

Frequently Asked Questions about Relationships and Sex Education



The Department for Education has announced changes to Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE). These changes will come into effect from April 2020 and all schools will be required to comply with the updated requirements, making Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education.

It has been 20 years since the last review of these curriculum areas, and in that time the world has changed significantly.

Children now face new challenges: they have to process lots of information from different sources such as TV, the internet, social media, understand how society is changing, understand risks they may face, all putting pressure on their physical and mental health.

We believe relationships and sex education is important for our pupils and our school because:

- It is giving children the knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships
- It is about giving children the opportunity to put knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts.
- It is the recognition that everyone faces difficult situations in their lives and how relationship and sex education can support young people to develop resilience, to know how and when to ask for help, and to know where to access support We view the partnership of home and school as vital in providing the context to both complement and reinforce what pupils learn at home about healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online, as well as how to be healthy.

Below, we have explained some of the common questions around these subjects.

So why now?

The Equality Act came into force in 2010. The Equality Act 2010 states that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- Age
- Disability • Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership • Pregnancy or maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex/gender
- Sexual orientation (Government, 2010, p1)

The public sector Equality Duty came into force on 5th April 2011 and requires that public bodies (including schools):

- Have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. (Government Equalities Office 2013, p1)

This makes it clear that promoting some of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act while ignoring others is against UK law.

What is teaching about equality?

It is teaching about:

- Difference
- Acceptance
- Tolerance
- Diversity
- How to challenge discrimination

Teaching about equality helps our children to prepare for the next stages in their lives.

Will my child be taught sex education at Primary School? Is this too young?

Sex education at Primary school is not compulsory. However, compulsory Relationships Education is being introduced in Primary schools from September 2020, to put in place the building blocks needed for positive and safe relationships of all kinds. This will start with family and friends, how to treat each other with kindness, and recognising the difference between online and offline friendships.

We currently teach sex education to children in Year 5 and 6 (which goes beyond the existing national curriculum for science). Before these lessons take place, the school gives parents the opportunity to understand what will be taught and how it will be approached, and view any materials so that you understand what we propose to teach and how. If you continue to have concerns, you have the right to withdraw from any sex education lessons that go beyond that of the science national curriculum.

We will continue to teach sex education (which focuses on puberty and reproduction). This is only part of the Science National Curriculum for Y5 and Y6. As it is part of the science national curriculum it is compulsory. You have the right to withdraw from any sex education lessons that go beyond that of the science national curriculum.

Is school the best place for discussions about Sex and Relationships?

We know that if children do not get the correct and accurate information about sex and relationships from a reliable source, they will find the information from other sources (friends, older siblings, website, TV) which may not be true or age appropriate. The information gathered during the Government consultation found that most children wanted this information and discussion to be provided in school with their teachers so that they could ask their questions in a safe space, and have them answered in an age appropriate way.

Does the new Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum take account of my faith?

The RSHE curriculum is designed to help children from all backgrounds build positive and safe relationships, and to thrive in modern Britain. Our School has a Christian religious character, and we believe that teaching about Relationships builds on our Core Christian Values of Love and Equality and is in line with the Church's teaching. The Church of England's charter for Relationship, Sex and Health Education states: 'Everyone will be treated with dignity as all people are made in the image of God and loved equally by God. All pupils have a right to an education which enables them to flourish and is set in a learning community where differences of lifestyle and opinion (within that which is permissible under UK law) are treated with dignity and respect'.

Do I have a right to withdraw my child from Relationships and Sex Education?

In a Primary School, you have the right to withdraw from any sex education lessons that go beyond that of the science national curriculum.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education at Primary or Secondary school as the contents of these subjects – such as family, friendship, safety (including online safety) – are important for all children to be taught.

Has the government listened to the views of my community in introducing these subjects?

The Government undertook a wide public consultation which involved discussions with over 90 organisations, as well as the public consultation on the draft regulations and guidance. This has informed the key decisions on these subjects.

Will these subjects promote LGBT relationships?

No, these subjects don't 'promote' anything, they educate. We are teaching about equality. Our school ethos says that we are respectful of everyone. We value ourselves and all others: This means that if someone is black, they are welcome in our school; if someone uses a wheelchair, they are welcome in our school; if someone is gay they are welcome in our school.

Pupils should be taught about the society in which they are growing up. These subjects are designed to foster respect for others and for difference, and educate pupils about healthy relationships. RSHE should meet the needs of all pupils, whatever their developing sexuality or identity – this should include age-appropriate teaching about different types of relationships in the context of the law.

In our school the teaching of LGBT will be delivered through teaching about different types of family, including those with same sex parents. All our planned learning will be taught in an age appropriate way. You will be informed about all learning that is taking place.

Are primary children too young to be taught about gay or lesbian people?

Some children grow up in families with gay or lesbian people. We can't say to a child who has two dads, 'You can't talk about your family!' We want all of our children to know that their family is normal and accepted in school and we want everyone to feel welcome.

There are no children who are gay or transgender here, so why does it need to be mentioned?

We want our children to grow up respectful and tolerant members of our community. As they grow up, make more friends, watch tv, go to different places they will meet people who are gay or transgender. We want them to understand that this is okay that some children when they grow up may be gay. We don't want children growing up thinking something is wrong with them or with people they recognise who are gay or transgender.

What are the topics covered in RSHE?

In school RSHE topics will taught within our Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum. Our PSHE curriculum is split into six areas:.

Autumn 1:	Being Me in My World	Includes understanding my place in the class, school and global community as well as devising Learning Charters
Autumn 2:	Celebrating Difference	Includes anti-bullying (cyber and homophobic bullying included) and diversity work
Spring 1:	Dreams and Goals	Includes goal-setting, aspirations and resilience building
Spring 2:	Healthy Me	Includes drugs and alcohol education, self-esteem and confidence as well as healthy lifestyle choices (on and off line)
Summer 1:	Relationships	Includes understanding friendship, family and other relationships, conflict resolution and communication skills
Summer 2:	Changing Me	Includes Sex and Relationship Education in the context of looking at and managing change

How will we know what is being taught so I can talk to my child about it at home? Parents will be given opportunities to attend meetings or speak to teachers throughout the year. At the beginning of each year each class teacher usually holds a meeting with parents to discuss the upcoming year's curriculum and there will be have a discussion with the class teacher. Each term parents will have access via the school website and the curriculum newsletter will summarise what is being taught.

If you need to discuss this further our teachers will be happy to discuss this with you or signpost other resources that can be use at home to support discussions.

Will this work prompt my children to ask challenging questions?

Possibly, your child or children trust you and will be likely to ask you questions to test your beliefs and opinions. Please don't avoid them, talk openly about diversity and equality. We are here to support you if you struggle to answer difficult questions.

How do I explain what 'gay' means to my child?

'Gay' is when a man loves a man. 'Lesbian' is when two women love each other. 'Bi sexual' is when a person can love both men and women. 'Transgender' is when a person feels different about the body they were born into; we are all assigned a gender at birth and sometimes when we get older we may feel differently about this. Some people say there are 'boy' things or 'girl things' but we say this is not the case and boys and girls can do the same sort of things if they want.

But brothers love brothers and sisters love sisters and fathers love sons. Does that make them gay?

When two brothers or sisters love each other, it doesn't mean they are gay. This is different kind of love. We may love our mum but we don't want to marry them. Some people grow up and fall in love with a person of the same gender.

What do I say if my child comes home and asks, 'how can two men/women have a baby?'

Lots of people have children in different ways, like fostering, adoption or step families. These are all families. They look after one another and love one another so they are the same in many ways. Some families have a mum and dad. Some families have a mum and a mum. Some families have two dads. Some families have one mum or dad or one grandparent. All families are different and that is okay.