



## Frequently Asked Questions about Relationship and Sex Education

The Department for Education has announced changes to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). These changes will come into effect from September 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)

## **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.

At Stoke Fleming Primary School 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. We hold meetings with parents in Y5 and Y6 to discuss this and share materials. 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 from surveys of children, that if they 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 Education and RSE curriculum take account of my faith?**

The RSE curriculum is designed to help children from all backgrounds build positive and safe relationships, and to thrive in modern Britain.

Stoke Fleming Primary School is a non-denominational school. However, we have a robust set of values incorporating the 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to as set out by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and British Values.

All children 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. RSE 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.

Our children will interact with people from different backgrounds we want them to treat all members of the community with the same respect. Just like racism, school has a duty of care to challenge any language that may cause offence to others, whether used intentionally or not. Phrases such as "that's so gay" or "that's a girls/boys toy" when used in a negative manner may unintentionally cause offence to a child or adult. School will challenge this language if it is used by children, parents or visitors as we want everyone to feel welcome.

**What are the topics covered in RSE?**

In school RSE topics will be taught within our Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum. Our PSHE curriculum is split into three categories. RSE is part of the first two categories. They are in bold.

Relationships	Health and Mental Well-being	Wider World
<b>Families and People who care for me</b> <b>Caring friendships</b> <b>Respectful relationships</b> <b>Online relationships</b> <b>Being Safe</b>	<b>Mental Well-Being</b> <b>Internet Safety and Harm</b> <b>Physical Health and fitness</b> <b>Healthy Eating</b> <b>Drug, alcohol and tobacco</b> <b>Health and prevention</b> <b>First Aid</b> <b>Changing Adolescent Body</b>	<b>Economic Well-Being</b> <b>Enterprise</b> <b>Careers</b>

**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 different meetings to understand how the curriculum is being planned to be taught. As the curriculum planning develops parents will have the opportunity to look at materials that will be used. At the beginning of each year there will be an opportunity to discuss with the class teacher the years curriculum.

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 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.