

## Producing your school's sex and relationships education policy

*The aim of this document is to help schools to produce their sex and relationships education (SRE) policy. It should be read alongside the [Secretary of State's 2000 guidance on SRE](#) which schools must have regard to when putting together such a policy. The Sex Education Forum (SEF) provides comprehensive information and guidance for schools developing their curriculum. We strongly recommend that colleagues familiarise themselves with the resource on [the SEF website](#).*

### Introduction

All maintained secondary schools in England have a statutory requirement to teach a programme of sex education including work on HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. All maintained schools, including primary schools, are also required to have a policy – even if (in Key Stages 1 and 2) that policy is to have no programme beyond the science national curriculum.

Academies are in a slightly different position, and the table below illustrates the differences between the current legal status of SRE in maintained schools and academies.

Maintained schools	Academies
Must have regard to SRE Guidance 2000	Must have regard to SRE Guidance 2000
Sex education is compulsory as part of the statutory science curriculum	Sex education is not compulsory
Required to have an up-to-date policy on SRE	There is no requirement for a policy on SRE but where there is a policy it should be produced with regard to statutory guidance

This document aims to help schools to create a draft policy. It is essential to make this draft document available for consultation to the parent and student body, professional colleagues and school governors. However, consultation is not the same as negotiation and it is virtually impossible to meet the values or viewpoints of everyone in the school community.

The more transparent, and the greater the engagement of the school community in the process of writing the policy the better. However, the school's governing body ultimately holds the final responsibility for the policy and the subsequent learning in the curriculum.

As a minimum, the policy should:

- set out an agreed approach to SRE in the curriculum and can act as a management tool to help in future decision-making.

- offer a whole school statement of intent or beliefs through the *aims* of SRE
- clarify the school's intended outcomes through the *objectives* of SRE
- inform and reflect practice by detailing the range of issues covered and methodology used to enable learning in SRE.

The policy will be used by:

- teachers, who will look to it to guide their lesson planning and to put boundaries around the issues they can explore with children and young people, and the range of ways that these can be explored
- parents, who will look to see both the SRE curriculum content and the values the school is promoting
- health professionals, visiting speakers and so on, who will want to know the aims, objectives and values the school's SRE promotes, agreed teaching methodologies and boundaries for their work with young people
- partner schools, who will want to know the school's approach to SRE so they can plan their curriculum in a way that ensures continuity of values and progression in learning.

As you work through the key questions in the framework below, a draft of your policy should form. There may be other areas we have not considered that are important to you in the context of your school and your community – please feel free to edit or add to it as you feel appropriate.

### Confidentiality and support services

Many schools will have a separate confidentiality policy. This defines what teachers and other adults working in the school can and cannot keep confidential. It is essential that confidentiality is discussed with pupils so that everyone understands these boundaries. No one working with children can agree confidentiality if a child is thought to be at risk. If your school does not have a confidentiality policy it is essential that the boundaries of confidentiality are made clear in your sex and relationships policy.

Any 'visitor' to the classroom is bound by your school's policy on confidentiality, regardless of whether they or their organisation has a different policy. It is therefore important to make sure visitors are aware of this and to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for pupils to access confidential support after the lesson if this is needed. The school should ensure that pupils know where to get help on personal concerns such as abuse and sexual health both inside and outside the school. The SRE policy should therefore be closely aligned to the school's safeguarding policy.

### The interaction between PSHE education and other subjects

While much of the sex and relationships education pupils receive will take place in PSHE lessons, it is important that this learning is linked to broader school policies and the curriculum in relevant subjects. A commitment to equality, for example, must run through the life of the school rather than there being the view that this is a 'topic' which can be covered in PSHE alone.

In addition to the SRE covered in PSHE education, for example, there is also work in the science national curriculum that covers basic human biology and is still statutory in maintained schools. PSHE education is where young people have the opportunity to consider what this knowledge and understanding means to them and to develop the skills and strategies they will need to apply this knowledge in their lives.

For example, science will teach about conception and perhaps contraception. PSHE education will explore what lifestyle choices young people may wish to make, and having made those choices what language, strategies and skills they need to stay healthy and safe. It is unlikely that science will directly teach assertiveness or, should they one day wish to become sexually active, how to negotiate contraception with a partner.

There may also be relevant learning in other subjects such as Citizenship or Religious Education in relation to the law of the land and the views of religious and secular groups on matters such as abortion and same-sex relationships.

It is also very important to make links with the ICT/Computing curriculum. As part of SRE it is important that pupils recognise ways they could put themselves at risk through the use of technology. These can include risks to their emotional and physical wellbeing and safety and their personal reputation. It is important to explore the risks, the law as it pertains to the sharing and downloading of images and information and safe ways of sharing personal information, social networking, online dating and sharing images.

### **Supporting pupils and parents through a high-quality SRE programme**

SRE has in the past been considered to be a ‘sensitive’ element of the PSHE curriculum, but the majority of pupils and parents now expect it to be part of the curriculum and to be taught with due regard to the age and maturity of the pupils just like any other element of the PSHE curriculum. It is worth considering that:

- The majority of parents are very supportive of SRE: A 2013 [NAHT](#) survey found that 88% of the parents of school-aged pupils polled want SRE to be compulsory
- A [YouGov](#) poll in May 2013 found that 86% of UK adults believe that SRE “which addresses sexual consent and respectful relationships” should be compulsory in secondary schools. 83% of parents said they had sufficient confidence in schools' ability to help their children understand the dangers specifically associated with pornography and that they believed teachers were as important as parents in handling the issue. Just 13% thought it should be left to parents alone to educate children about pornography.

This being said, parents still have the legal right to withdraw their children from all or part of any SRE provided, with the exception of the biological aspects necessary under national curriculum science. Many schools have considered how they can support parents who exercise this right by offering material to enable them to undertake this learning at home and this should be covered in your SRE policy.

### **Ensuring you meet legislative requirements through your SRE policy**

Under the Education Act 2002/Academies Act 2010 all schools must provide a balanced and broadly-based curriculum which:

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

SRE is set within a wider legislative context. The 2006 Education and Inspections Act laid a duty on Governing Bodies ‘to promote the well-being of pupils at the school’. The duty came into effect in September 2007. Since that date, an equivalent requirement has been placed on new academies through their funding agreements.

Governing bodies also have wider responsibilities under equalities legislation (most recently the Equalities Act 2010) and should ensure that their school strives to do the best for all of the pupils, irrespective of disability, educational needs, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender identity, pregnancy, maternity, religion or sexual orientation or whether they are looked after children. This means that sex and relationships education must be sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils and may need to evolve and adapt over time as the pupil population changes. At all times the overarching principle is to ensure the present and future wellbeing of pupils and to meet their learning needs. It is also crucial for lessons to help children to realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

We teach in one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. In a class we may have pupils from a wide variety of cultures and with a wide variety of faiths. These cultures and faiths often hold views, perhaps strong views, about sexual behaviour. It is essential that any school policy is sensitive to these views but must ensure that pupils have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals. This should include clear, impartial scientific information on matters such as abortion as well as covering the law in relation to, for example, forced-marriage and female genital mutilation. It should also cover the concept of, and legislation relating to, equality. As set out above, schools like all public institutions have specific responsibilities in relation to equality and protected characteristic groups. It is important that SRE caters for all pupils and is respectful of how pupils choose to identify themselves, understanding that depending on their age and maturity, their sexual orientation and gender identity may be 'emerging'. This means that sex and relationships education must be sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils and may need to evolve and adapt over time.

### **Drafting your SRE policy**

When drafting your SRE policy, it is crucial to recognise that in maintained schools the policy is the statutory responsibility of the school's governing body, and should be produced in consultation with the parent body to reflect the values of the community (unlike other areas of the taught curriculum, which are the responsibility of teachers or prescribed by the national curriculum, in maintained schools the governing body is responsible for this area of the curriculum). A teacher who teaches within the boundaries of their school's policy is fully protected under law.

While academies are not statutorily required to have an SRE policy, our strong advice would be to keep a document that sets out clearly to the entire school community the school's approach to SRE and that this approach is fully endorsed by the academy's governing body. In both maintained schools and academies, this policy should be available to the school community.

Before starting to draft your policy it is worth spending a little time considering key questions:

- What values will underpin your school's policy?
- What will be the aims and outcomes of your provision?

It is impossible for education to be 'value free'. Simply giving curriculum time to a topic demonstrates that you and your school deem it important. Any policy must work for your school, but it is important to make sure that both the universal and the unique needs and wellbeing of students drive the policy, rather than the professional or personal comfort of the adults.

As stated earlier, schools are statutorily required to *provide a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes the physical, moral, social, spiritual and cultural development of young people and to prepare young people for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life.*

It is therefore important to reflect on:

- the moral context of the school, and the values it promotes and models through its culture and ethos
- the learning experiences that help young people develop their own set of moral values, which may include pupils reflecting on a variety of different issues, viewpoints, dilemmas, situations and case studies
- how the school enables young people to develop the language, strategies, skills and confidence required to behave according to their moral values in new situations.

Once you have thought this through, you should begin to write your SRE policy. The table below provides headings and prompts which you may find helpful. In drawing up the policy you should refer throughout to the [Secretary of State for Education's 2000 guidance on sex and relationships education](#).

*For further support and training in developing your SRE policy, please [join the PSHE Association](#) and then [contact us](#) to discuss the further help we can offer.*

Key question	Considerations	Some possible openings.
<b>Basic information</b>	<p>What does this policy cover? What is its scope?</p> <p>Who was involved in its production?</p> <p>Who was consulted and how?</p> <p>When will it be reviewed?</p>	<p>This policy covers our school's approach to...</p> <p>It was produced by...</p> <p>Through consultation with...</p> <p>It will be reviewed in...</p>
<b>How will the policy be made available to parents?</b>	<p>How will parents know about and be able to access the policy?</p> <p>For example, you may want to refer to the policy in the school's prospectus and make a physical copy of the policy available at some location in the school.</p> <p>If a policy is to be truly accessible it also needs to be written in a way that all parents can understand, regardless of ability and language. Might it need translation(s)?</p>	<p>Parents will be informed about the policy through...</p> <p>The policy will be available to parents through...</p>
<b>What are your overall school aims and objectives?</b>	<p>All policies should be informed by your school's overall aims and objectives. How will these inform practice in teaching sex and relationships education in your school?</p>	<p>Our school's overarching aims and objectives for our pupils are...</p>
<b>Rationale – why are we teaching this?</b>	<p>What is 'sex and relationships education'? How do we define it in our school context?</p> <p>Why do we feel it is important to address this?</p> <p><i>This is where working with health professionals can help to identify both:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the universal entitlement of young people to learning that will enable them to live safe, fulfilled and healthy lives, and</i></li> <li>• <i>the contribution the programme makes to protecting children and young people by addressing specific national and local health priorities.</i></li> </ul>	<p>We define 'sex and relationships education' as...</p> <p>We consider that it includes...</p> <p>We believe it is important to address this area of the curriculum because...</p>

	<p>What are we statutorily required to teach? It is important for different audiences to understand that aspects of sex and relationships education are a statutory entitlement for young people at key stages 3 and 4.</p>	<p>We are required to teach...</p>
	<p>What does 'sex and relationships education' mean in our school and for pupils of this age?</p> <p><i>For example, in key stage 1 it would include laying foundations of understanding about growth and change and respect for one another; in key stage 2 it might be preparation for the changes of puberty; while in key stages 3 and 4 it provides a comprehensive body of knowledge and understanding about sexual health to manage fertility and avoid infection.</i></p>	<p>We believe it is important to address sex and relationships education in this age group because...</p>
<p><b>What values will we promote?</b></p>	<p>What values will underpin our work in this area of the curriculum? How do these link to <i>our school's overall values</i>? Statutory guidance refers to schools teaching about '<i>the importance of stable relationships</i>', '<i>marriage</i>' and '<i>family life</i>'. What does this mean in the context of your school and your community?</p>	<p>Our programme promotes the values of...</p>
<p><b>What are the aims and objectives of our programme?</b></p>	<p>What are we ultimately aiming to achieve through our sex and relationships education provision? What are our objectives (what are we setting out to achieve)? How does this relate to our wider PSHE education provision and the wider curriculum?</p>	<p>Our programme aims to...</p> <p>... with the learning objectives of...</p>
<p><b>What are our intended outcomes?</b></p>	<p>What will be the learning outcomes for pupils (what will they be able to demonstrate) from taking part in our sex and relationships education programme?</p>	<p>The learning outcomes of our programme will be that pupils will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• know and understand...</li> <li>• be able to say and do...</li> <li>• understand they have a right to...</li> <li>• understand they have a responsibility to...</li> </ul>

<b>How will we involve and consult pupils?</b>	<p>Consultation and involvement of pupils in SRE is crucial if teaching is to meet their needs and address the issues they are facing. Without such engagement, teachers are left to 'guess' what is needed. Involvement of pupils also means that teachers can learn what pupils think of what is currently being taught.</p> <p>Consultation and involvement of pupils will of course be different depending on their age and level or maturity. At Key Stage 1 and 2, it will be important to explore with children the prior learning they bring to the classroom; with older children, it will be possible for them to be fully engaged in a needs assessment and evaluation of the school's current provision.</p>	We will involve pupils by...
<b>How will we assess this learning?</b>	How will we provide evidence of our pupils' learning?	We will assess pupils' learning through...
<b>How will we ensure inclusion and differentiate learning?</b>	<p>How will we ensure that all young people have equal access to our sex and relationships education programme? How will we recognise and respect pupils' different abilities, levels of maturity and personal circumstances; for example their own sexual orientation, gender identity, faith or culture (which may, depending on their age and maturity, not be something they have yet considered or may be 'emerging') or the sexual orientation, gender identity, faith or culture of their immediate family, close friends and wider community? In looking at these questions, it is important to draw links to the school's inclusion policy.</p>	<p>We will identify pupils' different starting points by...</p> <p>We will respect pupils' unique starting points by providing learning that is...</p>

<b>What topics will be covered and (broadly) when?</b>	<p>Unlike other policies it is important that the school community understands what topics will be covered, and when. It is not necessary to provide an entire scheme of work but an outline is helpful. Year groups are different and it is worth giving the school the flexibility to move aspects of this work to match the readiness of the pupils. You <i>might</i> want to include the resources you will use, but remember that if you do your policy will need to be amended whenever they are changed.</p> <p>The <a href="#">PSHE Association's Programme of Study</a> document covers the key concepts, skills and topics at different key stages which we believe should be covered as part of a comprehensive programme.</p>	Our programme will cover...
<b>How will parents and carers be involved?</b>	<p>The most powerful sex and relationships education is a collaboration between school and home. Will the school provide support to parents and carers – for example, offering material for parents or carers to explore with their children? Will the school offer any form of parents' and carers' evening or workshop for interested parents and carers to find out more?</p> <hr/> <p>Whenever more sensitive or specific aspects of this work are covered it is important to notify parents and carers. Many are comfortable with the school taking the lead on planned learning, but want to be prepared to answer their children's subsequent questions or simply talk together about their children's learning.</p> <hr/> <p>Legislation states that '<i>parents have the right to withdraw their children from any and every aspect of sex education that is not taught as part of the statutory curriculum</i>'. How will this right be communicated to parents?</p>	<p>We are committed to working with parents and carers. We will offer support by...</p> <hr/> <p>We will notify parents when particular aspects of sex and relationships education will be taught, by...</p> <hr/> <p>We will communicate to parents about their right to withdraw their children by...</p>

---

**How will we support children who are withdrawn from the programme?**

If parents choose to withdraw their children (see above), physically where will they go and educationally how will they learn? It is also important to recognise and protect the pupil from the possible reaction of their peers to this withdrawal. Some schools offer packs of material to parents to help them provide this learning in a way that they are comfortable with.

If a parent requests that their child be removed from 'sex education', the school will provide support by...

---

**How will we ensure the curriculum is balanced?**

This can bring us to the fundamental question of: what do we believe is the purpose of education? Is it ultimately enabling young people to acquire learning that will allow them to make their own choices, or is it to teach young people a set of 'acceptable' choices? In the real world, it is probably a balance between the two. Getting this balance right has to be for your school to decide. Providing a programme that offers a range of viewpoints on issues is not incompatible with the school promoting a set of values. *(For example, there are different viewpoints on choices such as 'abstinence before marriage', the use of contraception or abortion. Enabling young people to explore differing viewpoints does not mean the school supports a particular position. It can be difficult for pupils to challenge a viewpoint if they have not previously considered it and decided where they personally stand.)*

While there is likely to be debate on whether or not some choices are acceptable, there is likely to be broad agreement that others are not acceptable, for example deliberately hurting others emotionally or physically.

Teachers should be careful to ensure that they do not set up polarising debates in SRE lessons. It is essential that lessons are sensitive to a range of views but the school must ensure that pupils have always access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals. This should include clear, impartial scientific information as well as covering the law in relation to forced-marriage,

While promoting the values above, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme by providing...

	female genital mutilation and abortion. It should also cover the concept of, and legislation relating to, equality.	
<b>How will we ensure that our equalities obligations are fulfilled?</b>	<p>Governing bodies have wider responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 and should ensure that their school strives to do the best for all of the pupils, irrespective of disability, educational needs, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, pregnancy, maternity, sex, gender identity, religion or sexual orientation or whether they are looked after children. Schools should always respect how pupils choose to identify themselves, understanding that depending on their age and maturity, their sexual orientation and gender identity may be ‘emerging’. This means that sex and relationships education must be sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils and may need to evolve and adapt over time as the pupil population changes.</p> <p>It is also crucial for lessons to help children to realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help.</p>	<p>We will ensure equality by...</p> <p>We will assess the needs of different pupils by...</p> <p>We will review this policy every... or in light of...</p>
<b>Who will be responsible for teaching the programme?</b>	Will this be class teachers? Form tutors? PSHE education, RE or science specialists? Will other professionals, for example school nurses or local sexual health services, provide support?	<p>The programme will be led by...</p> <p>It will be taught by...</p> <p>It will be supported by...</p>
<b>How will the SRE policy link to other school policies and other subjects on the curriculum?</b>	How does this policy link to the school’s bullying and safeguarding policies? How will you ensure that learning in ICT/Computing, Citizenship, RE and other relevant subjects complements learning about sex and relationships in PSHE lessons?	<p>This policy supports/complements the following policies...</p> <p>Learning about sex and relationships in PSHE classes will link to/complement learning in...</p>

<b>What teaching methodologies will be used?</b>	<p>This provides a clear framework within which professional colleagues can work.</p> <p>If particular resources are to be used, will the school make these available to parents to view before the lessons? <i>(It is probably best not to name specific resources in your policy. You need the flexibility to change these to meet the changing needs of your students.)</i></p>	The programme will be taught through a range of teaching methods, including...
<b>How will children's questions be answered?</b>	<p>This needs careful thought. Simply putting '<i>children's questions will be answered honestly and openly</i>', without any consideration of their prior learning or readiness, can be disastrous. It is important that children feel able to ask any questions that they wish and that their questions are valued.</p> <p>If necessary teachers also need to feel able to ask the child to wait for an answer to give them time to consult with the school's leadership team. <i>(For instance: 'That is a really interesting question and I need a little time to think because I want to give you a really good answer.')</i></p> <p>Teachers answer questions on behalf of the school and should feel able to work with colleagues to construct an appropriate answer.</p> <p>It is also good practice to have an anonymous question box where pupils who are not comfortable raising questions in an open setting may ask questions to be responded to at a later date.</p>	<p>Pupils' questions will be answered by...</p> <p>We will allow pupils to raise anonymous questions by...</p>
<b>How will children who are thought to be 'at risk' be supported?</b>	When teaching any sensitive issue young people may give cause for concern, and a link needs to be made with the pastoral system and safeguarding arrangements.	If we have any reason to believe a pupil is at risk, we are required to...

For further support and training in developing your SRE policy, please [join the PSHE Association](#) and [contact us](#) to discuss the further help we can offer.