



Relationship and Sex Education at Acres Hill

A guide for parents

What is Relationship and Sex Education?

The Government's definition is this:

“It is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching.”

(Department for Education and Employment, SRE Guidance, 2000)

Why is it important?

- More than ever before, children are exposed to representations of sex and sexuality through the media/social media and the social culture around them, so we need to present a balanced view of RSE and help them to be discerning and stay safe.
- Research shows that most parents say they want the support of schools in providing RSE for their children.
 - Research consistently shows that effective RSE delays first sexual experience and reduces risk-taking.
 - Surveys of children and young people, as well as Ofsted, have repeatedly told us that RSE tends to be “too little, too late and too biological”.

What are the aims of RSE?

The objectives of Sex and Relationship Education are:

- To provide the knowledge and information to which all pupils are entitled.
- To clarify/reinforce existing knowledge.
- To raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence, especially in their relationships with others.
- To help pupils understand their sexual feelings and behaviour, so they can lead fulfilling and enjoyable lives.
- To help pupils' develop skills (language, decision making, choice, assertiveness) and make the most of their abilities.
- To provide the confidence to be participating members of society and to value themselves and others.
- To help gain access to information and support.
- To develop skills for a healthier safer lifestyle.
- To develop and use communication skills and assertiveness skills to cope with the influences of their peers and the media.
- To respect and care for their bodies.
- To be prepared for puberty and adulthood.

Key Questions

Won't telling my child about human reproduction take away their innocence?

No. The evidence suggests that high quality RSE does the opposite: it actually delays young people's first sexual experience, and it helps them become much more confident and comfortable about making informed choices.

Good and appropriate RSE takes away children's ignorance, not their innocence. Teaching about safety and relationships as part of PSHE contributes to how schools approach the safeguarding of pupils. It helps them to recognise when they and others are at risk and equips them with the skills, strategies and language they need to take appropriate action. It is clear, therefore, that PSHE plays a vital part in helping to meet school's responsibilities to safeguard their pupils, your children.

Key Questions

I've heard that I can take my child out of PSHE lessons on RSE. Is this true?

Yes, it is. Currently, parents/carers have the legal right to withdraw their children from the RSE included in the PSHE curriculum (as that is a non-statutory subject). However, they are not permitted to withdraw their child from the Sex Education included in the National Curriculum Science Orders, as Science is a statutory subject.

If you are considering taking your child out of RSE lessons within PSHE , please consider the following:

- All the other children in your child's class will have been taught this information and may well talk to your child about it, perhaps in the playground... and potentially mislead them or confuse them as a result. It may prove far better to allow experienced and sensitive teaching staff to teach your child in a progressive, developmental way that is grounded in research.
- They will be learning about reproduction in Science lessons. The RSE in PSHE will echo this and will concentrate on teaching children how to enjoy healthy, appropriate relationships, improve self-esteem and self-confidence, and make healthy, informed choices. When viewed this way, it is hoped that RSE won't be seen as contentious or a cause for concern, but rather as helpful.
- **Attend an information session** at the school to fully understand the rationale behind and the content of this work.
- **Talk to SLT.** Often, when parents/carers find out what is in the PSHE curriculum, their fears are allayed as they can appreciate it is in the best interests of their child's lifelong learning.

Key Questions

How can I talk to my child about relationships, puberty and human reproduction?

What children learn at school is part of the puzzle, and children can continue to learn from you at home. For some parents/carers, it can feel totally natural to discuss relationships, puberty and human reproduction with their child, while for others it can seem awkward and difficult. Either way, it is important to remember these **key points**:

- We all want children to feel safe and to be happy and healthy
 - We need to consider their needs
- We need to normalise talking about relationships, puberty and human reproduction so taboos don't need to exist
 - We might need to challenge our own ways of thinking
- We have choices: we can avoid it or we can communicate openly and honestly with children – they need us!

Top Tips

Here are some tips for talking to your child:

- **Be honest:** if you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and say so. Tell your child that you will need to find out and that you will get back to them with more soon.
- **Remember that children are curious and want to know and understand.** We tend to place our adult perspective on children's questions and comments, allowing our brains to fill up with all the possible horrors that an innocent question could be about, when actually a child just wants (and needs) a very simple, matter-of-fact answer. This answer will not involve an 'adult' understanding of a topic – it needs to be at a child's level, with opportunity given for the child to be able to ask further questions if needed. Give yourself time to respond by asking something like, "What do you think that means?" or "Why do you ask?"
- **Keep lines of communication open:** having an open and honest relationship with your child can really help make conversations easier, so make sure that you are always willing to talk when your child needs you; if you can't, explain why and find another time when it is more mutually convenient.
- **Use correct terminology:** it helps that children aren't confused by hints, euphemisms and innuendo; use correct terminology whenever you can, especially for body parts. This is hugely important for safeguarding too.

Top Tips

Here are some tips for talking to your child:

- **Respond to what children say they need:** bear in mind that children's lives today are very different from even five years ago. Therefore, the education they receive needs to reflect this. Research shows us time and time again that children want and need RSE that is age- and stage-appropriate, that teaches them about relationships and emotions, and that is returned to consistently throughout their education. We may feel that they know too much, when actually ignorance is the enemy of innocence: we believe effective RSE delays sexual activity, ensures children are safer and empowers them to make their own healthy choices.
- **Answer questions and don't be afraid to say: 'I really don't know - let's work it out or look it up together'.** Have a phrase for awkward moments, such as: 'That's a good question, and let's talk about it once we get home' (then make sure you do!).
- **Always respond:** if you don't, she or he may think it is wrong to talk to you about relationships, puberty or human reproduction and as a result you may find your child clams up when you raise the subject.
- If it all feels too personal, try talking about people in books, films and favourite television programmes.
- **Listen rather than judge.** Try asking them what they think.
- **Enjoy it.** Laugh with each other.
- **Work in partnership** with the school.
- Most parents/carers want their children to be healthy and happy. Schools do too... and high quality RSE is part of this.