



Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education and Sex and Relationships Education in Schools](#), HC 145

Wednesday 17 December 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Department for Education \(SRE0364\)](#)

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Members present: Pat Glass (Chair), Alex Cunningham, Siobhain McDonagh, Ian Mearns, Mr David Ward.

Questions 389 – 517

Witness: **Mr Nick Gibb MP**, Minister of State for School Reform, Department for Education, gave evidence.

Q389 Chair: Good morning, Minister; welcome back.

As you know, we have been carrying out an investigation into PSHE and SRE within that. We have held a number of evidence sessions, and we went along to Bristol to talk to some incredible young people about what they wanted to see in the curriculum. It is a hard time for a young person to be growing up in 2014. We have seen that bullying has become more sophisticated and widespread through the internet. The world is infected with HIV. Teenage pregnancies are still unreasonably high. There appears to be an epidemic of sexting among 12 and 13-year-olds, which I find particularly worrying. We have seen all the awful cases in Rochdale, Oxford and Rotherham, with many more to come, and this Committee has heard evidence about FGM.

It is a really hard life for a young person and a really hard time to be growing up, yet the Department seems to be increasingly focused on five A to Cs and appears—certainly from the evidence we have seen—to be doing little or nothing to help young people to combat what is an increasingly dangerous world for them. Is that your view? Can you tell us what the Department is doing to try to help young people to navigate a very difficult time?

Mr Gibb: Thank you very much for that introduction and for the inquiry that you are conducting. The Government do regard PSHE as an absolute priority. It is crucial, and we absolutely recognise all the issues that you highlighted in your introduction. It is a difficult world for young people today. It is a very different world from that in which you and I grew up in as children. We are cognisant that good-quality PSHE education in schools is crucial to enable young people to cope with life in modern Britain and a demanding academic curriculum. Unless you get those basics right, children will not be able to cope. If they suffer due to cyber-bullying, or anxiety caused by changes in their lives and not being able to understand the modern world, they will not be able to cope with the academic curriculum.

We recognise all the points that you make and regard PSHE as a priority in schools. We want to improve the quality of PSHE teaching and what is taught. We were struck by the 2013 Ofsted report entitled *Not yet good enough* about the quality of PSHE teaching in schools. It is wrong to characterise the Government as not prioritising PSHE. It is quite the contrary—we are making it a huge priority and regard it as an absolutely fundamental part of the school curriculum.

Q390 Chair: If the Government see PSHE as an absolute priority, are they concerned that the number of teachers who qualify each year has dropped from more than 1,000 about four years ago to just over 100 last year? If so, what are they going to do about it?

Mr Gibb: We want to ensure that teachers have the right courses and the right CPD training to enable them to teach the subject appropriately. We have funded, and continue to fund, the PSHE Association, which has training and CPD courses for teachers. Indeed, it is introducing a concept of chartered teachers of PSHE, which will ensure that we are, over time, improving the quality and status of PSHE teachers.

Q391 Chair: I think that we could only find one course; I would be interested to hear where the others are. We, as a Committee, are really concerned that the issue appears to have dropped off the horizon. It is not being funded in the way it was. All the evidence that we have had is that good, qualified teachers make the difference, yet last year we trained fewer than 100. We find it difficult to see the connection between that and PSHE being an absolute priority.

Mr Gibb: The way in which ITT and recruitment in colleges works is as a demand-led system, determined by what schools say they need in terms of new teachers. We regard PSHE as an absolute priority. I do not recognise your one course. I presume that you are talking about the Roehampton university course, which is of a very good quality. We promote and point schools towards such courses and continue to fund the PSHE Association in providing them.

Q392 Chair: When I was managing such things in education—money was tight then—we would look at the courses. We had three separate categories: ones that were an absolute priority to the authority, which we would fund and schools simply had to release staff; ones where we were encouraging schools, so we would pay half and the school would

pay half; and ones where we would secure and facilitate the course, but the schools would pay themselves because they saw it as a priority. If it is an absolute priority, is there no responsibility on the Department to have a strategy like that? Next year, if it goes the same way, there are going to be virtually no teachers trained.

Mr Gibb: The whole direction of travel of the Government's education policy is school autonomy. There is always a careful balance between central prescription and giving schools the freedom to develop the curriculum outside the national curriculum subjects in the way that they see fit. One centralised view about what constitutes PSHE may not be right for pupils from different backgrounds in different areas with different circumstances. It is important to allow schools the freedom and autonomy to develop the type of education—

Q393 Chair: So if a school decides that maths is not an issue and it does not want any maths teachers or teaching, that is fine because that is school autonomy.

Mr Gibb: Maths, of course, is within the national curriculum. I was talking about subjects outside the national curriculum.

Chair: But you understand the concept.

Mr Gibb: I do understand the concept. We are continually being pressed to be prescriptive on a whole range of issues, and we want to hold the line and say that it is important to allow schools the autonomy to develop their own curriculum outside the national curriculum area. We could be prescriptive in a whole range of areas outside the national curriculum, but you have to distinguish between the national curriculum and the school curriculum. As far as the school curriculum is concerned, it has to reflect local needs and the needs of the pupils.

Q394 Chair: I entirely accept that—I do not think any of us would want you to be prescriptive about what schools should necessarily teach. However, it almost seems as if the Department is just withdrawing in this area. I know you said that it is not, but we find it difficult to bring together what is being said and what is being done. How much money does the DFE give to the PSHE Association?

Mr Gibb: I think it is about £75,000 a year.

Chair: So, very little.

Mr Gibb: My understanding is that that is not its total funding—it has other sources.

Q395 Chair: Could you give us the details of the total funding and what comes through the Department compared with what is paid in other areas?

Mr Gibb: I cannot do that immediately. I can either do that during the course of this hearing, or I can write to the Committee with those details.

Chair: Thank you.

Q396 Alex Cunningham: If this is such a priority for the Government, why would you not follow the advice of many of the witnesses we have seen here who have said to us, “We think it should be put on a statutory footing”?

Mr Gibb: We continually address that issue, keep it under review and consider it. In my own experience of schools—I have visited quite a few hundred over the past 11 or 12 years—I do not sense, among the school population, any reluctance to teach PSHE. On the contrary, I have not met a head teacher or teaching staff who do not want to have good quality PSHE teaching in their school.

Q397 Alex Cunningham: But the picture is that PSHE is relatively poor over the country.

Mr Gibb: It is patchy. The Ofsted report *Not yet good enough* says that 60% of PSHE teaching is good or outstanding and that 40% either requires improvement or is inadequate. That 40% is an unacceptably high figure, so that is what we need to address. I do not think that there is any reluctance to teach PSHE. The issue is whether the quality of teaching and of what is taught is good enough in the schools. Those schools in that 40% would agree that what they want is more support.

Q398 Alex Cunningham: We go back to where the Chair started by saying it is about the quality of the teachers and the training. Again, the question has to be: how can we actually improve the quality of teaching better to equip teachers to overcome this 40% problem?

Mr Gibb: I do not think it is necessarily just the quality of the teaching, but the quality of what is taught. We need to be supportive of schools and that is where the PSHE Association comes in. It is establishing a subject expert group, formed by leading experts in PSHE, to help to determine what that support should be and how it can best be delivered to schools. I do not disagree with your highlighting of the problem, but I am not always convinced—we keep looking at these issues—that passing a law is necessarily the right solution to the problem when there does not seem to be any lack of will to provide PSHE courses within schools.

Q399 Alex Cunningham: You talked about the £75,000 to the PSHE Association, which seems a small sum, especially compared with the latest announcement of £5 million to encourage and support the military ethos in schools. Is that a right balance? What are we achieving through improved PSHE by promoting this military ethos in schools?

Mr Gibb: The Government have a range of agendas, one of which is to improve behaviour in schools. I think we have achieved quite a lot over the past four and a half years to improve behaviour in schools and to tackle issues of bullying. That is a very important part

of ensuring that young people have a good-quality and enjoyable life in our schools. I think that parents want us to address behavioural issues and a huge amount has been done. We have improved guidance to teachers, we have given more powers to head teachers, and we have clarified when teachers can use force and so on. I don't think that you can take one area of policy and say, "Well, because you're doing that, you should be doing more in another area."

Q400 Alex Cunningham: It is a case of balance—you are correct about that—but is the balance right when we are spending many, many millions? It is not just the £5 million, as many millions have been invested before that in this particular area of education. It is about developing character, resilience and everything else, but is that really good value for money when we see how little is being spent on equipping teachers to deliver better PSHE?

Mr Gibb: As I said, the £75,000 that we give to the PSHE Association is not its total funding. We always have to be cognisant of ensuring that we get good value for taxpayers' money.

Q401 Chair: To be fair, Minister, with on costs, it is not even one salary. This is measly—it really is. It is a tiny proportion. It is not even one salary with on costs.

Mr Gibb: Yes, but the PSHE Association is a membership association that receives fees from its membership. We believe that we are getting good value from the money that we give to the PSHE Association.

Chair: I think you are getting extraordinary value.

Mr Gibb: You should be praising us for that, rather than criticising. That money pays for resources, by the way, not for salaries.

Chair: I was just saying, to put it in context, that it is not even one salary with 20% on costs in London.

Q402 Mr Ward: We have lots of other questions to come on to, but this is so fundamental. This thing is really, really important. When we met the wonderful young people in Bristol, they were saying, "We're actually entitled to look beyond that. We have a right to this." We know that it is not being delivered at a high enough standard, and we know that schools will focus their attention on the things that they are required to do. I don't get it. If this foundation that is required so that they can learn English, maths and everything else in school is so important, why is there reluctance? What stops you from saying that this is so fundamentally important that it should be a requirement—built in, but with the ability to withdraw and so on?

Mr Gibb: There is no reluctance. As I said, it is a major priority of the Government. The PSHE Association, of course, does not always promote everything itself directly. It will point schools towards expert bodies on the particular area that schools want to deliver, so it will not be providing everything itself. Also, this is not the only club in the pack. The

accountability regime is also important, and that will ensure that schools are taking PSHE seriously. Ofsted has a requirement to look at a broad and balanced curriculum. It also has to look at everything in the context of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of young people. Within that, of course, are a lot of the issues covered by PSHE. Schools are held to account on good PSHE, so that is a very powerful force to make sure that schools deliver good-quality PSHE teaching.

Q403 Alex Cunningham: Do you see a day, Minister, when schools will fail their Ofsted inspection because they are failing to deliver quality PSHE education?

Mr Gibb: I do see that. There was an Ofsted report recently that looked at 40 outstanding schools, and all but two of them had an outstanding grade for the quality of their PSHE provision. I do see Ofsted looking at PSHE in the context of the overall judgment that it makes about a school. If a school has very inadequate PSHE, that would indicate that it is, first, not delivering a broad and balanced curriculum; and, secondly, that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is probably inadequate.

Q404 Alex Cunningham: So as many as 40% of our schools could be facing a situation in which they fail their Ofsted because they are failing to deliver in this area.

Mr Gibb: That could happen. Ofsted is Ofsted, and it has its own framework—it is an independent body. I have just highlighted where the Education Act 2011 says that it has to take SMSC into account and has to look at a broad and balanced curriculum.

Q405 Chair: This is not a limiting judgment in Ofsted, so schools are unlikely to fail even if they have diabolical PSHE. Would you like to see a stronger link between that and safeguarding, which is a limiting judgment? If schools have diabolical PSHE, should they be judged as not safeguarding their pupils?

Mr Gibb: I think you have got to be careful with limiting judgments, and how many you have and require Ofsted to apply. The Ofsted framework enables important aspects of PSHE to be considered in what I would regard as a proportionate and integrated way. PSHE is linked to those four core aspects of the Ofsted inspection framework.

Q406 Chair: I have seen schools that have failed safeguarding and therefore failed on the grounds that they do not have an up-to-date list of teachers in the school and silly things like that. Would it not be more sensible—ultimately, this is about keeping young people safe—to have stronger links between PSHE and safeguarding? Schools would then take it more seriously.

Mr Gibb: As I said, I do not regard schools as not taking PSHE seriously. We take it seriously and our messaging to schools has been clear. In our termly e-mails to all our schools—

Q407 Chair: There was a freedom of information request on the e-mail that went out from the Department on 2 April 2014. The response showed that the vast majority of schools had not even opened your e-mail to schools about the importance of education about FGM, cyber-bullying, mental health and so on. You might be doing your bit, but your Department has told us, very clearly, that the vast majority of schools did not even open the e-mail.

Mr Gibb: And that is obviously a communications issue that we continually battle with, but we have sent a more recent e-mail to schools highlighting the 2012 regulations and their requirement to publish on their website details of their curriculum, including PSHE.

Q408 Chair: That is how seriously schools are taking it. They are getting an e-mail from you and not even opening it.

Mr Gibb: That is not the only communications tool that we have. We also have the national curriculum itself, the opening lines of which talk about the importance of PSHE in schools and of drawing on good practice. The messaging has been clear from the centre, but I do not detect from schools any reluctance to teach PSHE. The issue is whether they are getting the right support, particularly in those 40% of schools that Ofsted highlights as not providing adequate PSHE.

Chair: Perhaps you should put either “Ofsted” or “funding” in the title, because my experience is that head teachers will always open those e-mails.

Q409 Alex Cunningham: So is the DFE actually monitoring or sampling the information that schools put on their websites?

Mr Gibb: The regulations came into force in September 2012 and, to be frank with the Committee, it is a requirement that so far is more honoured in the breach than the observance. We are taking measures to address that. I have written to every local authority asking them to ensure that their schools conform to those regulations. Inserted in that letter is a paragraph drafted by Ofsted pointing out that Ofsted will take seriously any lack of observance of the regulations. I have also written to the main academy chains along the same lines, because most funding agreements—

Q410 Alex Cunningham: You said the main academy schools. Not all academies and free schools.

Mr Gibb: No. I have written to the major chains initially.

Q411 Alex Cunningham: Surely this applies to every single school.

Mr Gibb: It does apply to all the academies but, in the first instance, I have written to all 150 local authorities and all the major chains, which covers the vast majority of schools in this country. We will see what pointing out the importance that Ofsted attaches to the issue—

Q412 Alex Cunningham: Sorry, but surely whether 5%, 10% or 20% of free schools and academies have been missed out because they are individual academies, they should be getting the same advice and guidance.

Mr Gibb: They should and—

Alex Cunningham: I am sure that you are going to do something about it, Minister.

Mr Gibb: I thought I was being quite active and draconian by writing to the people to whom I have written, but if you think that I should take further steps, I will be led by your advice.

Q413 Chair: Can we get a copy of those letters and do they specify PSHE?

Mr Gibb: I will be delighted to send you a copy of those letters.

Q414 Alex Cunningham: Are British values a part of PSHE?

Mr Gibb: Sorry, what was your question? Are they part—

Alex Cunningham: Are British values, as communicated or taught, part of PSHE? Should they be?

Mr Gibb: Yes, they can be. They are also part of citizenship education—things like the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs. That is the essence of the Prevent definition of British values, so they can be taught in PSHE.

One important aspect of PSHE is ensuring that young people are prepared for life in modern Britain and prepared for the workplace, and that they have that resilience that you need to survive in a modern, competitive and demanding world. So, yes, some aspects of British values should be incorporated into PSHE.

Q415 Alex Cunningham: Talking about the success or failure of PSHE education and SRE in schools, either nationally or locally, does it matter, in terms of the subject value, whether SRE has a measurable effect on wider social issues such as teenage conceptions and sexually transmitted infections?

Mr Gibb: If I understand your question, SRE is obviously an important component of PSHE. It is not everything in PSHE—

Alex Cunningham: A lot of people think it is.

Mr Gibb: Yes, they do, and SRE is important. There is very good guidance from the Secretary of State that came out in 2000. We reviewed that in 2013 and we think that it is

still very pertinent today, although there are things in it that would need to be updated, such as references to Acts, and it needs more on online issues, which have developed considerably since 2000. There is supplementary guidance that has been prepared by the PSHE Association that is very high quality. Schools are pointed towards that guidance and it is very good. If schools adopt it and implement it, it will result in very good SRE education in schools.

Q416 Alex Cunningham: How do we know that schools are getting SRE right? Is it a parent satisfaction thing or something else?

Mr Gibb: Again, it is part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Some of it is statutory—in the science curriculum in particular—so it is part of the issues that Ofsted would consider when looking at a broad and balanced curriculum, and at the social and moral aspects of education.

Q417 Alex Cunningham: Finally from me at the moment, how do we ensure that all children in all schools get the same level of support and information, and do not have to rely on what happens in the playground?

Mr Gibb: That is the importance of SRE. There is no question about that. It is a compulsory subject in secondary schools and it is optional in primary.

Q418 Alex Cunningham: Can parents withdraw from particular parts?

Mr Gibb: They can. They cannot withdraw from the elements of SRE that are in the science curriculum at secondary level—at key stages 3 and 4. A tiny minority of parents withdraw their children. It is important to be sensitive about these issues with a small group of parents in this country, and we have maintained that right of withdrawal for pupils from SRE.

Q419 Alex Cunningham: Despite the fact that many children then end up getting the playground gossip version rather than the factual version from the teacher.

Mr Gibb: Well, the factual elements will most likely be covered in science. It is the relationships aspect, which is very important, that a minority of parents may wish to withdraw their children from.

I think we have good accountability measures in place for this. A less crude approach to accountability is looking at things like destination measures. If you believe, as I and the Government do, that good-quality PSHE provides the bedrock for young people to survive in modern Britain and to cope well with the pressures of an academic curriculum, destination measures—where children go when they leave school—are a very good reflection of the overall quality of both the academic and the wider school curriculum, including PSHE.

Q420 Alex Cunningham: A definite final question now: how many DFE staff work on PSHE full or part time? How does that compare with other things?

Mr Gibb: I am looking around for inspiration, but if inspiration does not come to me during this sitting, I will write to you.

Q421 Mr Ward: Just on the bedrock thing, I have just had a small extension done to my house and the building inspector had to come to look at the foundations. It could not be left to the builders themselves to do it. There were strict requirements about how deep it had to be. Can I give you a couple of answers to my earlier questions? You might have said, “It is very difficult to assess this and to evaluate it,” or, “There might be parental issues.” But the idea that this is very important and we are not going to make it a requirement doesn’t really wash, does it? If it is so important, why is it not to be assessed?

Mr Gibb: You cannot measure and assess everything. We need to move away from that world where we say, “If you don’t test it and measure it, it is of no value in schools.” One of our objectives is to move away from that almost tick-box approach.

Q422 Mr Ward: That is a slightly different answer from the first one.

Mr Gibb: Is it? How do you mean?

Mr Ward: Well, to the first one, you said, “We do actually measure it because we’ve got SMSC within the requirement for the broad and balanced curriculum, so we actually do, and we have Ofsted coming in.”

Mr Gibb: There is accountability about the quality of the education, but you are asking me whether we test it and measure it. I would argue that we need to move away from a world where the only things that are important are those that we test and measure. The other things in a school—the ethos, the cultural activity, the music, the sport, PSHE and so on—are very important to the success of a school. I have not been to a school that has very high academic standards and results but does not have a good all-round school curriculum in terms of sport, the arts, PSHE and so on. That is the message we need to deliver. If you start saying, “You’ve got to measure everything, otherwise it’s of no value,” that is the wrong message to send to schools.

Q423 Mr Ward: There is some funding being put aside for the competition on character, which Nicky Morgan announced at the Tory party conference. This character thing—do you have a way of defining what that would look like?

Mr Gibb: It is about preparing young people to be more rounded, so that they can succeed in later life. To be successful in life, you need to have that resilience and grit to deal with failure and upsets in life, and to cope with the pressures that the Chair of this Committee talked about when she opened this meeting. That is really what the Secretary of State is talking about. It is important to ensure that young people have built up that resilience, grit and character to be able to cope with modern life and to cope with academic rigours.

Q424 Mr Ward: I remember when I was at school, literally everybody in the school had to do cross-country. For many people, it put them off.

Chair: I'm still traumatised by it.

Mr Ward: It put them off activities of that nature for the rest of their lives, particularly if it was raining on that day. Is this about watching "Rocky" films? What is it about? How do we develop this character thing?

Mr Gibb: It is about emphasising that things like exercise are actually very important for not just your health but for being able to cope with life. It is about instilling that in young people so that they are aware. That is part of PSHE; it is the "H" element of PSHE. What the Government have done is ask people to submit bids to demonstrate how best we can instil these values in young people. I do not think that anyone in this Committee would disagree with the notion that we need to make sure that young people have a rounded education, that their character is developed and that they are able to cope with all the pressures of modern life. That is really what this priority is all about.

Q425 Mr Ward: If there had not been a general election, the statutory requirement would probably have gone through. That is my understanding of it. It was recommended. It was going to be introduced, and then a general election came along and it got lost in wash-up.

Mr Gibb: Do you mean before 2010?

Mr Ward: Before 2010, yes. If the statutory requirement had got through, would this Government have repealed it?

Mr Gibb: That is one of those hypothetical questions that you yourself, Mr Ward, would not answer.

Mr Ward: I am interested in how strongly you feel about it not being a statutory requirement.

Mr Gibb: As I said, I do not sense from schools any reluctance to teach this. We do keep this issue under review. When I talk to teachers and head teachers, they do not say to me, "We are determined not to teach PSHE. We just think it's terrible." That is not what I hear when I visit schools. They share our view that PSHE is a priority.

Q426 Chair: What they tell us is, "Yes, we understand how important this is. Yes, we want to teach it. Yes, we want to have qualified teachers teaching it." However, there is always a "but". They say, "But, given the pressure that we are under over the best eight, EBacc, and five A to Cs, PSHE just gets lost in the curriculum so we have these odd drop-down days. We know that we are not doing it right or sufficiently well. We know it is a real priority, but we cannot make time for this to happen or put aside resources when it is not seen as a priority by the Government."

Mr Gibb: Our message is that this part of the school curriculum is absolutely key to delivering those other priorities. In the Ofsted report, there were 40 outstanding schools, all but two of which had high-quality PSHE. My experience of visiting schools is that you do not get high-quality academic output without a good-quality school curriculum beyond those academic subjects, which includes PSHE. That is what this character and resilience priority of the Secretary of State and the Government is all about: ensuring that young people have healthy lives, that they are rounded young people when they leave school, and that they can cope with a rigorous academic curriculum at and beyond school.

By the way, I have had inspiration about the number of staff in DFE. My understanding is that six staff are working on the PSHE curriculum.

Q427 Mr Ward: I am jumping around a little bit. An important point has been made to us a number of times about whether SRE should be RSE—whether “relationships” should come first. Do you have any views on that? Would it really make any difference?

Mr Gibb: I do not get obsessed about the nomenclature but I agree with the concept that underlies that—that relationship education is very important. However, you cannot underestimate the scientific aspects. Things such as STIs and HIV are factual issues that young people need to be taught because HIV, for example, is easily caught, but easily avoided if you have the information. We need to ensure that young people have that information. I do not disagree with you but let’s not neglect the knowledge side of PSHE and SRE.

Q428 Mr Ward: Okay. As I said, I am flipping around a little bit. On pornography and the increasing exposure that young people have to that, do you believe that enough is being done to protect children and make them aware of the consequences of coming across pornography?

Mr Gibb: I think that this is a bigger issue, again, than it was in our childhood. Pornography is so easily accessed on the internet. Young people need to be made aware of the dangers of pornography and that what they see there is not a reflection of real life. That needs to be taught to secondary-age children. It needs to be age-appropriate. We should not be using material that is inappropriate for young people in our schools but the dangers of pornography need to be emphasised. There is some good information within the supplementary guidance that talks about the issue and gives good advice to schools on how to deliver the material.

Q429 Ian Mearns: Minister, the DFE says that sex and relationships education is statutory in maintained schools and, yet, Ofsted indicates that the content that the DFE is referring to is not SRE. Is the current status of the subject clear and what is the current position of SRE in academies?

Mr Gibb: Well, you have summed up the issue in relation to maintained schools but academies are required, in their funding agreements, to provide a broad and balanced

curriculum. You are right that they do not have to deliver the national curriculum, but SRE is important and we have made it clear to academies that it is an important part of what we regard as a broad and balanced curriculum.

Q430 Ian Mearns: And with regards to the current status of SRE, there is this contradiction that SRE is statutory in maintained schools yet Ofsted indicates that it does not regard the content that the DFE is referring to as being SRE.

Mr Gibb: I am sorry, I do not quite understand the last point.

Ian Mearns: The DFE is saying that sex and relationship education is statutory in maintained schools, but Ofsted is saying that what the DFE is referring to as sex and relationship education is not what schools would see as such. Is there a contradiction or a problem in terms of communicating what is required of maintained schools within that?

Mr Gibb: I do not think so, because if a school is delivering SRE, it has to have regard to the Secretary of State's statutory guidance, and it is statutory. It is quite voluminous, but very clear and well put together. There should be no confusion about what constitutes SRE because it is broadly set out in the statutory guidance.

Q431 Chair: The Ofsted written submission that we have received says very clearly that: "It is compulsory for pupils in secondary schools to have sex education (not SRE) that includes HIV/AIDS and STIs...(not SRE)"—that is the knowledge bit that you talked about before, but it says twice that it is not SRE—and they can get that "in science at key stages 1-3." It is saying that it is compulsory to have the knowledge-based stuff, but they do not consider that to be SRE.

Mr Gibb: Right, but the statutory guidance sets the framework for what they should be teaching.

Q432 Chair: There is a clear problem here if Ofsted is disagreeing with the Department for Education and saying that what you are referring to is not, in its view, SRE. It is saying it is not compulsory.

Mr Gibb: I accept what you say.

Q433 Chair: Can you see why schools are confused?

Mr Gibb: I do not sense that confusion when I visit schools. They regard themselves as having to teach SRE in schools and wanting to teach PSHE. Those schools that are delivering SRE are using the statutory guidance.

Q434 Chair: But there is a problem if that is Ofsted's view and that is not what it is looking at. Basically, it is saying that all the things that the DFE is referring to can be taught

in science. The other important bits around relationships and so on are not compulsory and therefore it is not looking at them.

Mr Gibb: No, but they are within the statutory guidance. All the issues about relationship education are in the statutory guidance. That is statutory; it is not optional. Those schools that want to, and that do, teach SRE have to have regard to the statutory guidance.

Q435 Chair: But nobody is checking that that is being done if Ofsted says “This is not what we are looking at.”

Mr Gibb: In terms of accountability, Ofsted do have a role—broad and balanced, social, moral and cultural development and so on. Of course, we want to have all this information on schools’ websites. They should be setting out very clearly what they are teaching in maths, French and also in PSHE and SRE.

If you are perceiving a different interpretation—

Q436 Chair: This is what Ofsted are telling us.

Mr Gibb: We will follow that up with Ofsted and we will clarify the position to the Committee.

Chair: Thank you, that would be very useful.

Q437 Ian Mearns: I think that would be very useful. There is a “however” or a big “but” here though—the position with academies. The majority of secondary schools are now academies. We are now in a situation where, because academies can do their own thing, they are not required to do what maintained schools are required to do. The broad, sweeping move towards academisation, particularly among secondary schools, has potentially created a problem regarding league table status and so on, because academies believe it is less important to do this than to do other things.

Mr Gibb: Yes, but they do have a requirement in the funding agreement that they have with the Secretary of State to teach a broad and balanced curriculum. Head teachers and principals of those institutions want to provide the best well-rounded education for the young people who attend those academies. Increasingly, there is going to be competition for parents to choose that academy for their children. They are going to select schools that are providing not only good quality academic education, but also good quality PSHE, SRE, sport and cultural education as well. I am more optimistic about academies providing good quality PSHE and SRE than is perhaps implicit in your question.

Q438 Ian Mearns: Many witnesses to this inquiry have previously called for PSHE and sex and relationships education within that to be given a statutory status. What does the subject being statutory mean in practice?

Mr Gibb: That is a recurring theme of this meeting. I am aware that if you look at all the submissions you have had, all the various important representative bodies share that view. We will keep this issue under review, of course, but I do not sense that schools need to be told to have PSHE within their school curriculum.

Q439 Ian Mearns: But citizenship is still statutory.

Mr Gibb: Yes, it was when we came into office. As part of the curriculum review, we looked at that issue and decided not to change it. But I do not sense from schools that there is any reluctance, as I said before, to have PSHE within the school curriculum.

Q440 Ian Mearns: So you think that there are no advantages, in that case, in making PSHE and SRE statutory?

Mr Gibb: We will continue to look at it. If there are clear advantages in doing so, that will be a different matter. The issue is not whether or not it is being taught; it is whether they are getting the right support to ensure that it is of the highest quality. That is the main issue.

Q441 Ian Mearns: Do you think that it is therefore possible to construct an entitlement for all pupils and still allow schools to tailor the curriculum to meet local needs? The view that you have expressed is consistent with what we have heard from the DFE before, inasmuch as a statutory status for PSHE and SRE would be on the basis that schools are best placed to understand the needs of their students. Do you think it is possible to construct an entitlement for all pupils that still allows schools to tailor the curriculum to their own local needs?

Mr Gibb: That is a very good answer that I should have given to your last question. It is an issue to consider when addressing the point of whether to make it statutory. You then have to think, “Well, is this going to be a national curriculum subject?” In that case, we will have to produce programmes of study with all the detail that requires. That may not be appropriate for some schools in some areas, and there may be other aspects that we miss out from the programme of study that schools should be teaching to certain communities in certain parts of the country. These are the kinds of issue that you have to address—or whether, instead of that, you make it part of the basic curriculum.

Q442 Chair: That came out very strongly when we met with the young people in Bristol, where particularly the girls were very knowledgeable about things like FGM and wanted more information so that they would be alert. The teachers were saying the same: “We need to know the signs to look for.” Clearly, that would not be an issue in a constituency like mine, where FGM is not a major feature and there is not a large African or immigrant population. But it is surely possible to provide schemes of work and so on that are tailored to local needs.

Mr Gibb: Yes, and I wonder whether the DFE is the right place to do that. It might be, but the whole approach to PSHE is to point schools to the experts in this field. What we do, though, in the science element of the national curriculum, is ensure that young people towards the end of primary and the beginning of secondary understand how the human body works, the proper terminology for the parts of the human body—that helps in dealing with issues like FGM—as well as what happens in puberty and what happens over the life cycle of human beings from birth to death. That factual side of the science curriculum is important in addressing some of those issues.

Q443 Siobhain McDonagh: Parents currently have the right to withdraw their children from SRE lessons, beyond what is covered in the science curriculum. Do you see the parental right of withdrawal and statutory status for SRE as mutually exclusive? Could the latter be introduced without compromising the former?

Mr Gibb: You do have to be sensitive. There is a requirement in the existing statutory guidance that schools should consult parents and their local communities when they are devising an SRE curriculum, and that does include maintaining the right of parents to withdraw their children. It is a tiny majority that does so, but I think it is important not to undermine parents' rights. Ultimately, the parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children, and we should not undermine that without careful consideration.

Q444 Siobhain McDonagh: Lots of the people we have interviewed for this inquiry have said that they think that SRE should be made statutory. Could you introduce it as statutory and keep the parental right to withdraw?

Mr Gibb: I don't see why not. I don't see why we couldn't incorporate that into the wording of the provision.

Q445 Siobhain McDonagh: Some of the written evidence the Committee has received portrays the debate about statutory status for SRE as a tension between parents and the schools, when in practice witnesses on all sides of the debate emphasise the importance of parental engagement. Would you consider making SRE statutory if it was combined with an enhanced duty on schools to consult with and involve parents?

Mr Gibb: You would have to do that. That is how the statutory guidance is worded. If you were to take it one step further away from the guidance into actual regulation or primary legislation, you would have to incorporate within that a duty on the school to consult both parents and the community when you are putting together the details of the curriculum. It is very important that schools are sensitive to the concerns of parents, because parents have a wide range of views about these issues. Schools need to take that into account when they are drafting the curriculum.

Q446 Siobhain McDonagh: The Children's Commissioner argues that SRE should be statutory in order to fulfil children's rights as set out in the UN convention on the rights of

the child. Do you agree with article 17, which states: “Children have the right to get information that is important to their health and well-being”?

Mr Gibb: Yes, I do. Absolutely. In schools in this country, they do receive that, both in the statutory national curriculum, which provides a lot of that information, but also in PSHE, which, as I said at the beginning of this session, we regard as an absolute priority in schools. I do not see how you can have a good school providing a good quality, academic and rounded education without good quality PSHE, including the “H” element of the PSHE that you refer to.

Q447 Siobhain McDonagh: But we currently have schools that do not provide PSHE.

Mr Gibb: I haven’t encountered one. Ofsted talks about schools where the PSHE is not of a good quality, and we have to address that. In the visits I have made to schools and in the correspondence I deal with, I have not encountered schools that don’t teach it. Perhaps you will correct me if you have encountered schools that don’t teach PSHE, which would be of concern to me.

Q448 Siobhain McDonagh: So if schools do not teach PSHE, or if they teach it badly, how do we fulfil article 17 on the rights of the child and their right to information on health and well-being?

Mr Gibb: We have to make sure that they do. When you are trying to develop education policy, you cannot always just use the same club for every objective. You can use Ofsted or you can use statute, but there are other measures as well. We want the PSHE Association to provide and point to good resources for schools. We want schools to be transparent about what it is that children are taught while they are at school. That is a way of holding the schools to account to parents. So, incorporating the UN convention into law, for example, would be one way, but there are other ways of so doing.

Q449 Siobhain McDonagh: Politicians generally say they always want to listen to young people. Young people overwhelmingly argue, time and again, that they want PSHE and SRE lessons. So if we do intend to listen to young people, and it is not just something that is easy to say, how are we going to take on board their views and get them involved in shaping the policy on SRE?

Mr Gibb: I am aware of the views of young people and of surveys of the different representative bodies that express a view. In the statutory guidance there is a requirement to consult. I am just checking whether they have to consult pupils as well as parents. The answer is that pupils should be consulted on PSHE policy.

Q450 Siobhain McDonagh: So you consult them; and what do you do with the outcome?

Mr Gibb: Yes, but consulting does not mean you automatically adopt everything that every consultee says.

Q451 Chair: But, Minister, consistently over years—this is nothing new—young people have told us that there are two things that matter to them and that they want. One is work experience, and this Government have now made work experience no longer statutory. The other one is sex and relationships education. There is no point in asking young people if we take absolutely no notice of what they say.

Mr Gibb: I will take the latter first. As I said, you don't always use the same club to deliver objectives. We have an objective as a Government that PSHE is an absolute priority.

Chair: An absolute priority is what you say.

Mr Gibb: You have written it down, thank you. SRE within PSHE is part of that priority. Of course you need to ensure that young people are taught about the things that are going to happen to their bodies, the pressures that are going to be on them in life, issues such as STIs and the importance of loving relationships. All those issues that you have touched on and we have debated and discussed in this Committee today are crucial parts of a young person's education. We want every school to deliver that. How do we do that? You are suggesting that that should be done through statute. I am saying that is an option and we keep that issue under review. There are other ways of developing.

Q452 Chair: I am not necessarily saying that we should deliver it through statute. It is one of the things the Committee has looked at. We would be interested to know, if it is not delivered through statute, how else we can make it happen. The only other mechanism that I can think of is Ofsted, and they say they look at different things from what the DFE thinks they look at.

The Committee wants to know these really important things. That list I read out at the beginning is getting worse, not better. If that was maths, the Government would be up in arms and doing something about it pronto. If it is not going to be delivered through statute, is there some other way the Government can guarantee that all those things we talked about earlier are going to get better and not worse for young people?

Mr Gibb: There are other tools. For example, there is the requirement to publish details of the curriculum on the website. There is the destination measure of schools. There is a lot of evidence that shows it is not just academic attainment that delivers success in life. It is also other issues of character, resilience and so on, the rounded nature of a child's education, that will determine their destination, both immediately after school and beyond.

So destination measures are a tool, Ofsted is a tool, parental choice is a tool. We can give more real choice to parents in terms of where their children are sent to school. They do look at those other aspects of a school's curriculum. You do not need just to use Ofsted and the statute book; there are always other arrangements.

Q453 Chair: I like to look at what Government says and what it does. I am getting a mismatch here. The Government is relying on supplementary guidance provided by the voluntary sector for this. I cannot think of many other subjects where it is just left to the voluntary sector. We talked about the number of teachers who are being trained; it has gone from 1,300 to 140 in a couple years. I am looking at what the Government is saying: absolute priority. What is it doing? There is a mismatch. Is it something that the Government, perhaps as a result of this inquiry, might be likely to look at a little bit more seriously?

Mr Gibb: We will certainly look at the report that you produce. There is no doubt that you have had a huge amount of written evidence submitted to you. It has been a very high-quality inquiry.

Q454 Chair: I think it has shocked us.

Mr Gibb: If it has shocked you, Pat, then it is definitely going to be shocking. We will certainly look at the report in great detail. It is an area we are very interested in and it is a priority. We will look at your recommendations.

Q455 Alex Cunningham: At what age do the views of the child trump those of the parents?

Mr Gibb: That's a question not just for me but for all of us.

Alex Cunningham: Yes, I know, but particularly in relation to this.

Mr Gibb: Yes, well, it's difficult. In all these consultations you are looking not at the quantum of submissions, but at the quality of what people are saying and the arguments they are putting forward. If a young person or group of young people are putting forward a very high-quality argument that is influential in its own right, that will obviously be very influential, but if the view—

Q456 Alex Cunningham: So if a group of 14-year-olds outlines a case asking why they should not have the same range of information as students get in the school on the other side of town, and say, "We need that quality of information as well," put their arguments to you and tell you exactly why, do you think that that could trump the parents withdrawing them?

Mr Gibb: Yes. As I said, pupils should be consulted by the school when it comes to the school's PSHE policy. If the view expressed to a school is that the pupils are not getting the same quality of PSHE as the school across town, the school should of course take that into account. In terms of national policy, it would depend on the quality of the arguments put.

Q457 Alex Cunningham: But they still won't trump the parents, at the end of the day.

Mr Gibb: No, you can't have any group trumping other groups. Again, if the parents put a very weak argument to us, that will carry no weight; if a group of 14-year-olds put a strong argument, that will carry a lot of weight.

Q458 Mr Ward: We have focused on the questions about the statutory requirement because we have clear evidence from Ofsted that what is happening is not good—nowhere near good enough. If we begin with the end in mind that we want to be good, what do we need to do to make it good? We have heard from various people that a statutory requirement is one way to make that happen. If that is not to happen, what else is? You have mentioned parents making decisions—although I am not sure whether parents really do look in a knowledgeable way at the comparable degree of quality—but there is also the Ofsted requirement in terms of social, moral, or balanced. What is your plan? If things are to improve but you are not going down the statutory route, what is the Department's plan for making it good?

Mr Gibb: It is about supporting the PSHE Association.

Mr Ward: Eighty thousand pounds?

Mr Gibb: Yes, although we are going over old ground—that is not their only funding. We are also setting up an expert group to try to improve the quality and we are pointing schools towards expert groups that know a lot about particular aspects of the PSHE curriculum. There are all the accountability measures. You are really talking about accountability, and there are the destination measures and the publishing of details of the curriculum on the website—all those things will help to improve the quality of SRE.

It is difficult, because you can have a very prescriptive approach to education policy, and of course there is prescription: the Education Acts are huge pieces of legislation, we have a very detailed national curriculum at primary and a good quality national curriculum at secondary, and we are deeply engaged with the awarding organisations about the GCSE content and so on. Nevertheless, there comes a point where you want to step back and say, "Look, this is for the schools to do. We want to give professionals that autonomy." The best way to get the best quality teaching in our schools is to give professionals the professional autonomy that they need. Every time you start to chip away at that, you run the risk of undermining the whole concept.

Q459 Mr Ward: But you wouldn't do that for maths, English, physics or French.

Mr Gibb: No, in the sense that there is a very detailed national curriculum for those subjects. But the evidence from organisations such as the OECD is that this autonomy issue is very important in driving up the standard of the school overall. Some things have to be prescriptive, of course, but you want to keep that to the core academic issues and allow the school autonomy over the wider school curriculum, including PSHE, because that is what the OECD says results in a higher standard overall.

Q460 Mr Ward: For how long would you allow things to go on unsatisfactorily before you said, “Actually, our plan is not working”?

Mr Gibb: That’s a good question. As I said, we want to keep this issue under review, and we will look very carefully at the recommendations made by this Committee, but the philosophical approach that we are taking to education policy is this autonomy issue, and we are reluctant to undermine that in too many areas.

Q461 Chair: That’s a really good question. Ofsted is saying that 40% of SRE in schools is not good, so when do we get to the tipping point? Fifty per cent.? Sixty per cent.? At what point does the Government say something? If this was another subject, if it was maths or English, and Ofsted was saying 40% is not good, you would be jumping up and down in the DFE, wouldn’t you? So where is the tipping point at which you think, “Actually, we have gone beyond allowing schools to do this”? I share your view, and I don’t want this to be prescriptive. I want schools to do this because it is a good thing to do, and I feel exactly the same about things such as SEN. Schools should do this because it is the right thing to do, but there comes a tipping point where you have to decide that SRE isn’t a priority for schools and it is just not good enough for these young people.

Mr Gibb: You are right. We will keep those measures under review. Take an area such as maths, for example. We engaged in the Shanghai teacher exchange and set up the 34 maths hubs. We did that with a view to improving the quality of maths teaching in our schools. We did not pass regulations to do that, and it is about providing support and the interesting evidence that those hubs can disseminate to other schools. So there are ways of improving the quality of the curriculum and teaching in schools other than sitting in a Committee and passing a statutory instrument.

Q462 Mr Ward: If the various measures in place mean that, at the moment, statutory instruments are not needed, how well are they monitored? There is a requirement for schools to publish PSHE and SRE curricula on the website. Does the Department monitor that? What if the school doesn’t do it?

Mr Gibb: This goes back to Mr Cunningham’s question. I look at school websites periodically, and I am disappointed by what I see.

Q463 Mr Ward: Do you get very cross with them?

Mr Gibb: Yes, I do. It irritates me because this was a policy with which I was involved back in 2011. We got the regulation on the statute book, and then we saw indifferent compliance. We have taken action to try to enforce the regulation. I know Ofsted is concerned about the lack of transparency on the curriculum, and I think we will see some changes in this area, but I have taken on board Mr Cunningham’s point about whether I ought to be taking action on academies that are not part of chains and that are not maintained schools within a local authority.

Q464 Mr Ward: If they don't respond to your being cross, do you get very, very cross?

Mr Gibb: There is very little difference between my cross and my very cross. Schools have a lot of issues to deal with, and one of the issues about which we are concerned is school work load. I do not want to pile on to schools yet another piece of work. We are trying to reduce the work load on head teachers and teachers, but I regard this as an important part of transparency. It goes with autonomy: the more autonomy we give to the school system, the more data and evidence we have to have and the more transparency there must be. I would very much like to get wider and deeper compliance with the school information regulations, which will enable us to continue the approach towards autonomy.

Q465 Mr Ward: I have a specific question on SRE. We have heard the call from some people that there is too much, too soon. I don't know whether you are of that view. Particularly in terms of the explicit nature of some of the DVDs, and so on, do you believe that the materials are age-appropriate? Does something still need to be done to calm the nerves of many parents?

Mr Gibb: Again, the statutory requirement is that the materials used in schools have to be age-appropriate. Inappropriate images and explicit material should not be used. Schools should ensure that pupils are protected from any teaching materials that are inappropriate. I agree with those concerns. In the national curriculum, science at the upper end of key stage 2 begins to talk about the human life cycle—there are the names of the body parts. It is important that children have that proper knowledge, so they are not the subject of “playground information”, as one of our colleagues talked about. However, all of that has to be age-appropriate and that is absolutely clear in the set of guidance.

Mr Ward: Good point.

Q466 Chair: Thank you. The Committee has heard evidence that school nurses are a good, important bridge between the delivery of SRE and providing confidential advice. I remember working in south-east London, where some of the schools had put together young people's health clinics in school that were manned by school nurses. That was seen as an excellent way of—the school delivered SRE, but this was an individual way of providing SRE to young people. However, the number of school nurses has reduced. I think there are currently around 2,500 to 3,000 pupils per school nurse. Have you had discussions with the DfE about increasing the number of school nurses as the school population increases?

Mr Gibb: The employment of a school nurse is a matter for the school. You and I can take a view that they are very important. There was always a school nurse when I was a child in school, but if you believe in autonomy, and if you believe in the head teacher and the governors of a school determining how to marshal their resources, you have to leave it to the school to decide.

Q467 Chair: Unless things have changed, in my experience the school nurse is not employed by the school; they are actually employed by the local health CCG and so on. So schools would like to have school nurses and in some cases would even like to buy in additional school nurses, but the facility is not there for them; it is actually Health that provides that. Perhaps your officials can tell you that that has changed in the last five years, but that was certainly my experience. Therefore, that would need discussions with the Department of Health, because as the numbers are growing in schools—which they are, and very fast in some parts of the country—the reduction in school nurses that we have seen is going to get much worse. They are incredibly skilled people. In my experience, they are grade Fs or Gs, so they are not basic-level nurses. They have a huge amount of experience and are incredibly helpful in schools, particularly secondary schools, in getting this right. If those discussions are not taking place, I think they need to take place quickly.

Mr Gibb: I take on board your point, but schools are free to employ nurses themselves, or they are free to buy the services of a nurse employed by others, whatever the local arrangements are. They are free to do so. We will discuss this with the Department of Health, but again it is up to schools how they marshal their resources.

Chair: Certainly my experience in parts of London was that even if schools have the money, the nurses were not there. Those kinds of experienced school nurses were not there to buy in. They had the money, but they could not buy them, so if those discussions are not taking place with the DfE, I think it would be a good idea to get them under way, because as you know, the population in schools is about to grow right across the country.

Q468 Ian Mearns: Minister, Ofsted has expressed concerns that some schools deliver sex and relationships education through one-off, drop-down days rather than through dedicated curriculum time. How can schools be encouraged to dedicate curriculum time to PSHE and SRE when head teachers are focusing on achieving exam results?

Mr Gibb: This goes back to the point that, actually, I think it is a mistake by schools just to focus on the academic results of the school in order to push the school up the league table. In fact, schools that do that, whether primary or secondary, are schools that do not deliver their objective. The way to deliver the objective of higher exam results and higher key stage 2 results is to have a rounded education in which children are playing sport, are engaged in music and have good quality school curricula that helps those children become rounded, resilient children with strong character, who can cope with the upsets in life and who understand all the strange things that will be happening as they get older, and so on. I think that schools know this.

Q469 Ian Mearns: Schools know this, but Ofsted have expressed concern that some schools are delivering what they perceive to be the child's entitlement to SRE as a drop-down day—a one-off thing that is done, and that's it.

Mr Gibb: We could prescribe—from the DfE, from central buildings—that PSHE should not be done on one, big long day a year. All Governments have always shied away and prevented ourselves, even by statute, from prescribing that there will be 30 minutes'

French on a Monday and 40 minutes' maths on a Tuesday. We have never prescribed the time that pupils should spend on a certain subject. We have always prescribed the content of the curriculum, so we would be reluctant to engage in that kind of prescription.

The best approach is the approach that we are taking, which is to have very strong accountability measures for our schools, a strong Ofsted inspection arrangement, transparency in terms of the data, parental choice and things like destination measures. All those accountability pressures will point the school in the clear direction of having a good quality rounded education.

Q470 Ian Mearns: You mentioned Ofsted, so should Ofsted inspect the provision of PSHE and SRE in schools as a subject in its own right? Could it even be a limiting judgment as far as Ofsted are concerned?

Mr Gibb: They have to take into account social, moral and spiritual education when they are conducting their inspections, and they have to make sure that schools are delivering a broad and balanced education. That is the right approach, rather than saying, "You have to inspect maths, PSHE and SRE." It is better to have the approach that we take.

Q471 Ian Mearns: But we have also learned that Ofsted no longer intends to run PSHE-specific surveys. In the absence of such surveys, how will the Government know whether the provision of SRE and PSHE is improving?

Mr Gibb: It is very important that Ofsted is an independent non-departmental public body. The inspection regime has to be independent. Its framework has to take into account Government policy, but the drafting of the framework is not prescribed by us. The other activity of these themed reports is a matter for the chief inspector to decide how he wants to allocate his resources. So the way to monitor the quality of PSHE and the length of time that children spend on this aspect of their education is a matter of how transparent the school is. I am determined to make sure that schools are transparent about what they are teaching. How much PSHE education there is; what it is that they teach within PSHE; how they are making young people resilient; and how they are preparing them for the world of work and for life in modern Britain should be set out in the curriculum, just as they should be set out when they are teaching about the Magna Carta, the Tudors and Stuarts and so on.

Q472 Ian Mearns: But the trouble is, in everything that you have said there, you hope it will be okay and you expect schools to be okay, but we are not doing anything physical to make sure it will be okay. It seems you will be spending a lot more of your time looking at school websites.

Mr Gibb: It will not be me looking at the school websites, other than checking that the regulations are being complied with. Parents will be looking at the websites. That is the ultimate aim. They can look at the websites and see whether a school takes PSHE seriously. They might think, "There is nothing here about making sure my child understands the importance of relationships and the risks involved in engaging with the internet

inappropriately and unsafely,” and they will not send their child to that school. You will argue that they are probably just looking at the maths and the history, but I think parents regard this side of education as very important as well.

Q473 Ian Mearns: As you would probably guess, I am interested in education and in what is going on in the schools in Gateshead, in my constituency, but I cannot remember the last time I had a single item of correspondence from parents asking whether I knew what was going on with the PSHE curriculum in schools in Gateshead. I wish they were more switched on to that, and I am sure that many are in many respects, but they are not exactly beating a path to my door to ask me about it. That is problematic, because it seems to me that for a whole range of what we are discussing today we are just hoping that it will be okay.

Mr Gibb: I don’t think it is about just hoping that things will be okay, because there are mechanisms in place. Accountability in schools has never been stronger, and the key is to ensure that PSHE is within that accountability regime. The way to do that is not to set an exam and have the marks published; there are other ways of doing it. Things such as the destination table are important. All the evidence is that children who are resilient, who have a strong character, and who have those other aspects of their education developed are the ones who do well when they leave school. Over a period of time, you can tell a lot by seeing where children are going from schools in Gateshead or Bognor Regis. I assert that that will be dependent, to an extent, on how good their PSHE education is in school.

Q474 Ian Mearns: You have said on many occasions that you place importance on PSHE, and I have no reason to disbelieve you, yet we heard about the e-mail that schools did not open. As the Schools Minister, is there anything that you can do to reinforce the importance of PSHE and SRE with schools across the country?

Mr Gibb: All our messaging and everything that I have said today—I am sure that the viewing figures for this sitting are huge—points in that direction. Everything in what the Secretary of State says in most of her speeches emphasises the importance of PSHE. I cannot reiterate enough how important we regard it as being. I don’t want to keep hammering the same old points, but Ofsted do look at these issues through the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects that schools are required to do by the 2011 Act, which we put on the statute book. If we can get the transparency that I would like to see so far as the curriculum is concerned, I think that will have a big impact in holding schools to account for the quality of their PSHE.

Q475 Chair: So can we expect a major speech from an Education Minister very shortly about the importance of PSHE?

Mr Gibb: I hope that you will hear that, yes. I hope that we will be saying more about PSHE in the new year.

Chair: We look forward to it.

Ian Mearns: Pat will even write it for you.

Mr Gibb: We need some good speech writers.

Q476 Chair: Minister, you talked a lot about destination information, but does that actually capture things such as teenage pregnancies or anything that is directly related to PSHE? My understanding is that the information is really just about jobs, who goes on to college and who is NEET. Destination information is not really going to be able to tell us anything about how well a school does PSHE, is it?

Mr Gibb: No, it won't cover teenage pregnancies, but we have national data, which show that our teenage pregnancy figures are at 40-year low. That is a tribute to—

Q477 Chair: It is still much higher than in most western countries.

Mr Gibb: I agree that it is still too high, but a lot has been achieved by this and previous Governments in bringing those figures down, which is very welcome. But you are right that the destination measure covers where pupils go, whether that is an FE college, university or work, and the quality of that.

Q478 Chair: But it will not tell us about who is homeless, the teenage pregnancy figures—

Mr Gibb: Or drug problems.

Chair: None of those issues.

Mr Gibb: I agree, but there are other measures that will show that, although they will not necessarily track the young people with those problems back to a particular school. That is an omission in the system, if you like, but the destination measure, which is very hard to deliver—it involves all kinds of technical issues—will tell you a lot about a particular school and how well it is equipping young people for life in modern Britain.

Q479 Chair: I remember doing something years ago with secondary heads about the children who were not there in their schools. It took a great deal of work by the authority, but we were able to say to every secondary head: “Here are the children who never even showed up on your doorstep because they went to a special school when they were little, so they are not yours; here are the ones whose parents have chosen to go somewhere else, but were within your catchment area; here are the ones you have excluded so will know about,” and so on. Once secondary heads saw those figures of the children who simply were not there—they did the best they could with those they had—it was quite shocking for them. If we were able to show secondary heads some of those figures relating to teenage pregnancies of children who came out of their school, the children who are in prison, the ones who are now homeless, and not just the NEETS, it might have a salutary effect on most of them.

Mr Gibb: I agree with you.

Q480 Chair: It would be hard to do, but it would have a huge impact.

Mr Gibb: Perhaps that is something you will recommend in your report.

Ian Mearns: A contact point would help with that.

Q481 Chair: We'll not go there; we'll let you off with that one. Can we talk about the new expert subject group? How long will that group be funded?

Mr Gibb: I am not sure of the details of the expert group, other than that the PSHE Association is establishing it.

Q482 Chair: If I give you some technical questions, perhaps you could reply to us.

Mr Gibb: Yes. We will get answers to you in writing.

Q483 Chair: We would like to know what funding has been provided, how long it is going to be funded, when the group is expected to report, whether its recommendations will be taken seriously or whether it will simply be seen as advice from an external group. Is it simply a distraction from the more fundamental issue of whether PSHE and SRE should be statutory? Is it a distracting tactic?

Mr Gibb: It is not a distraction. We will come back to you on all the factual details of the funding, longevity and composition of the expert group. The concept of an expert group is not new. We have had them in the national curriculum. They are very effective because you get high-quality people, experts in their particular subject area, meeting and discussing an approach to pedagogy and curriculum content. They are very valuable, but do not cost a huge amount. People volunteer their time, and it is just a matter of travelling expenses and a room. I do not anticipate that you will be receiving very high figures when we send you the details. They deliver more than you imply in your question. I am optimistic about this group and what it will deliver.

Q484 Chair: Could we also have the details of who is involved?

Mr Gibb: Yes. We will provide that.

Q485 Mr Ward: The Government guidance on SRE was prepared in 2000—that is the latest. That was a long, long time ago. Are any measures in place to update that Government guidance on SRE?

Mr Gibb: We conducted a review in 2013 after the Ofsted report. The conclusion of that review was that it is as pertinent today as it was in 2000, albeit there are some

shortcomings, in the sense that the statutory references all predate 2000 and there have been several Education Acts since. It is also too sparse about cyber-type issues and online issues—sexting and all those issues to do with more recent innovations. That is why we have the supplementary advice on SRE. I know it was slightly pejoratively referred to as produced by voluntary organisations, but they include the experts in this field in the country. Even if we had produced our own supplementary advice, we would have been leaning on the individuals who produced this.

Q486 Mr Ward: Some aspects of that have been criticised by certain groups as being controversial. In addition, it is not something that you would find unless you were looking for it. You would simply refer back to the 2000 guidance. Is enough being done by the Department to promote the contents of this and make people aware of it?

Mr Gibb: We did point to both pieces of guidance in our communications, so I think a lot has been done. We keep these issues under review and we will look at your report when it comes out. The people who were involved in the PSHE guidance—there is a list of people in the back somewhere—are the sort of people we would ask to help us to draft any statutory guidance. We wouldn't just produce this in-house with civil servants; we would want to rely on those experts to produce it. It will always be controversial because this is a controversial area. We seek to minimise that, but ultimately you sometimes have to bite the bullet.

Q487 Mr Ward: You seem to be somewhat laid back. The Welsh and Scottish have introduced proposals on new guidance, as I understand it. There seems to be a remarkable degree of reticence to engage fully with this whole subject, and not only in terms of updating the guidance. Earlier we heard commentary about the statutory nature of the guidance. There is almost a laissez-faire approach of just letting these things develop. I know we are going round in circles, but we are coming back to Ofsted, which is clearly showing that what is currently happening is not working.

Mr Gibb: Yes, I accept that we have quality issues in 40% of schools, as highlighted by Ofsted. The question then is how to improve that quality. It is difficult. We are trying to improve the quality right across the board—maths, history, behaviour and policy in schools; you name it—and it is always going to be the Government's objective to raise standards. Even if our standards are very high now, we have to make sure that we compete with countries around the world that are raising their standards even further.

That is always going to be an objective; the question then is how we deliver those higher objectives. Is it by making something statutory, having a very detailed programme of study and having a central roll-out in a national strategy-type of process, as happened under the last Government with maths and literacy? You could take that approach, but right across the board our view has been that trusting professionals is the best way to get the best out of the 500,000 highly qualified teachers that we have in this country. I think that is what the teaching profession wants, albeit the teaching unions say something slightly different when it comes to PSHE. The profession wants to be trusted, and I think that is the way you get the best results.

Q488 Mr Ward: The supplementary guidance to which you referred has been criticised by some groups. Is there anything in the supplementary guidance with which the Department itself is unhappy?

Mr Gibb: Are you getting at something in particular?

Q489 Mr Ward: I think the comments to which I am referring were made by the Family Education Trust, which believes that the guidance “represents the perspective of organisations advocating a highly controversial approach to sex education.”

Mr Gibb: I have read the guidance, and I think it is very sensible. The guidance generally points people. I don’t know whether you have had a chance to read the supplementary guidance, but it seems to me to be very reasonably worded. Ultimately, we have to rely on the specialists in the field. If people are worried about specific things, we will always consider them, but from my reading the guidance seems to me to be carefully and sensitively worded. Of course, in any SRE curriculum that they use, schools have to take into account the views of their local community.

Q490 Mr Ward: So are you adopting it? Is that now formally the Government’s response?

Mr Gibb: It is something to which we would point, because these are the experts in the field. The approach we are taking is that we will point schools and teachers to respectable organisations in this country that have a good reputation as being the people who produce the resources that schools need, as we do in maths and French, and so on.

Q491 Mr Ward: I cannot help but feel that the whole of this approach, of letting it develop and keeping it under review, is too laid back. It is 14 years since the last formal guidance was prepared, and you seem to be allowing this thing to drift on when there is clear evidence from Ofsted that the level of provision is unsatisfactory. It does seem that what you yourself said was bedrock—the foundation on which so much else in schools depends—and a major area of education is being treated with a remarkably complacent attitude by the Government.

Mr Gibb: I think that is unfair, because, as I say, we have a very clear objective that PSHE is an absolute priority for Government.

Q492 Mr Ward: It does not seem it.

Mr Gibb: That is because you think we should be more prescriptive about how we implement that objective, and my view is that you can overdo the prescription and that will not necessarily deliver your objective; in fact, it could be counter-productive, and you could end up with a very tick-box approach to delivery if you are over-prescriptive in how you deliver things. That is what we are seeking to avoid.

Q493 Mr Ward: But when we have evidence from a young person who has HIV and who never learned about HIV, or even heard about it, during the whole of his school life, this approach—what I refer to as a laid-back approach—and trusting the schools to do this is of no value to that young person at all, is it?

Mr Gibb: HIV is one of those exceptions to the rule that I was describing. Teaching about HIV is required by law. In the science curriculum, they are required to teach the factual elements of reproduction and they are required to teach about sexually transmitted infections, in particular about HIV, so there is an example where it is not happening, and yet it is very prescriptive. Even if you provide very detailed prescription, it ultimately depends on the quality of the school, the leadership of the school and so on to deliver it in practice. We can pass all the rules and regulations we want in this building, but they have to be delivered by good-quality schools. Part of the objective of the Government is to raise the quality of the schools.

Q494 Mr Ward: Isn't that really a result of the total confusion that seems to exist in the system about what is required and what is not required? That is the evidence that we have received, even in contradictory statements by the Department on what the requirements are of schools.

Mr Gibb: Well, if a head teacher of a school reads these two documents, they will know just about everything they need to know in terms of the requirements of schools, and where to go for further expert advice about the content of that teaching. When you combine that with the fact that we have in this country some of the best qualified teachers we've ever had—highly educated professionals—we are seeing the school system improving.

Q495 Mr Ward: Not in PSHE.

Mr Gibb: I understand that there are particular problems with the 40% highlighted by Ofsted, but in the school system as a whole there are now more children being taught in good and outstanding schools than ever before. And that is the only way, really, that you are going to get better-quality teaching in any particular subject. You can write the most perfect curriculum and produce the most perfect text books, but ultimately they have to be delivered by teachers who are managed by heads of departments and head teachers of schools. That is really why school improvement is so important: it will affect everything, including PSHE. However, in terms of PSHE itself, we are taking measures with the expert group, with the PSHE Association, to ensure that we are improving the quality.

Q496 Mr Ward: I have to say you're failing.

Mr Gibb: Well, clearly the Ofsted report indicates that we're not doing well enough in terms of PSHE. In 60% of lessons observed, there was good and outstanding PSHE being delivered, but we take very seriously the 40% of schools that are not delivering this well, and

we are taking measures to improve that teaching, in terms of helping the quality, CPD and so on, through the PSHE Association.

Q497 Alex Cunningham: About an hour ago, the Chair talked about the link between SRE and safeguarding, and Ofsted has said that there is a strong link between the two. Do you agree with Ofsted? Do you think that if schools don't provide SRE they are putting children at greater risk of sexual exploitation?

Mr Gibb: Yes, that was the recommendation of the various reports there have been into this very serious issue. I agree that good-quality PSHE in a school will help combat child sexual exploitation. There is no question in my mind about that. That is why we believe it should be an absolute priority in schools, but it then goes back to how you deliver better quality PSHE, and we can go into or rehearse all those issues.

We have also revised statutory guidance on safeguarding, called *Keeping children safe in education*. It basically tells governing bodies how children should be safeguarded in the school environment.

Q498 Alex Cunningham: Ofsted notes that some younger pupils may be unable to report sexual abuse as a result of not being able to name the correct body parts and describe what was happening to them. At what age do you think children should learn the correct names for genitalia, and what words do you think they should use before then? I think the Chair has a list of about 30 or 40 for you to choose from.

Mr Gibb: Yes, and I am sure that she won't read them out.

Ian Mearns: Just for the record.

Mr Gibb: It is a serious issue, and I think that is why in the primary curriculum, in the upper key stage 2, there is a requirement for young people to be taught the body parts in a very factual, non-emotional way, and I think that is important. With regard to girls, it is that transition between primary and secondary where the greatest danger lies, with issues such as FGM.

Q499 Chair: On that point, I have a copy of your letter to the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children from 5 July 2012. I hate to put you on the spot, but you confirm very clearly in it that "neither...the National Curriculum nor the new draft programme of study requires the naming of internal or external body parts with reference to reproduction. The current National Curriculum level descriptions and the new draft notes and guidance make clear that this is not included when pupils are taught to name the main body parts in KS1/Year 1"—or later. I found that really quite worrying, because when I got this list and looked up the synonyms for "penis", I got 21 different names, and for "vagina", I got 14—most of which are derogatory. Is it not sensible that we actually teach the proper names for genitalia, rather than have these rude, derogatory terms bandied about by children in the playground, many of them used in terms of bullying?

Mr Gibb: Perhaps I can read you a bit of the key stage 1 science curriculum. It says “identify, name, draw and label the basic parts of the human body and say which part of the body is associated with each sense.” Under statutory requirements, it says: “Pupils should be taught to...describe the changes as humans develop to old age.” Then, in the notes and guidance, which is non-statutory, it says: “Pupils should draw a timeline to indicate stages in the growth and development of humans. They should learn about the changes experienced in puberty. Pupils could work scientifically by researching the gestation periods of other animals and comparing them with humans; by finding out and recording the length and mass of a baby as it grows.”

That is in the key stage 1 curriculum, which is for years 1 and 2—rising sixes through to age seven. I think that that does cover the issues that you are concerned about. As you move from age seven upwards, there are more requirements.

Q500 Chair: So this letter is wrong.

Mr Gibb: If it is from me, the chances are—

Chair: And we are encouraging teachers to use the proper names in key stage 1.

Mr Gibb: I suspect that what that letter is referring to is the reproduction element and you do have to be careful, when you are addressing issues of reproduction, that it is age-appropriate. That is really the issue that that letter, from my recollection, is deemed to address, whereas if we look at what is required, it says “identify, name, draw and label the basic parts of the human body and say which part of the body is associated with each sense.”

Q501 Chair: In a sense, the point that I am trying to make, without trying to be too clever, is that there are lots of terms here, some of which I have not heard of before—just a couple—and they are regularly used in bullying. They are derogatory terms and young children are using them. If we use the correct names, we may therefore go at least some way towards stopping that. Would you encourage teachers to do that?

Mr Gibb: I would, but it needs to be age-appropriate and in accordance with the national curriculum as it has been very carefully drafted. I suspect that as you move up through key stage 2, you can do more of that than you can at a very young age. It is also linked with the whole issue of bullying and behaviour in schools. It is important that schools take bullying and poor behaviour very seriously, and I believe that, increasingly, they are. We are now seeing much higher standards of behaviour in schools as a consequence of the measures taken back in 2010 and 2011, but there is more to do. Sir Michael Wilshaw highlighted the issue of low-level disruption—not doing homework, answering back cheekily and so on. We need to ensure that we address that, and we are. For me and for the Government as a whole, improved behaviour is crucial to everything that we are trying to do in education. That will partially help to deal with it, although you are never going to prevent everything.

Q502 Chair: I can remember that we entertained one another a lot in 2010 during the passage of the Education Bill on the whole issue of behaviour and how to manage it.

You said earlier that an awful lot of people will be watching today. It would be really useful if you could let teachers out there know at what age you think the words “penis” and “vagina” are appropriate.

Mr Gibb: That is a matter for the professionalism of teachers, rather than for the Minister for school reform. Schools need to adhere very carefully to the science curriculum at key stages 1 and 2, which sets things out in great detail—much more detail than the curriculum is set out in secondary. If schools adhere to that and to the statutory guidance, they will not be going wrong.

Q503 Alex Cunningham: Earlier, in an answer to David, you mentioned sexting. Do you think that schools need to do more to tackle sexting and cyber-bullying?

Mr Gibb: I do. Those are new issues for people of our generation, and it is very important that we address them for the young generation. We have made computing a statutory requirement of the curriculum from the beginning of key stage 1 right through to key stage 4. That covers issues such as the dangers of the internet and how to be safe on the internet. That is very important, and it starts very young. Page 11 of the PSHE Association guidance on SRE to which we have been referring—“Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) for the 21st century”—does discuss sexting. It says that, when teaching specific work about sexting: “Teaching should cover communication skills, attitudes and values, the law, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and how to seek help.”

Q504 Alex Cunningham: So it is about much more than just the technology end of it?

Mr Gibb: Yes; I think that young people already know how to do it—

Alex Cunningham: That is not quite what I meant.

Mr Gibb: The question is whether they should do it and the danger of so doing for the young person in terms of what will happen to images. They need to know that the sending of lewd images of children, even by children, is a criminal offence.

Q505 Alex Cunningham: How do we get schools to address these issues in detail? The technology is changing all the time—the next new app will be out before we leave this room. Things are constantly changing, so how can we ensure that our teachers are properly equipped to give the proper advice to children at the right time? Or is the advice the same all the way through, with just the technology changing?

Mr Gibb: To an extent, it is the same advice, but teachers who cover this area need to ensure that they are kept up to date. That is something that is true of CPD more generally: it ought not just be about how to get children from a D grade to a C grade at GCSE; it must be

about knowledge of your subject area, whether that is the latest thinking about King John or ensuring that you are up to date on the latest app that can be a danger to young children.

Q506 Chair: Minister, some of the most informative and best advice and evidence to the Committee has been from young people themselves. I have learned a huge amount from young people about what is going on currently, though it may be something different tomorrow.

I was really shocked by the evidence we had on sexting, which said it was absolutely routine between most 11, 12 and 13-year-olds. How seriously is the Government taking that? For instance, how many young people do you have on your expert group? Because it is not about the experts in the field, is it? It is about listening to what is happening to young people now. Many of us have no idea what is going on.

Mr Gibb: No. We do take it very seriously and that is why we are teaching e-safety in the curriculum in schools.

Q507 Chair: I accept that you do not have the details of the people on your expert group, but when you give us those details, will you please identify how many of them are under 18?

Mr Gibb: We will do that. On the basis of other expert groups, they tend not to have young people of that age.

Chair: For very obvious reasons.

Mr Gibb: But we want people to be experts in their field. That does not stop those groups from conducting surveys of young people's views or indeed having young people with a particular interest in the subject giving evidence to them as they deliberate.

Chair: Can we look at the technicalities later? Maybe it is possible for you to let us know how many are under 18, but we will not publish that information for very obvious reasons.

Q508 Alex Cunningham: I have a bit of an off-beat question. The British Heart Foundation has asked me to ask you a specific question. Will you be considering introducing CPR and PAD as part of the national curriculum in order to improve lifesaving in our schools?

Mr Gibb: We have already provided up to 500 defibrillators in schools, at a discounted negotiated rate. I am just waiting for some inspiration on this. Those issues can, of course, be taught within PSHE. I know St John Ambulance is involved.

Q509 Alex Cunningham: It apparently takes only 30 minutes to learn the technique.

Mr Gibb: I don't know where that figure comes from. Schools are free to teach whatever they want. People such as the British Heart Foundation, Red Cross and St John Ambulance do provide resources to schools to help them deliver that.

Q510 Alex Cunningham: And would you encourage schools to listen to what they are saying and deliver this, so that young people can be equipped in this way? We hear great stories in newspapers occasionally of a 14-year-old who saved somebody's life because they had had that specific training.

Mr Gibb: Yes, absolutely. That message is loud and clear. A number of our colleagues, such as Justin Tomlinson, have been pushing this issue strongly over the years. I think the message is loud and clear in schools.

Q511 Siobhain McDonagh: How do you choose between the many possible topics that PSHE education can encompass? How can you get away from the problem that some head teachers may choose a very narrow definition of PSHE education or, conversely, an over-broad one?

Mr Gibb: That does have to be a matter for the head teachers of schools. It will reflect their local communities and the needs of the pupils in those schools. There is a requirement in the statutory guidance, for SRE in particular, to consult. I would have thought that most head teachers would want to take into account local opinion when developing their own PSHE curriculum.

My own view is that it should cover all those issues in the title, things like health and SRE. It should also cover issues about ensuring that young people leave school ready for work, that they have acquired those soft skills of team building, collaboration, resilience and character that you need when things go wrong, as they always will. That will mean we have a generation leaving school equipped not just academically but to start work in a demanding work environment.

Q512 Siobhain McDonagh: Is there a subset of PSHE education topics that every child should be taught irrespective of the local circumstances?

Mr Gibb: That is again a difficult question. Certainly the SRE element needs to be taught and some of that is statutory. We have debated the extent of that. Making sure people understand the dangers of drugs, alcohol, STIs and HIV are a given wherever schools are, in my view, if I were a head teacher. I also think children should be ready for work when they leave school. They really need to acquire these soft skills. On top of that, it will be dependent upon the needs of their pupils.

Q513 Siobhain McDonagh: To what extent could national health issues such as the obesity crisis be tackled through PSHE?

Mr Gibb: That is within the “H” element of PSHE that young people need to be taught. Some of that is covered in the national curriculum subjects, but they do need to talk about the importance of exercise and healthy eating. That is crucial. As the country gets wealthier, paradoxically people are eating more unhealthily and, as we have seen in America where they are always several steps ahead of us, we do not want our obesity epidemic to reach the same level as theirs. It is an issue that needs to be addressed, and the best time to address it is when children are young.

Q514 Siobhain McDonagh: The national curriculum for education includes a statutory spelling list. Why does the Government see a need to specify that children should be able to learn to spell the word “yacht”, when it takes an entirely laissez-faire approach to whether children learn about mental health and well-being?

Mr Gibb: This goes back to the debate about prescription. It is a balance between prescription and autonomy. In developing the English primary curriculum, which I was heavily involved with, we felt that it ought to be specified year by year with that kind of detail, because we perceive there to be not enough attention paid to things like spelling. We could have taken that approach to the geography and history curriculum, which is less detailed, and we could have taken that approach to PSHE. It is a judgment about the balance between central prescription and autonomy for schools. We felt that, because the needs of pupils vary across the country—there are some consistent issues, but some are not consistent across the country—PSHE ought to be a matter for the professional judgment of head teachers.

Q515 Siobhain McDonagh: Mental health problems are consistent across the country. There are issues about mental well-being.

Mr Gibb: I do agree with that. I know this is something that the Secretary of State is particularly concerned about.

Q516 Siobhain McDonagh: And it feeds into your issues about grit, determination, being work-ready and coping with disappointment.

Mr Gibb: It does, but the answer is to make sure that the services—the child and adolescent mental health services and so on—are more available to schools when they need those services, and that they have the capacity to deal with young people’s problems. In terms of building up resilience and character so that children are able to cope with the pressures of life—when the Chair opened this session, she talked about all the new pressures on young people that we did not face, or I did not face as a young person, which the young people of today are facing—we need to make sure that we do everything we can to educate children about the dangers and help them deal with those new pressures. That is what we are trying to do now. We have a new fifth priority for the Department to build up children’s character and resilience, so you are right. I do not disagree with you on that.

Q517 Chair: Minister, you referred to the list that I gave you at the beginning about the pressures on young people these days and how hard it is to be a young person growing up in 2014. We touched a little bit today on the Government's strategy around this, which is about destination measures, parental choice, school autonomy, and the expert group. You stressed that this was a massive priority for the Government. However, guidance has been left to the voluntary sector. I remind you of the e-mail that was sent to schools, which the vast majority of schools did not open. Funding the PSHE Association at £75,000 is a paltry amount. We have to look at how the Government say this is a massive priority, and yet the strategy for delivering on that is wanting in many ways.

I want to finish by mentioning the £10 million that the Government recently gave to building "character education". That would have trained 14,000 teachers at £700 each on the Roehampton course. In terms of Government money, I know if you say it fast, it is nothing, but £10 million is not a great deal of money if we are really serious about training teachers. One of the consistent pieces of evidence that we have had is that if you are going to deliver this, deliver it well, and the best way of delivering it is by having trained teachers who are experts in PSHE.

Thank you for coming along today. It has been an enlightening session. I hope you have found it as useful as we have. It is good to see you back.

Mr Gibb: Thank you very much, Chair. I look forward to seeing your report.

Ian Mearns: Merry Christmas.

Chair: Oh, yes. Merry Christmas to everybody, especially the staff.