

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Parent/carer FAQs for Hertfordshire Primary schools

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

Before this development, the Department for Education's guidance to school's 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:

- fosters pupils' respect for themselves and others
- promotes equality and values difference
- 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 guidance states:

'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.

Does the Department for Education's guidance state exactly what needs to be taught?

The guidance sets out the key learning that pupils must receive by the end of their primary education. Schools will decide exactly how they teach the curriculum and what resources they will use. Information about this should be in the school policy.

What are the key themes that will be taught in relationships education in primary school?

Families and people who care for me

Caring friendships

Respectful relationships

Online relationships

Being safe

Can I request my child is excused from Relationships Education?

No. Parents/carers will not be able to withdraw their child from any part of Relationships Education.

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

Mental wellbeing

Internet safety and harms

Physical health and fitness

Healthy eating

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco

Health and prevention

Basic first aid

Changing adolescent body

Can I request my child is excused from Health Education?

No. Parents will not be able to withdraw their child from Health Education. Health Education includes the teaching of the correct terminology for body parts and learning about the changing adolescent body in a timely way to ensure children are prepared for changes they will experience before they happen.

Will primary schools have to teach sex education? Isn't this too young?

Many primary schools currently teach sex education (which goes beyond the science curriculum), and it is strongly recommended by the government that this continues. The decision about if and when to teach sex education remains a decision that individual primary schools must make. Schools will inform parents when this will be delivered. You can discuss this with the school to understand what they propose to teach and how.

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

Nothing at all.

Who will be delivering the sex education teaching?

This will usually be the class teacher. Visitors may also contribute to the curriculum, but schools will always ensure their messages and approaches are in line with the school values and policy.

Can I request my child is excused from the Sex Education curriculum?

Yes. Parents/carers will be able to request that their child is excused from those parts of lessons that are defined as sex education in the school policy. 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 discussion about human reproduction. Discussion of sex within relationships education, therefore, provides opportunities to set this learning in the context of meaningful relationships, personal values, health and safety. Parents/carers requesting to excuse their child 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.

Will excusing my child from sex education mean they will not learn about sex?

No. The school cannot guarantee that pupils will not learn about sex from other sources outside the classroom. There are many places that children can get information from including: parents/carers, peers, older siblings and the

internet. The accuracy of the information they access will be variable. The delivery of Sex Education within Relationships and Sex Education ensures that what pupils learn is age and developmentally appropriate, addresses their real questions and is based on important values and the law.

Can I request my child is excused from the elements of sex education taught through the science curriculum?

No. Parents/carers do not have a right to excuse their child from any part of the science curriculum, including lessons about reproduction and human development.

Can I request my child is excused from lessons about the changing adolescent body and puberty (including teaching about wet dreams and periods)?

No. Parents/carers cannot excuse their child from elements of Health Education. They can only excuse their child from what the school defines as 'sex education' in their policy.

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

Yes. The curriculum enables children 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.

Can I excuse my child from lessons about LGBT people and relationships?

No. The purpose of the Relationships Education 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. Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Parent/carer FAQs for Hertfordshire Primary schools 5 LGBT-inclusive curriculum content is not new: it has been a requirement for all schools under the Equality Act 2010. The new Relationships Education curriculum reinforces this by clarifying that the lessons children 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.

What will my role as a parent/carer be in Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education teaching? Will our family values be undermined by the curriculum in any way?

Parents/carers are partners with the school in this important area of education, helping to keep children safe and supporting them to thrive. Schools will inform parents/carers about what is being taught across each year group, so that parents/carers can support the learning at home before or after lessons. This gives families the opportunity to talk about their own values, experiences and perspectives. The government recognises in the guidance that: 'parents are the first teachers of their children. They have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships.'