



RSHE Parent Consultation

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Agenda

1. Glossary of terms
2. Why this subject matters
3. Statutory requirements
4. Life Lessons' curriculum
5. Age appropriateness - the evidence
6. Supporting your child (recommendations for parents)
7. Life Lessons - credibility
8. Life Lessons - approach
9. Optional activity - what parents hope for their child's education in this subject
10. Support for parents moving forward
11. Withdrawing your child from sex education



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Glossary of terms

Relationships sex and health education can have an overwhelming amount of jargon and acronyms. Here are some of the key terms that could be useful to share with parents.

Word or acronym	Definition
RSE	Relationships and sex education
RSHE	Relationships, sex and health education
Statutory requirement	Compulsory under law
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
PSHE / Personal development	Personal Social Health Education
Ofsted	The government Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.
DfE	Department for Education



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Glossary of terms continued

Relationships sex and health education can have an overwhelming amount of jargon and acronyms. Here are some of the key terms that could be useful to share with parents.

Word or acronym	Definition
Neurodivergence	A term used to describe brains that work in different ways to the predominant neurotype. Examples include ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, DCD/Dyspraxia.
PSHE Association	The industry body for the teaching of RSE in schools and who directly translated the government's statutory requirements for schools to follow,
Spiral curriculum	Teaching and returning to a topic in increasing detail and complexity matched to the needs and maturity of a year group



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Why RSHE matters in schools

PSHE and RSHE didn't used to be prioritised so much in schools. It likely wasn't when you, the parents in the room, went to school. Now young people have access to more information and risk at a younger age. Below are the main reasons why RSHE is a statutory requirement and is prioritised in this school.

Develop life skills and knowledge

- Communication/oracy and listening
- Healthy relationships
- Resilience
- Look after your physical and mental health
- Critical thinking to make good choices

Safety

- Preventative
- Staying safe in school, online, in the world
- Reporting concerns

A safe space to talk

- Counter negative influence Incl. the web
- Consider alternative viewpoints

School culture and behaviour

- Respect others and treat them well
- We talk about things

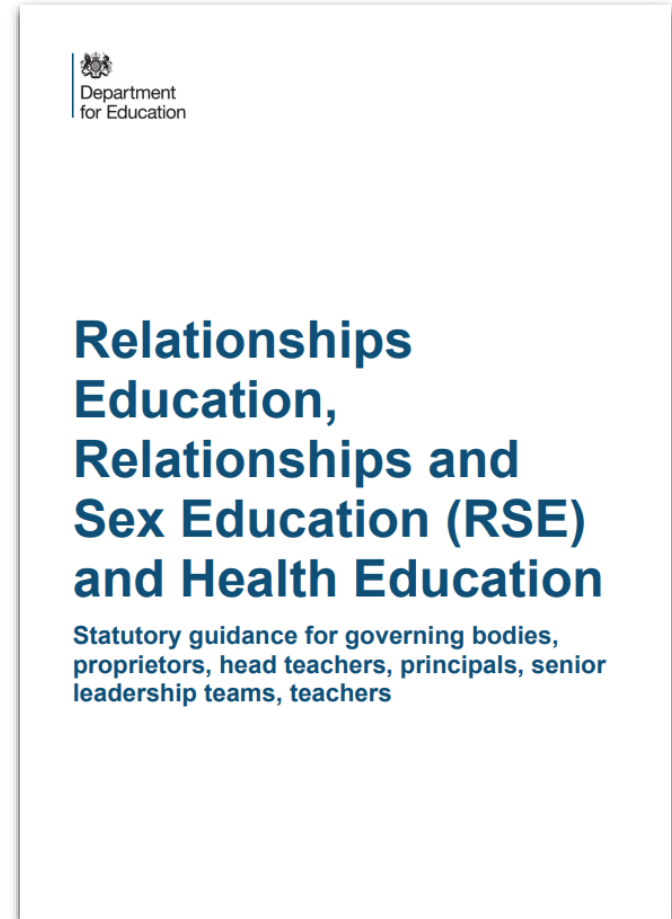


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Statutory requirements in secondary education

- From **2020**, Relationships and sex Education became **compulsory in all secondary schools**
- Following consultations with parents, young people and professionals, the Dept for Education published [statutory guidance](#) for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education.
- A new focus in the requirements was on supporting young people to have **healthy and consensual relationships** (previously, only sex education was compulsory and was covered mainly in Science).



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Statutory requirements in secondary education

Who does the guidance apply to?

Curriculum focus	A legal requirement	Optional but recommended
Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)	<p>All schools providing secondary education years 7-11, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All through schools including academies and free schools • Middle schools • Independent schools • Alternative provisions and pupil referral units (PRUs) • Non-maintained/ maintained special schools 	<p>The statutory requirements do not apply to sixth form colleges, 16-19 academies or Further Education (FE) colleges, although we would encourage them to support students by offering these subjects.</p>
Health Education	<p>All maintained schools including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools with a sixth form • Academies • Free schools • Non-maintained special schools • Alternative provisions and pupil referral units (PRUs) 	<p>The statutory requirement to provide Health Education does not apply to independent schools – PSHE is already compulsory as independent schools must meet the Independent School Standards as set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.</p>



6 key areas schools have to focus on:

Policy

All schools must have in place a written policy for RSE detailing how the subject is accessible for all pupils and with an acknowledgement that pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) are more vulnerable to exploitation and bullying.

Safeguarding

There should always be a focus on keeping children safe and a connection between safeguarding and RSE as the school plays a part in preventative education.

Right to be excused from sex education

Parents will have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some of all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

A whole-school approach

All of these subjects should be set in the context of a wider whole-school approach to supporting students to be safe, happy and prepared for life beyond school.

Support for parents/carers

Schools should communicate how RSHE will be taught as well as informing parents/carers about their rights to withdraw.

RSE curriculum

The aim of RSE is to give young people the information to develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. Full details of topics can be found [here in the DfE's published statutory guidance](#).

Being safe

Online and media

Physical and mental
well-being

The law in relation to
RSE topics

What's included

Families

Respectful
relationships, including
friendships

Intimate and sexual
relationships, including
sexual health

Menstruation

Specifics - By the end of secondary school, pupils should know:

Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● about different types of committed, stable relationships● how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children.● about marriage and long-term relationships including legal rights● the roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children● how to seek help and support others in unsafe relationships
Respectful relationships, including friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (including online)● how stereotypes are damaging and the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality● how to show respect towards others and show tolerance of other people's beliefs.● about types of bullying, the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help.● criminal behaviour within relationships including violence and coercive control.● sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable.
Being safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and fgm, and how these can affect current and future relationships● how people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn (in all contexts, including online).



Specifics - By the end of secondary school, pupils should know:

Online and media

- their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online
- about online risks, including the sharing of materials
- what to do and where to get support for any issues
- the impact of viewing harmful content specifically
- sexually explicit material and its impact on future relationships
- criminal behaviour related to indecent images
- how information is collected, shared and used online

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

- how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy intimate relationships,
- that all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships
- the facts about reproductive health, including fertility and menopause
- that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure
- that they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex.
- the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available.
- the facts and choices around pregnancy including miscarriage, adoption and abortion
- how the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex and the importance of and facts about testing
- how the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour
- how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment

Specifics - By the end of secondary school, pupils should know:

The law

Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, including for example:

- marriage
- consent, including the age of consent
- violence against women and girls
- online behaviours including image and information sharing (incl. nudes and sexting)
- pornography
- abortion
- sexuality and gender identity
- substance misuse
- violence and exploitation by gangs
- extremism/radicalisation
- criminal exploitation (for example, through gang involvement or 'county lines' drugs operations),
- hate crime
- female genital mutilation (FGM).

Mental wellbeing

- how to talk about their emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary
- that happiness is linked to being connected to others
- how to recognise the early signs of mental wellbeing concerns
- common types of mental ill health (e.g. anxiety and depression)
- how to critically evaluate when something they do or are involved in has a positive or negative effect on their own or others' mental health
- the benefits and importance of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation and voluntary and service-based activities on mental wellbeing and happiness.

Specifics - By the end of secondary school, pupils should know:

Internet safety and harms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● the similarities and differences between the online world and the physical world, including: the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparison with others online (including through setting unrealistic expectations for body image)● how people may curate a specific image of their life online, over-reliance on online relationships including social media● the risks related to online gambling including the accumulation of debt● how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online● how to identify harmful behaviours online (including bullying, abuse or harassment) and how to report, or find support, if they have been affected by those behaviours.
Physical health and fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● the positive associations between physical activity and promotion of mental wellbeing, including as an approach to combat stress● the characteristics and evidence of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, maintaining a healthy weight, including the links between an inactive lifestyle and ill health, including cancer and cardiovascular ill-health● about the science relating to blood, organ and stem cell donation.
Healthy eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● how to maintain healthy eating and the links between a poor diet and health risks, including tooth decay and cancer.

Specifics - By the end of secondary school, pupils should know:

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco

- the facts about legal and illegal drugs and their associated risks, including the link between drug use, and the associated risks, including the link to serious mental health conditions
- the law relating to the supply and possession of illegal substances
- the physical and psychological risks associated with alcohol consumption and what constitutes low risk alcohol consumption in adulthood
- the physical and psychological consequences of addiction, including alcohol dependency
- awareness of the dangers of drugs which are prescribed but still present serious health risks
- the facts about the harms from smoking tobacco (particularly the link to lung cancer), the benefits of quitting and how to access support to do so.

Health and prevention

- about personal hygiene, germs including bacteria, viruses, how they are spread, treatment and prevention of infection, and about antibiotics.
- about dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene and dental flossing, including healthy eating and regular check-ups at the dentist
- (late secondary) the benefits of regular self-examination and screening.
- the facts and science relating to immunisation and vaccination
- the importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and how a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn.

Basic first aid

- basic treatment for common injuries
- life-saving skills, including how to administer CPR
- the purpose of defibrillators and when one might be needed.

Specifics - By the end of secondary school, pupils should know:

Changing adolescent body

- key facts about puberty, the changing adolescent body and menstrual wellbeing
- the main changes which take place in males and females, and the implications for emotional and physical health.

Menstruation

- key facts about the menstrual cycle including what an average period is, about a range of menstrual products and the implications for emotional and physical health



DfE guidance for different faiths

In all schools, when teaching these subjects, **the religious background of all pupils must be taken into account** when planning teaching, so that the topics that are included in the core content in this guidance are **appropriately handled**. Schools must ensure they **comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010**, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.

All schools may teach about **faith perspectives**. In particular, schools with a religious character may teach the distinctive faith perspective on relationships, and **balanced debate** may take place about issues that are seen as contentious. For example, the school may wish to reflect on faith teachings about certain topics as well as how their faith institutions may support people in matters of relationships and sex.

In making learning appropriate to the faith of pupils, the guiding principle should be that **teaching is responsive to their lived experiences**, and so can **reflect the religious and cultural background of pupils**, for example in the choices of resources and tailoring the curriculum to meet pupil needs. The **difference between fact and opinion** must always be made clear to pupils and information about the law and legal rights included throughout RSE.

DfE guidance for SEND pupils

Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education must be accessible for **all pupils**. This is particularly important when planning teaching for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities who represent a large minority of pupils.

High quality teaching that is **differentiated** and personalised will be the starting point to ensure accessibility. Schools should also be mindful of the preparing for adulthood outcomes, as set out in the **SEND code of practice**, when teaching these subjects to those with SEND.

Schools should be aware that some pupils are **more vulnerable to exploitation**, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND. Relationships Education and RSE can also be particularly important subjects for some pupils; for example those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs or learning disabilities.

In special schools and for some SEND pupils in mainstream schools there may be a need to tailor content and teaching to meet the specific needs of pupils at different developmental stages. Schools should ensure that their teaching is sensitive, age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate and delivered with reference to the law.

Age appropriateness

Schools must be sensitive to teach topics at a time that will most benefit the safety and development of the child. The maturity and development of children varies hugely and this is influenced many factors including:

- A child's home life - language and openness modelled by parents/carers
- The influence of other people including friends and older siblings
- Access to technology and the world of adult focussed content it opens up
- Neurodivergence



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A schools approach to 'age appropriateness'

We use a combination of the following inputs to develop and deliver our curriculum:

1. National statistics and evidence - for example recommendations published by the PSHE Association or by national charities such as the NSPCC
2. We use a spiral curriculum format - this means themes are revisited throughout a child's time in secondary education, each time revisiting the topic in an age appropriate way.
3. An awareness of the community students are growing up within including police data
4. Surveys to students and parents
5. Our understanding of pupil maturity based upon their behaviour, language and prevalence of safeguarding concerns raised in schools
6. Two classes within the same year group could in theory receive different lessons based upon a judgment of maturity and need.
7. There is potential for us to deliver interventions with a pupil(s) who needs education on a specific topic without a whole class receiving that lesson.
8. Feedback from parents



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An example of 'age appropriateness' decision making - Pornography

National statistics:

The average age at which children first view pornography is now 13 years old.

[\(The Children's Commissioner report 2023\)](#)

- The report findings, based upon a survey of over a thousand 16-21-year-olds and focus groups with teenagers, also showed substantial proportions of young people had seen pornography viewed it at a much younger age than 13 - 27% by age 11 and 10% by the age of 9.
- Young people spoke about the unbearable pressure to view hardcore pornography even if they do not want to, much of which depicts degrading acts and violence against women

In response to this report, the PSHE Association have recommended in strong terms that pornography should be **taught before year 11** and that this topic should be revisited as part of a spiral curriculum of study throughout secondary education.

Our school RSHE resource partner Life Lessons recommend that pornography is introduced as a topic in year 8. However schools can teach the subject sooner or later than year 8 based upon their understanding of the maturity, attitudes, prevalence of sexualised language and behaviour and how active students are on digital media.



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How to support your child in their RSE journey

our recommendations

- **Celebrate individual differences** to promote a greater sense of belonging for everyone in society
- **Talk openly** with your child to model confidence in discussing tricky topics
- **Listen to your child** without judgement
- **Engage** with the school's parent consultations about RSE topics
- **Stay up to date** with what is being taught and when so you can follow up on these topics at home
- **Ask for support** if you need it - you are not expected to know everything!



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Useful resources for parents

Online safety

- Support your child to be **safe online** by monitoring their device usage. There are [free courses available via National Online Safety](#) on how to do this.
- Be aware of **social media age restrictions**. [Guidance available at Internet Matters](#).
- [Find support on the NSPCC website](#) related to social media use and staying safe online.
- **Specific advice** available around the use of tablets, smart TVs, games consoles and smart speakers at [UK Safer Internet Centre](#).

Communicating with your child

The [BBC parent toolkit](#) has a wealth of resources including how to [speak to your child about mental health](#) and support in [talking to them about LGBTQ+](#) David Chambers' (a masculinity and relationships coach) [video on understanding and communicating emotions](#)

Find support around alcohol and drugs, racism, mental health, and how to speak to your child about difficult topics on [the NSPCC website](#).



How to get a balanced view online



<https://vimeo.com/794802336/a1202c67a3?share=copy>



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Your right to withdraw

[Right to be excused from sex education \(commonly referred to as the right to withdraw\)](#)

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

Entitlement to withdraw

- Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of 'sex education' delivered as part of broader statutory RSE.
- The precise definition of sex education, and what is included, is determined by the school.
- Parents cannot withdraw their child from lessons on sexual reproduction and body development. Effectively biological content that could be taught within the science curriculum.

The school's responsibility

- The school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16.
- After the age of 16, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

The process and discussion

Head teachers should discuss with parents the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child. This could include any social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly said by the teacher (although the detrimental effects may be mitigated if the parents propose to deliver sex education to their child at home instead).

Schools will want to document this process to ensure a record is kept.



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Want to get in touch?

- If you have any thoughts or would like any further clarity on things, please don't hesitate to get in touch at:
- MHSinfo@Consilium-at.com



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