

News story: Education Secretary launches RSE call for evidence

- Views of teachers, parents and young people to help shape first updating of relationships and sex education guidance since 2000
- New approach to combat online issues
- Follows confirmation that the subject will be compulsory in all schools, to help equip every young person for life in modern Britain

The government is asking parents, teachers and young people to help shape a new relationships and sex education curriculum that will help them stay safe and face the challenges of the modern world.

The current statutory guidance for teaching Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) was introduced in 2000. It currently fails to address risks to children which have grown in prevalence in recent years, including online pornography, sexting and staying safe online.

The guidance is being updated after legislation was passed by Parliament earlier this year to make relationships education compulsory in all primary schools and relationships and sex education compulsory in all secondary schools.

As part of that process, an eight week call for evidence will invite views on age-appropriate content on mental wellbeing, staying safe online and LGBT issues in the updated subjects.

The move to make RSE compulsory was welcomed by the teaching profession and organisations such as Barnardo's, Stonewall, the Catholic Education Service, NSPCC, Terrence Higgins Trust and the End Violence Against Women coalition.

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

It is unacceptable that Relationships and Sex Education guidance has not been updated for almost 20 years especially given the online risks, such as sexting and cyber bullying, our children and young people face. Young people must have an education that teaches them the importance of healthy and stable relationships.

This call for evidence is about giving teachers, parents and especially young people a chance to help shape that new approach and I'd urge them to take part.

Currently only pupils attending local-authority run secondary schools – which represent around a third of secondary schools – are guaranteed to be offered Sex and Relationship Education as currently delivered.

The 'call for evidence' aims to gather views from people across England from all backgrounds on the content of this subject. It will look to establish:

- what teachers think they should be teaching their pupils to help them navigate the modern world they are growing up in;
- how parents expect their children to be taught this topic in a safe and age-appropriate way; and
- what children themselves think they would benefit from understanding the most, and the online risks they are concerned with.

Ian Bauckham, who was awarded the CBE in 2017 for services to education, will lead this process. He is CEO of a multi-academy trust, executive head of a large 11-18 Church of England comprehensive in Kent and, as a National Leader of Education (NLE), works with many other schools in the region and more widely.

Ian Bauckham CBE said:

I warmly welcome the government's decision to seek views on these important topics. Since I started work as a teacher over thirty years ago, enormous changes have taken place both in the lives of young people and in the wider world in which we are preparing them to live. I hope that the call for evidence being launched now gives us the chance to find out about the best teaching and to improve provision for all our young people in all types of school.

The teaching of this important subject in schools is supported by the wider public. Recent surveys show that:

- 91% of parents believe all pupils should receive lessons to teach them about the risks of sexting, as well as other issues such as contact from strangers online; and
- 74% of 11 – 15 years old believe that children would be safer if they had age appropriate classes on relationships and sex education.