

Government response: Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education: FAQs

The Department for Education is introducing compulsory [Relationships Education for primary pupils](#) and [Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\)](#) for secondary pupils from September 2020. Also, from September 2020 it will be compulsory for all schools to teach Health Education.

Through these subjects, we want to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe – we want to equip them for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society. Throughout our engagement process as we developed this curriculum, we have heard a number of wide ranging concerns.

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

Q: Will my child's school have to consult with me before teaching these subjects?

A: Schools will be required to consult with parents when developing and reviewing their policies for Relationships Education and RSE, which will inform schools' decisions on when and how certain content is covered. Effective consultation gives the space and time for parents to input, ask questions, share concerns and for the school to decide the way forward. Schools will listen to parent's views, and then make a reasonable decision as to how they wish to proceed. What is taught, and how, is ultimately a decision for the school and consultation does not provide a parental veto on curriculum content.

A school's policies for these subjects must be published online, and must be available to any individual free of charge. Schools should also ensure that, when they consult parents, they provide examples of the resources they plan to use, for example the books they will use in lessons.

Q: Will my child be taught sex education at primary? This is too young.

A: We are not introducing compulsory sex education at primary school.

We are introducing Relationships Education at primary, 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.

Some primary schools choose to teach sex education (which goes beyond the existing national curriculum for science), and in those instances we recommend you discuss this with the school to understand what they propose to

teach and how. If you continue to have concerns, you have an automatic right to withdraw your child from these lessons.

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

A: The subjects are designed to help children from all backgrounds build positive and safe relationships, and to thrive in modern Britain.

In all schools, when teaching these subjects, the religious background of pupils must be taken into account when planning teaching, so that topics are appropriately handled. Schools with a religious character can build on the core content by reflecting their beliefs in their teaching.

In developing these subjects, we have worked with a number of representative bodies and faith organisations, representing all the major faith groups in England. Several faith organisations produce teaching materials that schools can choose to use.

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

A: Parents will have a right to withdraw their child from sex education delivered as part of RSE in secondary schools which, unless there are exceptional circumstances, should be granted up to three terms before their child turns 16. At this point, if the child themselves wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements for this to happen in one of the three terms before the child turns 16 – the legal age of sexual consent.

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

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

A: A thorough engagement process, involving a public call for evidence and discussions with over 90 organisations, as well as the public consultation on the draft regulations and guidance, has informed the key decisions on these subjects. The consultation received over 11,000 responses from teachers, schools, expert organisations, young people and parents – these responses have helped finalise the statutory guidance as well as the regulations that have been laid in Parliament.

Q: Will these subjects promote LGBT relationships?

A: No, these subjects don't 'promote' anything, they educate.

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.

Pupils should receive teaching on LGBT relationships during their school years – we expect secondary schools to include LGBT content. Primary schools are enabled and encouraged to cover LGBT content if they consider it age appropriate to do so, but there is no specific requirement for this. This would be delivered, for example, through teaching about different types of family, including those with same sex parents.

Q: Will teachers receive training before delivering these subjects?

A: The department is committed to supporting schools to deliver these subjects to a high standard. We know that training is a priority for teachers and we will be consulting with teachers, trade unions and other key stakeholders over the coming months on how we structure the training.

In addition, we are encouraging schools to act as early adopters for this curriculum and to start teaching the subjects from September 2019. To help early adopter schools, we will provide further advice on how they can improve their practice. Lessons learned from the early adopters and best practice from schools will be shared with all schools from September 2020.

We also have translation in: