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 2021 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.

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 2021, 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 Winnersh Primary School, we currently teach sex education to all children following the Jigsaw Programme. 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. We will continue to teach sex education (which focuses on puberty and reproduction). This is only part of the Science National Curriculum for Year 5 and Year 6. 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, websites, television) 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.

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 before 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.

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 attend different meetings to understand how the curriculum is being planned to be taught.

Information will also be available on our website.

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.