



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

The Department for Education has announced changes to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). These changes came into effect in September 2020 and all schools are 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 (e.g. TV, the internet, social media), understand how society is changing and understand risks they may face – this all puts 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 was introduced in primary schools in 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 Harrington Hill Primary School we currently teach sex education (which goes beyond the existing national curriculum for science) to children in the summer term. Before these lessons take place, the school gives parents 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. Puberty and reproduction is taught as part of the Science National Curriculum for Y5 and Y6 and is compulsory. 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 RSE curriculum is designed to help children from all backgrounds build positive and safe relationships, and to thrive in modern Britain. All pupils have a right to an education which enables them to flourish and is set in a learning community where differences of lifestyle and opinion (within that which is permissible under UK law) are treated with dignity and respect.

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 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.

Will these subjects promote LGBT relationships?

No, these subjects don't 'promote' anything, they educate. We are teaching about equality. Our school ethos says that we are respectful of everyone. We value ourselves and all others: This means that if someone is black, they are welcome in our school; if someone uses a wheelchair, they are welcome in our school; if someone is gay they are welcome in our school. Pupils should be taught about the society in which they are growing up. These subjects are designed to foster respect for others and for difference, and educate pupils about healthy relationships. RSE should meet the needs of all pupils, whatever their developing sexuality or identity – this should include age-appropriate teaching about different types of relationships in the context of the law. In our school the teaching of LGBT will be delivered through teaching about different types of family, including those with same sex parents. All our planned learning will be taught in an age appropriate way. You will be informed about all learning that is taking place.

Are primary children too young to be taught about gay or lesbian people?

Some children grow up in families with gay or lesbian people. We can't say to a child who has two dads, 'You can't talk about your family!' We want all of our children to know that their family is accepted in school. Our children will interact with people from different backgrounds; we want them to treat all members of the community with the same respect. Just like racism, school has a duty of care to challenge any language that may cause offence to others, whether used intentionally or not. Phrases such as "that's so gay" or "that's a girl's/boy's toy" when used in a negative manner may unintentionally cause offence to a child or adult. School will challenge this language if it is used by children, parents or visitors as we want everyone to feel welcome.

There are no children who are gay or transgender here, so why does it need to be mentioned?

We want our children to grow up respectful and tolerant members of our community. As they grow up, make more friends, watch tv, go to different places they will meet people who are gay or transgender. It is important that they are able to make sense of the world around them.

My religion says that being gay is wrong, so why are you teaching about different sexuality choices?

We are teaching about equality. We understand and respect all faiths. We recognise the tension that it can present. Any discussion or resources used will be to help your child be respectful and tolerant towards others. We are preparing the children for life in Britain. Britain is diverse and they are going to meet people who are different to them as they grow up.

You are confusing my child because at home they are learning that being gay is wrong but at school you are telling them that being gay is OK.

As a parent it is your right to talk to your child about religious beliefs. In school we build our curriculum around UK law. We are teaching children that all people and relationships are equal. We are teaching children that all families are different and your child as they grow up will meet people who live in different families. It is important that children learn about people who are different. They need to learn to be tolerant and respectful of people with different views. When they grow up they can make up their own minds about what is right and wrong.

What are the topics covered in RSE?

In school, RSE topics will be taught within our Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum, using the Jigsaw scheme of work. Jigsaw is split into six Puzzles (units) with puberty and human reproduction being taught in the 'Changing Me' Puzzle over a period of 6 weeks, usually in the second half of the summer term.

The Jigsaw 'Changing Me' Puzzle is all about coping positively with change and includes:

Ages 3-5	Growing up: how we have changed since we were babies.
Ages 5-6	Boys' and girls' bodies; correct names for body parts.
Ages 6-7	Boys' and girls' bodies; body parts and respecting privacy (which parts of the body are private and why this is).
Ages 7-8	How babies grow and how boys' and girls' bodies change as they grow older. Introduction to puberty and menstruation.
Ages 8-9	Internal and external reproductive body parts. Recap about puberty and menstruation. Conception explained in simple terms.
Ages 9-10	Puberty for boys and girls in more detail including the social and emotional aspects of becoming an adolescent. Conception explained in simple biological terms.
Ages 10-11	Puberty for boys and girls revisited. Understanding conception to the birth of a baby. Becoming a teenager. All lessons are taught using correct terminology, child-friendly language and diagrams.

Jigsaw and LGBTQ (please see the Jigsaw leaflets for more information):

Ages 4 – 7

LGBTQ is not mentioned specifically in lessons for children aged 4-7. However, in lessons that explore differences in families, pictorial resources are used as a discussion focus. Questions such as; 'Which photos show a family?' 'What is important about a family?' and 'What does your family mean to you?' help children understand about their own and other's families and how a family is founded in love and respect. Should children raise the question about pictures that show a same-gender couple, Jigsaw's teacher notes suggest this is explained to children in the following way: 'Some children have two mummies or two daddies.' Teachers are not expected to go beyond this response, or give more detail, as that would not be age-appropriate. However, this does acknowledge and include any children who have LGBTQ people as part of their family.

Ages 7 - 11

In materials for 7-11-year olds, some lessons about bullying provide opportunities for teachers to discuss and correct homophobic language the children may be using, such as the inappropriate use of the words 'gay' and 'lesbian', or the use of slang words that are LGBTQ-phobic. In the same lessons they will also be exploring racist and sexist language, or insulting language that is used about a person's physical appearance, their abilities, or whether they have special needs. In these lessons, teachers explain that any insult is unkind and hurtful. Teachers explain that being gay is a type of adult relationship where two men or two women love each other in a romantic way, and if they choose, they can get married. Teachers are not expected to go beyond this definition and give more detail.

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

Details of what is being taught is included in the RSE policy which is available to read on the school website. However, parents are able to request a meeting if they would like to better understand how the curriculum is being planned to be taught. Parents can request to look at materials that will be used. Each term parents will be sent a curriculum knowledge organiser which 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.