

National Office

Mātauranga House  
33 Bowen Street  
PO Box 1666  
Wellington 6140

Phone: 04 463 8000  
[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

DR: 1052415

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David Johnston  
[david@eyesofablacksheep.com](mailto:david@eyesofablacksheep.com)

Dear David

The Minister of Education, Hon Hekia Parata, has asked me to reply to your email of 15 March 2017 about the introduction of compulsory education around sexual consent.

Teaching children and young people respect for others is a responsibility for all of us; something they learn at home and school, both in what they are told, and what they observe around them.

As part of this shared responsibility, *The New Zealand Curriculum* recognises that schools work with children and young people on the skills they need to navigate personal relationships and sexual identity.

Sexuality education is a compulsory part of our health and physical education curriculum, which schools must deliver in Years 1 to 10. The Ministry of Education expects schools to follow the guidance we issued in 2015, this can be found at <http://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-HPE/Policy-guidelines/Sexuality-education-a-guide-for-principals-boards-of-trustees-and-teachers>. This guidance spells out what should be covered by sexuality education. For secondary schools, that detail sets out a clear pathway through topics including consent, coercion and sexual violence.

Our guidance puts identity and sexuality firmly in the context of relationships with others. It covers the skills of self-knowledge, assertiveness and caring that are central to healthy relationships. Students learn about personal boundaries in sexuality education. From the beginning, we expect schools to teach children to identify safe and unsafe touching and the importance of respect. By Years 6 to 7, students are identifying pressures from others and developing assertiveness strategies.

Schools are required to consult with their communities every two years, or more often, about how they teach sexuality education. It is one of the reasons there is variation from school to school in teaching this subject. Any teaching programme discussing consent requires an understanding of empathy and respect for others' feelings. So at the heart of sexuality education, again from a young age, is material on affirming the feelings and beliefs of others.

Many secondary schools and communities include consent in their sexuality education. Many schools also hold forums outside scheduled classes where important issues such as consent, coercion and safety in intimate relationships can be debated and discussed.

We encourage all schools to look at what they are doing on sexuality education with their school community.

Thank you for taking the time to share your views.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Glen Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Glen Johnson  
Acting Group Manager Pathways and Progress  
Early Learning and Student Achievement