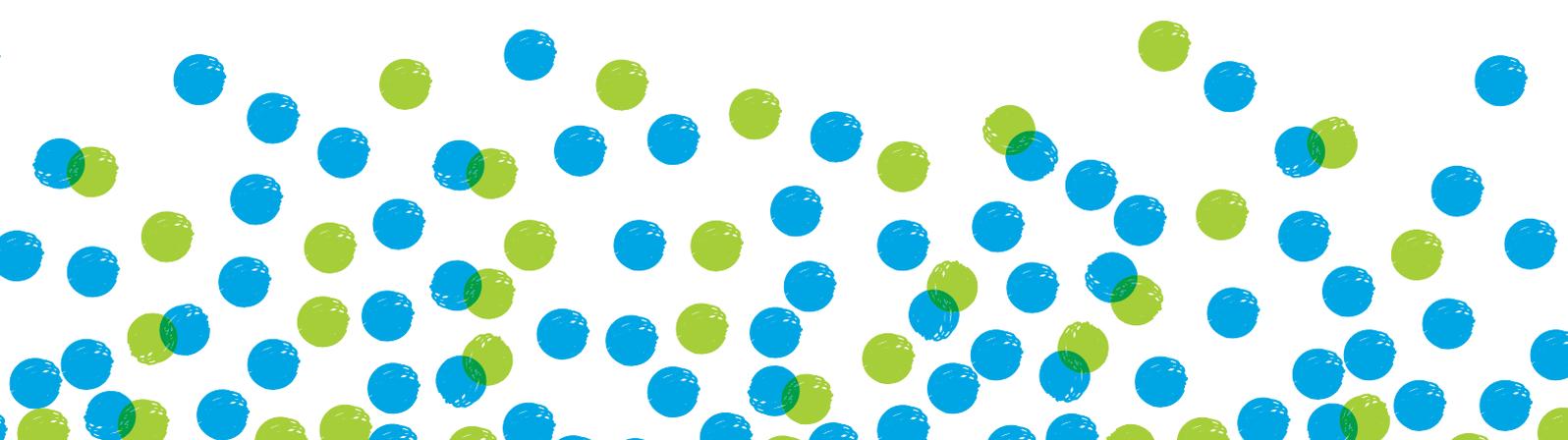


SRE Policy Guidance

**A step-by-step guide to updating
your school sex and relationships
education policy**



Introduction

This Sex Education Forum guidance is designed to support schools in reviewing and updating their policy on sex and relationships education (SRE). It explains the current requirements for SRE based on legislation and provides a step-by-step process for updating a primary or secondary school SRE policy. The third section explores key issues to be addressed in a SRE policy to help ensure good quality provision.

This publication has been produced and made available free of charge thanks to a commission from Leicestershire Healthy Schools, Public Health, Leicestershire County Council. A pack of SRE consultation activities is also available to complement this guidance.

Section 1. Current requirements

Does our school need to have a SRE policy?

Maintained primary and secondary schools are legally obliged to have an up-to-date SRE policy that describes the content and organisation of SRE taught outside science in the National Curriculum. This includes special schools. In primary schools if the decision is taken not to teach SRE beyond the National Curriculum this should also be documented in the policy. The policy should be made available to parents on request. It is the school governors' responsibility to ensure that the policy is developed and implemented.

It is good practice for academies, free schools, colleges and independent schools to have a policy on SRE. All state-funded schools must publish information in relation to each academic year, about the content of the school's curriculum for each subject, and this includes any teaching in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and SRE (See 2.5 in the [National Curriculum framework](#) (DfE 2013a) and Statutory Instrument 2012 No. 1124).

What aspects of SRE are compulsory?

The sex education contained in [National Curriculum science](#) (Key Stages 1–4) is compulsory in maintained schools. In maintained secondary schools it is also compulsory for pupils to have sex education that includes HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

All state-funded schools must have 'due regard' to the Secretary of State's [guidance on SRE](#) (DfEE, 2000). This states that:

- 'All children, including those who develop earlier than average, need to know about puberty before they experience the onset of physical changes' (1.13)
- Children should learn 'how a baby is conceived and born' before they leave primary school (1.16)

The guidance (1.18) states that secondary schools should:

- Teach about relationships, love and care and the responsibilities of parenthood as well as sex
- Ensure young people understand how the law applies to sexual relationships
- Link SRE with issues of peer pressure and other risk-taking behaviour, such as drugs, smoking and alcohol
- Provide young people with information about different types of contraception, safe sex and how they can access local sources of further advice and treatment.

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the model funding agreements for academies and free schools require that state-funded schools ensure that within sex education children 'learn the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and the bringing up of children', and 'are protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate'. The guidance includes some specific information about meeting the needs of young people, whatever their sexuality, including boys and girls and those with special educational needs. It also has advice about addressing specific issues in SRE such as menstruation, contraception, safer sex and abortion.

[SRE for the 21st Century](#) is Supplementary Advice to the government SRE guidance. It was produced in 2014 by Brook, the PSHE Association and the Sex Education Forum with the aim of supporting schools with issues that have arisen since 2000, such as safe use of online technology. It provides advice on specific issues including teaching about sexual consent, sexting, pornography, sexual exploitation, relationship violence and making SRE inclusive. It was produced independently of government, and the Department for Education has communicated to schools about the document saying that schools will welcome it.

How does SRE link to other curriculum requirements?

Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

This is stated in section 2.1 of the [National Curriculum framework](#) (DfE, 2013a) and relates to duties set out in the 2002 Education Act and the 2010 Academies Act. This gives schools a very clear remit to provide SRE and PSHE. Whole school (Section 5) Ofsted inspections consider the extent to which a school provides such a curriculum.

How does SRE relate to other statutory duties that schools must fulfil?

Safeguarding

SRE plays a very important part in fulfilling the statutory duties all schools have to meet. SRE helps children understand the difference between safe and abusive relationships and equips them with the skills to get help if they need it. State-funded schools have responsibilities for safeguarding and a legal duty to promote pupil well-being (Education and Inspections Act 2006 Section 38). Updated [government safeguarding guidance](#) is now available (Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2014a) and includes a section about being alert to signs that young girls may be at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM). School summer holiday especially during the transition from primary to secondary schools is thought to be a key risk time for FGM. See also the government [Multi-agency practice guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation \(2014\)](#) which includes a section for schools.

Equalities

The Equality Act 2010 covers the way the curriculum is delivered, as schools and other education providers must ensure that issues are taught in a way that does not subject pupils to discrimination. Schools have a duty under the Equality Act to ensure that teaching is accessible to all children and young people, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT). Inclusive SRE will foster good relations between pupils, tackle all types of prejudice – including homophobia – and promote understanding and respect. The Department for Education have produced advice on The Equality Act 2010 and schools (DfE 2014b).

What is the school's responsibility to parents?

The government guidance on SRE (DfEE 2000) emphasises the importance of schools working in partnership with parents. Under current legislation schools should enable parents to exercise their right to withdraw their children (until the age of 19) from any school SRE taught outside National Curriculum Science (Education Act 1996). This applies to maintained primary and secondary schools and includes pupils attending a sixth form that is part of a school. It does not apply to sixth form colleges and further education colleges.

Parents have a legal right to see the school SRE policy and to be given a copy of it (Education Act 1996). Parents should also be aware that schools are legally required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Sex and relationships topics can arise incidentally in other subjects and it is not possible to withdraw pupils from these relatively limited and often unplanned discussions.

Table 1. Summary of requirements for state-funded schools, from [SRE for the 21st Century](#) (2014).

ALL STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS		
	MAINTAINED SCHOOLS	ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS
WHOLE CURRICULUM	Must be balanced and broadly based, with a statutory duty to promote pupil wellbeing. Schools must publish details of their curriculum, including PSHE and SRE.	
PSHE	The Department for Education states that all schools should make provision for PSHE education, drawing on good practice. Schools are free to develop their own PSHE programme to reflect the needs of their pupils.	
SRE	It is compulsory for pupils in secondary education to have sex education that includes HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.	
SRE GUIDANCE	Any school that provides SRE has a statutory duty to have 'due regard' to the Secretary of State's Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (DfEE, 2000).	
NATIONAL CURRICULUM	Statutory sex education in science programmes of study at Key Stages 1 to 4.	
SRE POLICY	The Secretary of State's 2000 guidance states that all schools should have an up-to-date policy for SRE, which must be available for inspection and to parents/carers on request.	SRE policy advisable but not compulsory.

Young people's access to health services at school

A parent's choice to withdraw a child from SRE does not affect the child's right to use confidential health services provided at the school or elsewhere. For further information see the Sex Education Forum factsheet: [Confidentiality: promoting young people's sexual health and well-being in secondary schools](#) (2007).

What should be covered in a SRE policy?

Government guidance (2000) stipulates that the policy must:

- Define SRE
- Describe how SRE is provided and who is responsible for providing it
- Say how SRE is monitored and evaluated
- Include information about parents' right to withdrawal; and
- Be reviewed regularly

It is good practice for the SRE policy to be part of the PSHE education policy. In addition the Sex Education Forum recommends that the SRE policy includes:

- The aims of SRE in the school and how they are consistent with the values and ethos of the school
- The main elements of content by academic year
- Who teaches SRE and how they are supported through training
- How teachers, including support staff, are consulted and advised about the policy
- How SRE is timetabled
- How SRE is linked to other areas of the curriculum e.g. science, drama, citizenship
- Information about how SRE is assessed
- Choice of resources including any external visitors contributing to the SRE programme
- Terminology / language used in SRE e.g. that the correct medical vocabulary for parts of the body will be used throughout
- Details of how pupils and parents have been consulted about the school's SRE provision
- (Where relevant) how faith groups and diocesan boards of education have been consulted, advised and involved in developing the policy
- Information about how the needs of particular pupils will be met, for example boys, girls, pupils with special educational needs and disabilities
- How SRE provision is inclusive of all pupils and consistent with the equalities duties
- How to deal with disclosures; links to other relevant school policies including the confidentiality policy
- How progression is ensured between early years foundation stage – primary and primary – secondary
- The name of the governor(s) with responsibility for SRE

Why your policy and programme may need updating

Ofsted has found that SRE needed improvement in over a third of the primary and secondary schools they inspected to inform their report '[Not yet good enough; personal, social, health and economic education in schools](#)' (2013). In primary schools this was because too much emphasis was placed on friendships and relationships, leaving pupils ill-prepared for physical and emotional changes during puberty, which many begin to experience before they reach secondary school. Some primary schools failed to teach correct terms for sexual parts of the body.

In secondary schools the tendency was too much emphasis placed on 'the mechanics' of reproduction and too little on relationships, sexuality, the influence of pornography on students' understanding of healthy sexual relationships, dealing with emotions and staying safe.

Ofsted state that:

“Lack of high-quality, age-appropriate sex and relationships education in more than a third of schools is a concern as it may leave children and young people vulnerable to inappropriate sexual behaviours and sexual exploitation. This is because they have not been taught the appropriate language or developed the confidence to describe unwanted behaviours or know where to go to for help”. (2013)

Section 2. Step-by-step process for updating a SRE policy

Getting started on updating the policy

A good SRE policy will be the outcome of a process of reviewing SRE provision in consultation and discussion with parents, pupils, staff and governors.

It can be very helpful to establish a working group to take responsibility for updating the school's SRE policy. Membership could include the PSHE education coordinator, a parent/carer, the school nurse, a governor, a member of the senior management team (SMT), a teacher, a teaching assistant and pupils. This group will draw up a timetable for the development of a policy, identifying the working party's meetings, key tasks (with deadlines), and the proposed date of formal presentation and adoption by the governing body.

The step by step process could follow this pattern:

1. Form a small working group
2. Draw up timetable for updating the policy
3. Consider relevant national and local guidance (DfE, Ofsted, Public Health)
4. Consider any changes in school population or pupil needs (pupil needs assessment)
5. Audit current provision and policy and consider the results
6. Draft changes to the policy
7. Consult on draft (for example, discussion of a draft at parents/carers, staff, governors and school council meetings)
8. Finalise the draft
9. Present to governors to ratify and set review date
10. Present to parent/carers and put on school website
11. Policy implemented
12. Monitor policy against specific success criteria
13. Review policy in two–three years

To audit the current provision and policy the following tool can be used:

Table 2. Auditing tool for SRE/PSHE policy development and revision, adapted from [Laying the Foundations](#), Sex Education Forum (2013a).

Aspects of school life	What happens at present?	Response	Action to be taken
Pupil consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the school involve pupils to ensure that the policy and programme meet their needs? How are pupils' needs identified? Is this done regularly? 		
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the school have a PSHE and Citizenship coordinator? Is this the person responsible for SRE? Is there a named governor for SRE? Is there a budget to support the development of SRE? 		
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the school have an up-to-date SRE policy with the date it was agreed and a future review date printed on it? Is it part of the PSHE policy? Is the SRE policy linked to other relevant policies e.g. anti-bullying, child protection, safeguarding and confidentiality? Who is responsible for its implementation and review? Does it reflect statutory requirements and national guidance, including the government SRE guidance (2000)? Does it refer to local and national health and wellbeing priorities for children and young people? Is it reviewed regularly (every two to three years)? How is the policy communicated to children and parents/carers? Did Ofsted comment on the PSHE/SRE provision at the last inspection? 		
Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is SRE currently provided and to which year groups? Who teaches it? Are they trained in SRE? Is there a specialist SRE/PSHE team? How much time is allocated to SRE in each year? Is the programme up-to-date; does it address the issues raised in 'SRE for the 21st Century' (Supplementary Advice produced by Brook, PSHE Association and Sex Education Forum, 2014) What are the main resources used, including published schemes? Where else is SRE, in its broadest sense, covered in the curriculum? (Examples include: assembly, RE, science, literacy hour) Is pupil learning assessed and their progress reported to parents on a regular basis? How does SRE address the diverse needs of children in the school? How do you know the programme meets their needs? Is there an annual evaluation and review of the programme? 		

Aspects of school life	What happens at present?	Response	Action to be taken
Climate and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the school ensure SRE lessons are a safe and positive place to learn? • How is pupils', families' and teachers' privacy protected? • How is unacceptable language/behaviour challenged? 		
Parents and carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What mechanisms are in place for consulting with parents/carers? When are parents/carers invited in to school? • Is there support available for parents/carers, either directly or indirectly (for instance, the school nurse or leaflets) to help them talk to their children about puberty, sex and relationships? • Have any parents/carers withdrawn their children from SRE? If so why? How was this dealt with? • Is there alternative provision? 		
In-service education and training (INSET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What SRE training have staff received? • What whole-staff INSET is provided in school? • What opportunities are there for SRE teachers to meet together? • What training opportunities are there for non-teaching staff and governors? 		
Wider community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are outside visitors invited into school to contribute to the school SRE programme? • If yes, who are they? • Is there a protocol for the use of outside visitors? • Do pupils have access to information about external sources of information, advice and support? • Does the school nurse contribute in any way to the SRE programme? 		
Girls and menstruation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What provision is available in school for girls who are menstruating? • Are there dispensers/disposal facilities? • How are protocols regarding acquiring supplies/ accessing disposal facilities communicated to the children? 		

Section 3: Key issues to address in a SRE policy

A. Defining SRE and what it aims to achieve

The Sex Education Forum defines SRE as learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health.

The aim of SRE is to equip children and young people with the information, skills and values to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships, and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.

Misunderstanding about what SRE really involves can be a barrier for parents, governors and school staff. Schools may prefer to write their own definition – and to personalise the aims of SRE at the school to complement their school values and ethos. It is helpful to give examples of what is meant by some of the terms included in the definition, for example:

- **physical** development, for example how our reproductive systems work,
- **emotions**, like how to manage feelings, and
- the **social** side of it, such as positive and negative influences from friends.

A range of activities can be used with parents, governors and staff to explore what they think is and is not part of SRE, and to share ideas about what the school community wants SRE to achieve.

B. SRE as part of PSHE

SRE is an integral element of a broader developmental personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme.

Knowledge and understanding

In an integrated programme, the PSHE education curriculum also covers emotional health and well-being, drugs, healthy eating and physical activity, citizenship and safety. There are links between areas of knowledge and understanding in PSHE and SRE, for example in relation to alcohol and drugs and emotional health. The [PSHE Association Programme of Study for PSHE Education](#) (June 2014) explains what a full programme of study looks like in practice organised by Key Stage.

Learning in SRE and PSHE should be linked to the curriculum in relevant subjects, such as the ICT/computing curriculum, citizenship and religious education.

Skills

There is a common set of skills underpinning the topics in SRE and PSHE and it is therefore essential and good practice that teaching and learning about sex and relationships is planned and implemented within this broader framework rather than as a stand-alone subject. The PSHE Association programme of study includes a list of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and skills for enquiry which are developed across all aspects of PSHE.

Values and attitudes

Good quality SRE promotes the core values of respect, love and care. It also provides the opportunity for children and young people to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs and those of their peers and others. The process of values clarification and development is common across the broader subject of PSHE.

C. What to teach and when

Under the government Information Regulations (Statutory Instrument No.1124 2012) all state-funded schools must publish details on-line of the curriculum subjects taught with content by academic year. This is not limited to National Curriculum subjects so includes PSHE and SRE. The same outline of content of SRE can be included in the SRE policy.

The information below is an extract from the Sex Education Forum [curriculum design tool](#), which is a web-based tool providing detailed sets of questions to explore with pupils in SRE at each age and stage. The tool can be used to help review and develop the school SRE programme to ensure content is developmental from early primary through secondary education and beyond. The programme can then be summarised for the policy and web-site.

Primary

SRE needs to start early in primary school so that children learn about their bodies, can recognise if other people make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe and can report abuse and get help. Lots of children start puberty before they leave primary school so it is important that all pupils know what to expect before it happens.

It is good to have some SRE in every year of primary school as it helps pupils to learn progressively as they mature and revisit the subject on a regular basis, to reinforce learning and provide opportunities to ask further questions.

Age 3–6

At this age children are interested in the differences between boys and girls, naming body parts, where babies come from, and friends and family. What areas of the body are private and should not be touched and who they can talk to if they are worried are also important.

Age 7–8

At this age children are interested in the emotional and physical changes of growing up, similarities and differences between each other and between boys and girls, coping with strong emotions and how babies are made from eggs and sperm. How to look after our bodies and how to be safe and healthy are also important.

Age 9–10

At this age children are interested in knowing about love and the different kinds of families and will be more aware of different types of partnerships and relationships. Gender stereotypes and homophobia can be explained and challenged. They will be curious about puberty and sexual feelings and changing body image. They will want more details about conception, how babies develop and are born and why families are important for having babies.

They will also be interested in knowing about how people can get diseases, including HIV, from sex and how they can be prevented. They will also want to know who they can talk to if they want help or advice and information about growing up and personal safety including online.

Secondary

Teaching in secondary school should build on the learning at primary school. It is very helpful if primary schools work together to establish a benchmark for SRE provision and liaise with the local secondary schools to ensure that this learning will be built on developmentally.

Age 11–13

Most young people will be going through puberty and will be interested in hormones, how they will be affected by them, the menstrual cycle, wet dreams, erections, fertility, pregnancy – how it can be avoided, and safer sex. They may also be wondering if their physical development is 'normal'.

Young teens also want to know about the difference between sexual attraction and love and whether it is usual to be attracted or in love with someone of the same sex. Young people will be asking questions about relationships, when is the right time to have sex, how to avoid pressure, and where they can get more information if they need it, including the best websites. Identifying how prejudice operates and being able to play a part in stopping prejudice based on gender identity and sexual orientation is also important.

Age 14–16

At this age young people want to know about different types of relationships. They may want to know about how to cope with strong feelings and how to cope with the pressures to have sex. They will be interested to know what they should expect of a partner and how to talk to them. They will need more information on contraception, sexual health and how to access services. They may ask questions about parenthood and may like to know how they can talk to their own parents or a trusted adult.

Most young people will not have sexual intercourse until they are at least 16 but statistics show that about a quarter of young people will have had sexual intercourse by the time they are 16.

Learning about sex and relationships is a life-long process and the transition from secondary school to sixth form or further education can be a very significant time in terms of young people's personal development and relationships. Most young people first have sex aged 16 or above, and experiences of non-volitional sex (sex against someone's will) are particularly prevalent in the 16–18 age-group (Macdowall, 2013). It is therefore very important that SRE continues post-16.

Age 16+

At this age young people are at the legal age of consent and many, but not all, will be in intimate relationships and will be interested to know about the challenges of long-term commitments and the qualities needed for successful loving relationships. They will be interested in what issues can be difficult to talk about in intimate relationships, for example sexual pleasure and contraception and how this can be addressed.

They will be interested to know more about being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Young people at this age will need more information on sexual risk, pregnancy, sexual health, fertility and infertility. They will be keen to discuss gender stereotyping, violence, exploitation, the law, and discrimination. Learning about the relationship between self esteem and body image and how to challenge negative messages from peers, the media and society is also important.

See the Sex Education Forum [curriculum design tool](#) for detailed sets of questions to explore with pupils in SRE at each age and stage.

[SRE for the 21st Century](#) (Brook, PSHE Association, Sex Education Forum 2014) provides advice on teaching about sexual consent, sexting, pornography, sexual exploitation, relationship violence and making SRE inclusive.

It is also essential to consult pupils to ensure the curriculum meets their particular needs. Pupils can help to prioritise which questions they want to explore in curriculum time. Prioritising will help if there is insufficient time to cover everything and will show up topical issues that may be of concern to pupils at a particular time. It can also be particularly helpful in planning for SRE with young people aged 16 and above when curriculum time is often most limited.

Check-list

- Have SRE learning outcomes been set for each year group in the school?
- Is there enough time allocated specifically for SRE?
- Do teaching objectives balance; knowledge and understanding, exploring values and attitudes and developing skills?
- Is there balance between content on relationships, and the biology of sex?
- Is there flexibility to respond to the changing needs of pupils, for example new topics identified through question boxes or pupil consultation?
- Does the curriculum include opportunities for pupils to explore SRE topics with parents / carers at home?
- Do local schools communicate to ensure curriculum progression from primary to secondary school?
- Are links made with other subjects so that learning is rich and relevant?
- Is the biological aspect of sex education adequately covered in science?

D. Sex education in National Curriculum science

Maintained primary and secondary schools must teach the National Curriculum, which includes some sex education within science. The new [National Curriculum for Key Stages 1–3](#) applies from September 2014 (with some exceptions) (2013b). GCSE subject content for [biology](#) and [combined science](#) has now been finalized (DfE 2014c and d). At the time of writing, a draft Key Stage 4 science programme of study has been published for consultation and will be published by the end of 2014 with first teaching from September 2016. During Key Stage 4 most pupils work towards national qualifications – usually GCSEs.

Primary science includes pupils learning about parts of the body, growth, reproduction, life cycles and ageing; they should also learn about the changes experienced in puberty (year 5). The programmes of study are set out year by year, but content may be introduced earlier if relevant to the pupils' needs.

Year 1 science includes pupils being taught to 'identify, name, draw and label the basic parts of the human body'. Although not mentioned specifically, it is important that pupils are taught the names of the external genitalia and know the differences between boys and girls. This is vital for safeguarding so that a child has language to describe the private parts of their body and to seek help if they are abused. Ofsted has raised concerns about primary schools failing to teach correct names for sexual parts of the body.

In secondary school the new National Curriculum science includes, at Key Stage 3:

'reproduction in humans (as an example of a mammal), including the structure and function of the male and female reproductive systems, menstrual cycle (without details of hormones), gametes, fertilisation, gestation and birth, to include the effect of maternal lifestyle on the foetus through the placenta'

There is no specific mention of sexual health in the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 or below. However, our correspondence with DfE has confirmed that: "while the new draft curriculum focuses on core science, we expect teachers will cover sexual health when they teach about reproduction" (Letter to the Sex Education Forum, 9 August 2013). This means it is acceptable to introduce content, for example about hormones, from Key Stage 4 and GCSE studies at an earlier stage.

A briefing setting out the full sex education content within the programme of study (PoS) for science in the new National Curriculum (NC) at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and in the GCSE subject content for single and combined science is available for members of the Sex Education Forum.

E. Timetable time

Good quality SRE requires sufficient time: for planning, delivery and evaluation. A timetabled SRE programme, with clear learning outcomes ensures regular and repeated input that builds year on year. Some considerations to support effective timetabling for SRE are:

- Will the timing complement that of other subjects including sex education taught in science?
- Does the timing clash with other activities, which might result in some pupils being absent from the lesson?
- Is there time for end-of-year assessment and reporting?

In addition to timetabled lessons SRE can be enriched by extra-curricular activities and special events such as theatre-in-education performances. The timing of these activities should be planned to complement timetabled lessons.

F. Consulting pupils

Asking children their views on SRE gives them an opportunity to be active citizens and ensures that teaching can meet the specific needs of the children it is aimed at. Findings from consulting pupils are also a powerful tool for communicating the needs of children to parents, school staff and governors. Ofsted seek the views of pupils as part of their inspections and rate PSHE as outstanding (2013) when there is bespoke support for SRE for pupils in challenging circumstances and for children with special educational needs. By making pupil consultation part of school culture there will be ongoing evidence showing how pupils' needs are being identified and met.

Pupil consultation can take the form of discussions with small groups of pupils, run as a focus group or part of a school council meeting. This can be complemented with full class consultation activities which ensure all pupils have a voice in the process.

Suggested questions to ask pupils:

- Where do you get information about your body, growing up, relationships and feelings?
- Does what is taught in school at the moment answer all of your questions?
- What would you like more information on?
- Do you feel able to ask for support and advice?
- Do you feel confident talking about feelings and emotions?
- Do you feel safe to learn in SRE lessons?
- Do the activities used in lessons help you to learn?
- What do you think would improve SRE in our school?

The Sex Education Forum has produced a pair of toolkits containing activities for use as full class consultation exercises. See also accompanying '[SRE policy consultation activities](#)' for a selection of consultation activities.

- *Let's get it right; a toolkit for involving primary school children in reviewing sex and relationships education* (2013b).
- *Are you getting it right; a toolkit for consulting young people on sex and relationships education* (2008) Available to download from the [Sex Education Forum web-site](#).

G. Involving parents

It is good practice to involve parents and carers from the outset in the development of the policy. Schools have a vital role in building partnerships with parents and carers to support children and young people in effective learning, and this includes SRE. Schools that have worked in partnership with parents and carers have found that this process helps to allay parents' fears about the content and purpose of SRE.

It can work well to inform parents about their right to withdraw as part of broader communications about SRE or PSHE. It is advisable to give parents the facility to opt out (not to opt in). Remember that only a minority of parents are likely to consider opting out.

In the rare cases that parents opt out of SRE, schools are strongly encouraged to offer further dialogue, either by letter or at a meeting. Parents should be encouraged to provide SRE at home if they choose to withdraw their child. It is good practice for schools to offer to support parents opting out of school SRE, for example with copies of materials used with pupils in school.

A combination of the following methods can be used to involve parents in reviewing the SRE policy.

1. Send the draft policy out to all parents by email, letter or posted on the school website and invite feedback and comments. Asking specific questions will make it easier for parents to respond.
2. Invite parents to a meeting about the policy. This will provide more time to explore what SRE really is and for facilitated activities that help parents to reflect on what kind of SRE they want for their children.
3. Recruit a group of parents (e.g. an existing group of parent helpers) to be a 'task force' and carry out a consultation on the policy. For example, a table could be set up in the playground at 'home time' or during a parents' evening so that the task force can ask other parents one to one about their views on the school policy.
4. Sharing material created by pupils in SRE lessons with parents is a great way to capture attention and gain support. This could take the form of questions asked by pupils that have been posted in an anonymous question box as part of a needs assessment. This will show parents the kind of questions that children of a particular age want to ask.

The case study below shows how gathering pupil views and then sharing them with parents provided the focus and starting point for a review of a primary school's SRE policy.

Case study: Consulting parents about the SRE policy

The first step in updating the SRE policy at Holy Family Primary School in Birmingham was to inform parents and invite their input. The school also wanted to get the views of children across all year groups. Parents gave permission for their children to be involved in the focus groups. Children were asked about their knowledge on topics such as growing up and where they got their information. The school then arranged a parents' discussion group and shared what the children had said and explained the legal responsibilities that schools and parents have for SRE. The views of parents and children were shared with staff and a new policy was then written with support from the Birmingham Health Education Service. This will be shared with governors for their approval.

For more information on involving parents in SRE see ['Let's work together – A practical guide for schools to involve parents and carers in SRE'](#) (2013c).

H. How SRE is taught: learning environment, language and resources

Teaching skills

The best resource for good quality SRE is a specially trained educator. Key characteristics of outstanding PSHE identified by Ofsted (2013; Not yet good enough) emphasise the importance of specialists for the subject – and rate the quality of teaching as outstanding if teachers have excellent subject knowledge and skills, demonstrated, for example by: "effective use of questioning to challenge pupils' views, deepen thinking and support pupils of different abilities" (Ofsted, 2013). The quality of SRE will benefit from schools' creating a specialist SRE/PSHE team or identifying a specialist lead teacher.

The SRE policy should state who teaches SRE and how they will be supported through training and continuing professional development. The Sex Education Forum [events and training diary](#) provides an up-to-date list of SRE related training opportunities available from a wide range of organizations.

Learning environment

Ofsted has identified that an emotionally safe and secure learning environment is a feature of outstanding PSHE (2013). Use of a working agreement or ground rules is an essential technique to help create and maintain a safe learning environment, and can also be a useful activity in itself. See for example these tips on setting up working agreements from 'Let's get it right' (Sex Education Forum, 2013b):

For younger pupils a circle time activity can be used to develop ground rules. For example, pupils are asked to name a game they like to play and then imagining an alien has landed on earth. How would the alien know how to play the game and what rules apply? Go round the circle naming rules from the game, and then discuss what it feels like when someone does not follow the rules. Why are rules helpful? This then leads into ground rules for when the children are learning together in SRE. Makaton and pictures can be used to support written ground rules.

For older pupils, put pupils into groups, give everyone a card or sticky note and ask them to write down one rule that would make them feel more comfortable working together in SRE lessons. Pupils then discuss in their groups and prioritise the rules. Each group puts forward 3–5 rules on a large sheet of paper displayed for everyone to discuss. From these suggestions hold a class vote.

Once a working agreement has been made it should be referred back to and displayed during SRE lessons. An effective working agreement or set of ground rules will contain the elements shown below – in language that is age appropriate and formulated (as far as possible) as positive behaviours.

Example of a working agreement

We will try:

- To be kind to each other
- To listen to each other
- To respect our rights to share different views
- To take care with information we share about ourselves
- To remember that we can always ask about things in private with an adult in school, but the adult may have to share information if they are worried about our safety
- Not to ask personal questions

Pupils may suggest confidentiality as part of the ground rules, proposing that 'what is said in the class should stay in the class'. In reality this is not feasible. Instead, talk to pupils about personal boundaries, what information is private and how to protect their own and others' privacy.

Check: are ground rules in place and actively referred to?

Language and terminology

SRE has a vital role to play in helping children develop a vocabulary they can use to communicate comfortably, respectfully and accurately about the human body, growing up, sex and relationships. This is only possible if adults teaching SRE are able to model use of this type of vocabulary. Teachers may choose to plan vocabulary lists for each lesson or unit of SRE and may also share the list with parents in advance of teaching.

It is good practice to use medically correct terms for genitalia and sexual parts of the body, for example vulva, vagina, penis and testicles. Ofsted provides full support for this approach (2013) and have raised concerns that some primary schools are currently failing to teach this vocabulary because this leaves children unable to describe abusive behaviours.

The use of respectful language which challenges sexism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice can be established in SRE and will have benefits for the whole school community – both in and out of lessons. Ofsted found that casual use of homophobic language in schools is often unchallenged (2013). Children and primary and secondary level need to know that using the word 'gay', to mean something is rubbish is and wrong.

See also '[The LGBT Issue](#)' e-magazine for inclusive SRE and challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia (Sex Education Forum, 2014).

Check: does the policy explain that correct medical terms for genitalia and sexual parts of the body will be used?

Classroom resources

Ofsted identifies a feature of outstanding PSHE as the use of a 'range of well-chosen and imaginative resources to support learning, such as case studies, scenarios, visual images and video clips with thought-provoking messages'.

Use of a range of resources e.g. images, 3-D models, stories and games can enhance and enrich SRE. The school policy does not need to list every resource used in the SRE programme but should be clear about the criteria used for resource selection. For example, resources should support inclusion in terms of the range of people and relationships they portray and must contain medically correct facts.

The Sex Education Forum recommend working through the following questions when choosing and using a resource:

Choosing a resource

- Individual resources may not meet all the above criteria but the programme should aim to use resources which, used together, promote inclusive SRE
- Is the resource consistent with the values set out in the school SRE policy?
- Is it factually correct and up-to-date?
- Does it encourage active and participatory learning?
- Is the resource contemporary in terms of the realities of children and young people's lives?
- Does the resource portray positive images of a range of children and young people?
- Does the resource show positive role models for girls and boys / women and men and avoid stereotypes relating to gender and sexual orientation?
- Is the resource inclusive on the basis of home and family circumstance, gender, sexuality, race, faith, culture and disability?
- Is it appropriate for the age, ability and maturity of the children and young people?
- Have resources been evaluated by children and young people and feedback acted upon?
- Have parents and carers been consulted about resources?
- Are teachers confident about using the resource?

Using a resource

- Will the resource be used in its entirety or will it be more appropriate to adapt it and select from it?
- Does use of the resource fit into a planned and developmental programme of SRE?
- Is there a range of types of resource being used across the SRE programme including a variety of formats such as video, audio, visual, games, and models?

Check: Does the SRE policy identify the key resources and criteria for selection? Does it name the teaching staff involved in SRE?

Role of the school nurse

- The extent to which the school nurse contributes to SRE will depend in part on capacity and local resources. School nurses can most effectively support SRE by:
- Introducing themselves in person to all pupils, for example by visiting a year group assembly or SRE lesson
- Supporting teachers with suitable vocabulary and resources
- Helping primary schools with the timing and content of puberty education
- Checking that sexual health information is up-to-date, medically accurate and comprehensive
- Informing curriculum planning by feeding back (anonymously) the common questions and concerns raised by pupils one-to-one with the school nurse

If the school nurse is unable to contribute directly to SRE then it is important that the curriculum includes learning about what services the school nurse or other local services provide and how they can be accessed including details about confidentiality.

These tips can be found in '[Developing strong relationships and supporting sexual health](#)' (2014).

Check: Does the policy mention the school nurse and their role in SRE?

External visitors

External visitors contributing to SRE could include school nurses, youth workers, peer educators, theatre-in-education companies, staff from local sexual health or domestic violence charities, members of a faith or community group. If external visitors contribute to SRE they should be selected because they have the right skills and experience to make a unique contribution and add value. An external visitor should not be used as a substitute for a teacher. They should also comply with the school policy on confidentiality. Ultimately schools are responsible for providing a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. The Sex Education Forum has produced [guidance on external visitors and SRE](#).

Check: Does the policy specify who, what and how external visitors contribute to SRE?

I. How SRE is monitored, evaluated and assessed

Monitoring, evaluation and assessment can easily get confused:

Monitoring is an ongoing process that checks the degree to which a programme, course or scheme of work is being effectively implemented. Monitoring answers the questions:

- Is the programme effectively managed and are staff clear about their roles and responsibilities?
- Does the planned programme reflect national guidance, local priorities and pupils' needs?
- Are all pupils being taught the programme as planned?
- Is the quality of teaching consistent across all classes and does it exemplify best practice?

These questions can be answered by having systems in place to record pupil attendance in SRE lessons, effective PSHE leadership with a system of lesson observations and peer support and a system for regular review of the SRE policy and programme including looking at staff records and samples of pupils' work.

Evaluation is the process that measures whether the lesson or unit of work is effective and worthwhile. The assessment of pupil learning will contribute to the lesson/unit evaluation. Evaluation answers the questions:

- Has this lesson or unit enabled the pupils to learn what was intended?
- Does it meet the needs of the pupils?
- What do we think of it? (teachers and pupils)
- What are its good and bad points?
- Do we need to modify it in any way to improve it?

These questions can be answered by both structured and informal pupil and staff feedback in the form of:

- Teacher evaluation of lessons, units and the overall SRE programme
- evidence from lesson observations
- evaluation of contributions of external partners
- feedback and evaluation by pupils
- scrutiny of assessment records
- sampling pupils' work and portfolios

Evaluation is a means of improving provision and raising standards. Evaluation helps to identify issues for development and can prompt a review process and this may result in changes to the SRE programme or policy.

Assessment is the process by which an individual pupil's achievements are measured against the lesson objectives. Assessment plays a key role in effective SRE teaching and learning. Assessment is a process through which judgements are made about an individual's learning and development. It is not about making judgements on the character, worth or values of individual pupils, nor is it about continual testing.

Ofsted highlight features of assessment in outstanding PSHE as follows:

"Assessment tasks are built into schemes of work and pupils have a clear idea of their progress. Work is marked regularly and includes helpful comments about how to improve. This monitoring of progress is appropriate to the activity and used to identify pupils who may benefit from additional support or intervention.

An example of outstanding practice in assessment is a secondary school that uses a wide range of methods, including project work; tests; written assignments; accredited courses; students' pre- and post-unit self-evaluations; and reflective logbooks to record progress in students' community activities." (2013)

Teachers should not rely entirely on pupil self-assessment, which should be supported by evidence of achievement. Although there is no attainment target for PSHE education, end of Key Stage Statements for **primary** and **secondary** were developed by QCDA to help teachers assess progress. These statements can be used to plan PSHE education programmes. The PSHE Association has also produced a Framework for PSHE education. Leicestershire Healthy Schools will shortly be publishing a new PSHE toolkit to update 'Making it work: a toolkit for schools' (2008).

Needs assessment or needs identification has a particular function which is to indicate the existing knowledge and skills of pupils. This enables a teacher to plan a programme that is relevant to the group and builds on prior learning. It also serves as a baseline against which future progress may be assessed. Needs assessment information from pupils can be gathered using techniques such as 'Draw and Write' activities, mind maps, values continuums and quizzes.

Assessment for learning enables pupils to understand what they are intended to learn, how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Assessment for learning is built into the learning cycle and encourages the pupil to participate actively in the learning **process**. It involves first sharing the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the programme with pupils and discussing what will be assessed, then providing pupils with a combination of feedback on their performance and enabling pupils to self-assess their performance in relation to agreed criteria. For assessment to be effective it must be planned. Also known as formative assessment.

Reflection

The learning cycle in Figure 1 is a reminder of the importance of reflection in the learning process.

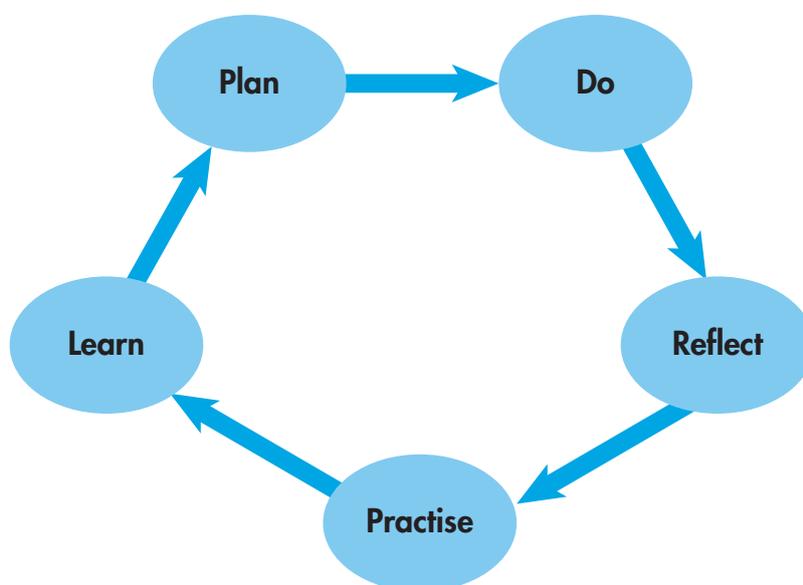


Figure 1: The learning cycle

The following are examples of questions that can be used with pupils to support the reflection stage and to develop pupil understanding of what they have learned and the progress they have made. This is an extract from *Assessment, evaluation and SRE (2012)* – See full details below:

- What new information have I learnt?
- What do I now think and believe?
- Has listening to the views of others changed my views and/or beliefs?
- Did it help me confirm what I really believe?
- Did I learn anything I did not expect to?
- How will it change my behaviour in the future?
- What do I know already?
- How did I feel about what I found out?
- What feelings did I have during the session?
- What do I now need to learn?
- Is there anyone else I need to talk to about this?

Individual responses could be recorded in a logbook or a diary.

Assessment of learning takes place at the **end** of a unit of work or academic year. It involves judging the pupils' performance against the learning outcomes of the programme or unit of work, using a variety of evidence; written, verbal, visual and observed. Examples include review sheets, written tasks and presentations. The evidence can contribute to the pupil's record of achievement and should also be the basis of reports to parents/carers. Also known as summative assessment.

Assessment checklist

- *Is needs assessment used to identify existing knowledge and skills of pupils?*
- *Is assessment built into the SRE programme and is this stated in the policy?*
- *Is there over-reliance on pupil self-assessment?*
- *Does assessment focus purely on knowledge or does it include skills development and attitudes?*
- *Is pupil progress and achievement reported to parents/carers?*
- *Is pupil achievement in SRE celebrated and shared?*

'*Assessment, evaluation and SRE*' (2012) is a practical guide for schools published by the National Children's Bureau, with a pack of activities for use with Key Stages 1–4.

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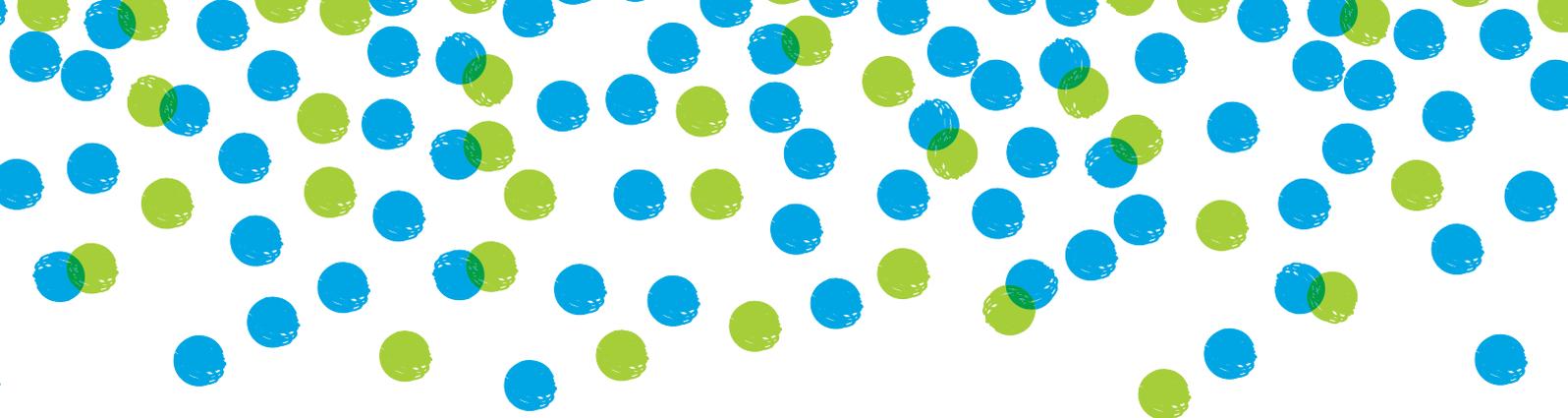
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