

Relationships Education and Health Education

A briefing paper for primary 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In February 2019, the Department for Education released updated draft guidance for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health education.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The guidance schools currently use to deliver RSE was written in 2000, therefore is over 19 years old and very out of date.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 primary schools, RSE will be renamed Relationships 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 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 parents** 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 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 schools should ensure that all of their teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content. At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT choices, they should ensure that this content is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. Schools are free to determine how they do this, and it is expected that all pupils will have been taught LGBT content at a timely point as part of this area of the curriculum.

The guidance also states that teaching about differences in families requires sensitive and well-judged teaching based on knowledge of pupils and their circumstances. Families of many forms provide a nurturing environment for children. (Families can include for example, single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures.)

Different families, including LGBT families, will normally be covered as part of relationships Education. Damien Hinds has stated that schools can decide how to cover differences in family structures and should consult parents when making decisions. **He also stated that while schools should consult parents, parent cannot veto these lessons and cannot withdraw pupils from these lessons, as they are part of Relationships Education.**

What themes are covered:

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

- Families and people who care for me
- Caring friendships
- Respectful relationships
- Online relationships
- Being safe

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**, which includes naming external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals. Parents cannot withdraw their children from aspects of Relationships Education that fall under the statutory science curriculum.

Sex Education is not statutory in primary schools. Many primary schools already choose to teach some aspects of sex education and will continue to do so, although it is not a requirement. The Department continues to recommend therefore that all primary schools should have a sex education programme tailored to the age and the physical and emotional maturity of the pupils.

Where a maintained primary school chooses to teach aspects of sex education (which go beyond the national curriculum for science), the school must set this out in their policy and all schools should consult with parents on what is to be covered.

Primary schools that choose to teach sex education must allow parents a right to withdraw their children. Unlike sex education in secondary schools, in primary schools, head teachers must comply with a parent's wish to withdraw their child from sex education beyond the national curriculum for science. The guidance refers to this as granting an automatic right for parents to withdraw their child from sex education lessons

Health Education

Physical health and mental wellbeing education will now become statutory in **primary 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 of primary-aged children 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>