

Hawthorn Primary School

Frequently Asked Questions about Relationships and Sex Education.

The Department for Education has announced changes to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). These changes will come into effect from September 2020 and all schools will be required to comply with the updated requirements, making Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education. It has been 20 years since the last review of these curriculum areas, and in that time the world has changed significantly. Children now face new challenges: they have to process lots of information from different sources such as TV, the internet, social media, understand how society is changing, understand risks they may face, all putting pressure on their physical and mental health.

We believe relationships and sex education is important for our pupils and our school because:

- It is giving children the knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships
- It is about giving children the opportunity to put knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts.
- It is the recognition that everyone faces difficult situations in their lives and how relationship and sex education can support young people to develop resilience, to know how and when to ask for help, and to know where to access support

We view the partnership of home and school as vital in providing the context to both complement and reinforce what pupils learn at home about healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online, as well as how to be healthy.

Below, we have explained some of the common questions around these subjects.

So why now?

The Equality Act came into force in 2010. The Equality Act 2010 states that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex/gender
- Sexual orientation (**Government, 2010, p1**)

The public sector Equality Duty came into force on 5th April 2011 and requires that public bodies (including schools):

- Have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

(Government Equalities Office 2013, p1)

This makes it clear that promoting some of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act while ignoring others is against UK law.

What is teaching about equality?

It is teaching about:

- Difference
- Acceptance
- Tolerance
- Diversity
- How to challenge discrimination

Teaching about equality helps our children to prepare for the next stages in their lives.

Will my child be taught sex education at Primary School? Is this too young?

Sex education at Primary school is not compulsory. However, compulsory Relationships Education is being introduced in Primary schools from September 2020, to put in place the building blocks needed for positive and safe relationships of all kinds. This will start with family and friends, how to treat each other with kindness, and recognising the difference between online and offline friendships.

At Hawthorn Primary School we currently teach sex education to children in Year 5 and 6 (which goes beyond the existing national curriculum for science). Before these lessons take place, the school gives parent's the opportunity to understand what will be taught and how it will be approached, and view any materials so that you understand what we propose to teach and how. If you continue to have concerns, you have the right to withdraw from any sex education lessons that go beyond that of the science national curriculum.

We will continue to teach puberty and reproduction. This is only part of the Science National Curriculum for Y5 and Y6. As it is part of the science national curriculum it is **compulsory**. We hold meetings with parents in Y5 and Y6 to discuss this and share materials. You have the right to withdraw from any sex education lessons that **go beyond** that of the science national curriculum.

Is school the best place for discussions about Sex and Relationships? We know from surveys of children, that if they do not get the correct and accurate information about sex and relationships from a reliable source, they **will** find the information from other sources (friends, older siblings, website, tv) which may not be true or age appropriate. The information gathered during the Government consultation found that most children wanted this information and discussion to be provided in school with their teachers so that they could ask their questions in a safe space, and have them answered in an age-appropriate way.

Does the new Relationships Education and RSE curriculum take account of my faith?

The subjects are designed to help children from all backgrounds build positive and safe relationships, and to thrive in modern Britain. When planning and teaching these subjects, the religious background of pupils is considered so that topics are appropriately handled. In developing these subjects, the DfE have worked with a number of faith organisations and representative bodies to ensure they are inclusive

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

In a Primary School, you have the right to withdraw from any sex education lessons *that go beyond that of the science national curriculum.*

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education at Primary or Secondary school as the contents of these subjects – such as family, friendship, safety (including online safety) – are important for all children to be taught.

Has the government listened to the views of my community in introducing these subjects?

The Government undertook a wide public consultation which involved discussions with over 90 organisations, as well as the public consultation on the draft regulations and guidance. This has informed the key decisions on these subjects.

What are the topics covered in RSE?

In school RSE topics will be taught within our Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum. Our PSHE curriculum is split into three categories. RSE is part of our Relationships unit of work and our 'Health and Wellbeing' unit of work

How will we know what is being taught so I can talk to my child about it at home?

Parents will be given opportunities to see what is being taught in PSHE through your child's topic web which will be sent home at the start of every half term.

Furthermore, each term parents will have access via the school website and the curriculum newsletter will summarise what is being taught. If you need to discuss this further Teachers will be happy to discuss this with you or signpost other resources that can be used at home to support discussions.

Will this work prompt my children to ask challenging questions?

Possibly, your child or children trust you and will be likely to ask you questions to test your beliefs and opinions. Please don't avoid them, talk openly about diversity and equality.