations of parents and capability of schools

Purpose

1. You commissioned ERO to undertake a review that identifies options for improving Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) through developing an understanding of how RSE is currently taught and how well it meets the needs of students, expectations of parents and capability of schools.

Background

2. Learning about relationships and sexuality is part of the New Zealand Curriculum and is one aspect of health education (within Health and Physical Education). It must be included in teaching programmes for years 1–13. What children learn at each level is guided by the New Zealand Curriculum, but individual schools and communities decide how this will be taught.
3. When designing the programme, schools should refer to the guidance titled: *Relationships and Sexuality Education: A Guide for Teachers, Leaders, and Boards of Trustees*. This provides guidance on:
 - A whole-school approach to relationships and sexuality education.
 - Relationships and sexuality education in the New Zealand Curriculum.
 - What schools are required to do under the requirements of the Education and Training Act 2020; the National Performance Measures; and the Human Rights Act (1993).
 - Consulting with communities on the ways in which health education should be implemented.
4. Health education is the only part of the school's curriculum for which the law specifically requires the board of trustees to consult with the school's community. Section 91 of the Education and Training Act 2020 requires the board to consult with the school community at least once every two years on how the school will implement the health education component of the curriculum. The board is required to adopt a statement on the delivery of the health curriculum following this consultation.
5. ERO has previously identified issues with the RSE curriculum. In 2007 it found that schools were not meeting the needs of all students, particularly Māori or Pacific students, international students, students with strong cultural or religious beliefs, students with additional learning needs and students who were sex-diverse, gender-diverse or diverse in their sexuality.

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6. In 2018, ERO found that the provision and overall curriculum remained inconsistent. Most schools were meeting minimum standards, but many had significant gaps in curriculum coverage.
 - In the majority of schools, the most commonly covered topics of the more specific sexuality-related topics were anatomy, physiology and pubertal change.
 - Gender stereotypes, gender diversity and diversity in sexual orientation were also more commonly covered relative to other topics, though much more so in secondary schools than in primary schools.
 - One third of primary schools were teaching about gender diversity and diversity in sexual orientation, and around half teaching about gender stereotypes.
 - 70 percent of secondary schools were teaching about gender diversity and diversity in sexual orientation, and nearly 90 percent were teaching about gender stereotypes.
 - The two least often covered topics in secondary school were sexual violence and pornography; both were covered in less than half of the secondary schools ERO visited.
7. In response to this review, the Ministry of Education released 'Relationships and Sexuality Education: A guide for teachers, leaders and boards of trustees', in 2020 as well as providing new resources for schools on consent, gender diversity & inclusion in 2022.

Scope of review

8. Following the Ministry of Education's release of the 'Relationships and Sexuality Education: A guide for teachers, leaders and boards of trustees', in 2020, and additional resources in 2022, the purpose of the review is to identify options for improving RSE through understanding how this guide impacted, how RSE is currently taught and how well it meets the needs of students, expectations of parents and capability of schools.

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Next steps

13. ERO is currently setting-up the review. We intend to begin fieldwork in June.

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Recommendations

15. It is recommended that you:

- a) **Note** that you commissioned ERO to undertake a review of how RSE is currently taught and how well it meets the needs of students, expectations of parents and capability of schools.

Noted

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9(2)(f)(iv)

f) **Indicate** if you want to discuss these plans with ERO officials. **Yes / No**

Nicholas Pole
Chief Executive

NOTED / APPROVED

Erica Stanford
Minister of Education

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