

Implementation of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education. September 2020

The Department of Education has issued helpful updated guidance on the implementation of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education recognising the impact that the Covid-19 situation has had on school preparations for the planned introduction of RSHE in September 2020. [Relationships education, relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education: FAQs](#)

The Department for Education is seeking to reassure schools that they will have considerable flexibility over how they discharge their duty within the first year of compulsory teaching. Schools will be expected to make an assessment about how ready they are to implement the new RSHE Curriculum.

This will include, in particular, the requirement to develop and publish a policy for Relationships and RSE on the school's website. To do this schools must have consulted parents in the development and review of that policy and informed them of the new right of parental withdrawal.

- *Schools who assess that they are prepared to deliver teaching and have met the requirements set out in the statutory guidance are encouraged to begin to deliver teaching from 1st September 2020, or whenever is practicable to do so within the first few weeks of the new school year.*
- *Schools that assess that they have been unable to adequately meet requirements because of the lost time and competing priorities should aim to start preparation to deliver the new curriculum and to commence teaching the new content no later than the start of the summer term 2021 (after Easter) .*

In making that assessment schools are encouraged to look at the guidance provided on the Church of England website <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies/relationships-sex-and-health-education>

- *Schools are encouraged to take a take a phased approach (if needed) when introducing these subjects. Schools should consider prioritising curriculum content on mental health and wellbeing.*

Technically from September 2020 Ofsted inspection will consider provision for RSHE as part of the judgement of pupil's personal development. Routine Ofsted inspections are currently suspended. When routine inspections do re-start the Department for Education promise that '*inspectors will be sensitive to and take account of the context and circumstances of schools*'.

From September 2020 onward the SIAMS inspection schedule is also due to inspect, in strand 5 c):

- *Does the school have an approach to relationships and sex education (RSE) that ensures children are able to cherish themselves and others as unique and wonderfully made, and to form healthy relationships where they respect and offer dignity to others.*

This requirement will now be inspected until September 2021.

To meet the requirements of the DfE and the guidance from the Church of England Education Office schools may need to consider how they conduct parental consultation while the school is practicing social distancing. While an open meeting would have been ideal this may not now be possible in the time scales required. Schools may have to make greater use of questionnaires and other methods to gather parental views and provide information to parents.

Schools should consider models of training that don't involve visitors coming into schools.

Schools will be aware that a consequence of the current situation is that they cannot be reliant on visitors who may not be able to come into school for the delivery of RSHE, this will include local Church groups.

Faith sensitive and inclusive Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (RSHE)

It is possible that some parents including members of some local faith communities may raise some concerns about the teaching of RSHE. Below are some of the more common concerns raised with some possible ways to address these anxieties. (The following is adapted from guidance produced by Bristol SACRE link to follow)

Guidance about religious objections

1. Some parents may voice general concern over Primary Relationship Education (especially due to media coverage), believing lesson content will conflict with their religious beliefs.

Expressing the curriculum in terms of 'seeking knowledge' (Families and people who care for me), 'friendships' (Caring friendships), 'good manners' (Respectful relationships) and 'being safe' (Online relationships, and Being safe) may demonstrate how the curriculum may actually be rooted in concepts very compatible with faith principles, and so alleviate parental concerns.

2. Some parents may voice concern over teaching about boyfriend/girlfriend relationships in Primary Relationship Education (because of religious beliefs against relationships outside of marriage).

The Statutory Guidance does not explicitly mention teaching about boyfriend/girlfriend relationships at the Primary phase, and therefore schools may choose not to include this optional content. However, schools may choose to

include content discussing, for example, good and bad reasons someone may choose a partner or friend (e.g. looks, wealth and personality) and many parents with faith commitments may not have concerns if the discussion was inclusive of pupils being able to choose to consider a 'future husband/wife' scenario (instead of only a boyfriend/girlfriend option).

3. Some parents may voice concern over teaching about LGBT in Primary Relationship Education. The Statutory Guidance states: "Pupils should know... that others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care." The Statutory Guidance also states: 'LGBT... content is (to be) fully integrated... rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson'.

One way this could be done is for lessons to be set in the context of teaching about diversity and tolerance/respect (e.g. single parent families, adoptive parents) – including those with protected characteristics (e.g. parents of same and different ethnicities, parents of same and different religions, married and non-married parents, same-sex parents etc) If explained to parents that the aim of the lesson is to encourage living well together by 'seeking knowledge / encouraging neighbourliness' (relating to those in pupils' community), teaching 'good manners' (tolerance/respect), and the extent of the LGBT element in this integrated lesson, the parent's concerns may be alleviated.

4. Some parents may voice concern over inclusion of positive narrative resources about sexual orientation or gender reassignment (e.g. a positive narrative storybook about an infant with two male parents) in Primary Relationship Education. This may be because some parents may not want their children considering a same-sex relationship or gender reassignment positively for themselves (because of religious beliefs or cultural stigma).

The Statutory Guidance does not necessitate the inclusion of LGBT positive narrative resources and therefore schools may choose not to include such resources as whole class texts. However, schools may choose to include, to offer positive counter-narratives to tackle prejudice and hate-crimes towards LGBT people and some parents of some faith communities may not have concerns if explained in this context. If context is broadened to celebrate wider diversity and tackle all forms of prejudice (e.g. includes positive narratives of Muslims and tackling Islamophobia), parents may be able to further empathise.

It should be remembered that parents do not have a right to withdraw their children from Relationship Education.