



Why is there new guidance on Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education from the Department of Education?

Before this development the Department for Education's guidance to schools on Relationships and Sex Education was last updated in 2000, and it clearly no longer accurately reflects the world we live in.

The new guidance was finalised and passed into law by Parliament in 2019, with overwhelming support in both houses. It aims to create a curriculum that:

- educates pupils about **positive relationships**;
- helps pupils understand how their actions can impact on their **health, wellbeing and safety**.

It also aims to meet the needs of all pupils, whatever their developing identity and family circumstances, and to prepare them for life and work in modern Britain.

The Secretary of State stated in his Forward* to the guidance:

'These subjects represent a huge opportunity to help our children and young people develop. The knowledge and attributes gained will support their own, and others', wellbeing and attainment and help young people to become successful and happy adults who make a meaningful contribution to society.'

In a great many schools, this curriculum will be delivered through the schools existing Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education and will require very little change.

Source: GOV UK | Statutory Guidance Forward by the Secretary of State

What has changed from the previous requirements regarding the delivery of sex education?

The definition of what constitutes 'sex education' in schools has been tightened. Schools will ensure parents/carers know what will be taught as part of the RSE and Health curriculum and when. Schools will clarify what they teach as part of the sex education curriculum in science and what they teach as part of the RSE and Health curriculum. This should be detailed in the school policy.

Teaching about the changing adolescent body and puberty is not part of the sex education curriculum. This falls within the health curriculum.

Who will be delivering the sex education teaching?

It will be members of the school staff who know the pupils. Visitors may also contribute to the curriculum, but schools will always ensure their messages and approaches are in line with the school's values and policy.

Will teaching about Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) encourage early sexual behaviour?

RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation. Young people who have received effective RSE are more likely to delay their first experience of sex and are less likely to engage in risky sexual practices. RSE teaches young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. It enables young people to mature, build their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity.

The curriculum also enables young people to understand how the law applies to relationships. In particular, this includes understanding the age of consent and the nature of consent. It helps young people to understand their responsibilities within a relationship and how to recognise an abusive or exploitative relationship.

What are the key themes that will be taught in Relationships and Sex Education in secondary school?

1. Families and family diversity
2. Relationship and friendships
3. Personal safety
4. Sexual relationships and healthy relationships
5. The law

What are the key themes that will be taught in Health Education?

1. Mental wellbeing
2. Internet safety
3. Physical health and fitness
4. Healthy eating
5. Drugs, alcohol and tobacco
6. Health and prevention
7. Basic first aid
8. Changing adolescent body

Can I request my child be excused from Health Education?

No. Parents will not be able to withdraw their child from Health Education in secondary school. Health Education includes teaching about the changing adolescent body in a timely way to ensure young people are prepared for changes they will experience before they happen.

Can I request my child be excused from RSE?

Parents/carers will only be able to request that their child/children be excused from those parts of RSE lessons that are defined by the school's RSE policy as being 'sex education' that goes "*beyond the science curriculum*". It is hoped that when parents/carers have opportunities to find out more about what will be taught and how, very few parents/carers will want to do this. Parents/carers should note that the science curriculum includes human reproduction. Relationships education provides opportunities to set this learning in the context of meaningful relationships, personal values, health and safety. Parents/carers requesting that their child/children be excused from sex education will be invited to discuss their concerns with a member of staff and asked to specify which particular aspects of sex education content they wish to withdraw their child from. Parents/carers have this right until three terms before the term in which the young person becomes 16 years old. At this point young people have a right to make their own decision and to opt into sex education.

There have been protests in the news about the new curriculum being LGBT-inclusive. Can I request my child/children be excused from lessons about LGBT people and relationships?

No. The purpose of the Relationships Education curriculum is to educate pupils, age appropriately, about relationships and diversity in the world they live in. It is important that pupils know that different families and individuals exist and are respected under the law.

LGBT-inclusive curriculum content is not new: it is a requirement for all schools under the Equality Act 2010. The new Relationships Education curriculum reinforces this by clarifying that the lessons young people receive in school must be inclusive of diverse families and be relevant to all pupils. The teaching must promote equality and respect, present material that is accurate and balanced, and it must be underpinned by legal rights and responsibilities. Content related to LGBT people will therefore be fully integrated into the curriculum, rather than being delivered in stand-alone lessons. Parents/carers will not be able to excuse their child from this.

Will family diversity be represented?

Yes. Families, both in school and in the wider world, sometimes look different from a child's own family. Pupils will be taught that British society values diversity and that all families deserve respect. Families are characterised by love and care, even though this may be expressed through different traditions and values.

In schools, learning about families must be inclusive. The Relationships Education curriculum must allow every child the right to see their family represented and all pupils must be confident and safe to speak about who they live with and who cares for them. Children will also look at social changes that have impacted family types such as divorce, gay marriage and cohabitation.

Will schools teach about a range of relationships: marriage, civil partnerships, relationships outside of marriage and same sex relationships?

Yes. The curriculum enables young people to understand the importance of a stable, secure and loving environment for family life and will include the range of different family types that can provide this. Teaching will therefore represent the full range of committed and mutually supportive stable relationships in our society, including religious and civil marriages, civil partnerships, and relationships outside of formal commitment. The range of families represented will include step families, same-sex parents, grandparents as parents, adoptive families, and more.

When will this guidance be reviewed again by the DfE?

The guidance is set to be reviewed in 2022

How do I get in touch with the school to discuss RSE and health education provision?

If you have any questions or concerns about the RSE & Health education framework at The Priory School please contact Katie Southall, Assistant Headteacher for student wellbeing & personal development

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