

Relationships Education and Health Education

A briefing paper for high and special schools.

In February 2019, the Department for Education released updated draft guidance for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health education. This draft statutory guidance will come into effect in schools from September 2020.

The guidance schools currently use to deliver RSE was written in 2000, therefore is over 19 years old and very out of date. The new statutory guidance is a much-needed update on what schools should be delivering as part of RSE and PSHE in primary, special and high schools. The DfE have committed to updating this new guidance every 3 years.

About this guidance:

This document contains information on what schools **should** do and sets out the **legal duties with which schools must comply** when teaching Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education.

Who is the guidance for?

This guidance is for maintained, non-maintained and independent schools, including academies and free schools, non-maintained special schools, maintained special schools and alternative provision, including pupil referral units.

What are these subject areas called?

In high schools, RSE will continue to be called Relationships and Sex Education. Health Education will now become statutory in all schools (except independent schools where PSHE is already statutory).

It is advised to continue to teach Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education as part of a wider PSHE curriculum.

Policy:

All schools will have to update their current RSE policy to reflect the changes. This policy should be in place by September 2020. It is likely this policy will be renamed Relationships and Health Education policy in Primary schools, we will have confirmation on this once the guidance becomes statutory late in the Summer Term.

Schools must consult with parents when developing their policy. The DfE advises that schools should ensure that the policy **meets the needs of pupils and parent and reflects the community they serve**. Schools are required to consult parents to develop this policy, however the DfE have stated that parents cannot withdraw their children from aspects of the curriculum that are statutory.

Schools often set up an RSE working party, which includes SLT, PSHE lead, staff, governors and parents when developing a new RSE and Health Education policy. It is not statutory to have a working party, but it is statutory to consult with all key stakeholders when developing your new policy. It is advisable that you communicate with parents stating explicitly how you will be consulting with them.

The DfE draft guidance has defined what should be included in this policy. The Health Improvement team will be developing a policy template for schools to use.

What resources do we use?

The DfE have stated that schools can use and adapt resources and they will not be developing any statutory resources. The Health Improvement team will be developing resources which schools can use and adapt. **The school must ensure that the resources they choose to use are laid out in their policy and are appropriate for the age and maturity of pupils.**

For special schools and for SEND pupils within a mainstream setting, there may be a need to tailor the content of the resources you are using to meet the specific needs of pupils at different developmental stages.

LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) families as part of the curriculum

The draft guidance states that pupils should be taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way. All pupils should feel that the content is relevant to them and their developing sexuality. Sexual orientation and gender identity should be explored at a timely point and in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner. When teaching about these topics, it must be recognised that young people may be discovering or understanding their sexual orientation or gender identity. There should be an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships. This should be integrated appropriately into the RSE programme, rather than addressed separately or in only one lesson.

The draft guidance also states that pupils should be well informed about the full range of perspectives and, within the law, should be well equipped to make decisions for themselves about how to live their own lives, whilst respecting the right of others to make their own decisions and hold their own beliefs.

LGBT education and awareness lessons should be covered as part of a wider PSHE and RSE curriculum. **Damien Hinds has stated that schools can decide what they cover and should consult parents when making this decision. He also stated that while schools should consult parents, parent cannot veto these lessons and cannot withdraw from these lessons, as they are part of Relationships and Sex Education.**

What themes are covered:

The new guidance sets out 5 themes that are to be covered as part of statutory Relationships Education in high schools. These are:

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online and media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

Right to withdraw:

The above 5 themes are **statutory**, and parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from these lessons. The science curriculum is also **statutory**, parents cannot withdraw their children from any aspects which are covered within the statutory science curriculum.

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

Schools are advised to meet with the parents individually to discuss why they wish to withdraw their children from sex education. Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional **circumstances, the school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16.** After that point, 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.

This process is the same for pupils with SEND. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where the head teacher may want to take a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision. The approach outlined above should be reflected in the school's policy on RSE.

Health Education

Physical health and mental wellbeing education will now become statutory in high schools. These subject areas are split into 8 themes:

- Mental wellbeing
- Internet safety and harms
- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- Health and prevention
- Basic first aid
- Changing adolescent body

Many of these subjects are already delivered as part of PSHE and will continue to do so after 2020. Parents cannot withdraw children from these lessons.

The guidance states that schools have flexibility to design and plan age – appropriate subject content, but this guidance sets out core areas that should be covered.

What to do if a parent wants to withdraw their children from RSE lessons before 2020?

As this guidance does not come into effect until September 2020, parents can withdraw their children from RSE lessons until this time as RSE is not currently statutory.

It is recommended that schools follow their current RSE policy when dealing with requests to withdraw children from RSE lessons and continue to follow their current policy until they have developed a new policy (which meets the requirements set out in the new guidance) or until statutory Relationships Education come into effect in September 2020.

Schools can access the draft guidance here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781150/Draft_guidance_Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education2.pdf

For any questions relating to RSE, please contact Claire Meade on meadec@ealing.gov.uk

For support developing a whole school approach to RSE, schools are advised to use the RSE policy, which can be found here: <https://www.egfl.org.uk/elp-services/health-improvement-schools/hit-toolkits>