

# Relationships Education, Sex Education and Health Education:

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. *Why is there new guidance on Relationships Education, Sex Education and Health Education?*

The Department for Education's guidance for schools in this area was last updated in 2000 and no longer reflects contemporary culture, or the digital and social media world in which we live.

### 2. *Is it a good thing?*

Yes. The new guidance is overwhelmingly positive and has been welcomed by school leaders, local authorities and the Church of England.

It recognises the importance of supporting our pupils to respect themselves and others; keep themselves safe; enjoy positive and healthy relationships; and understand the impact of their actions and choices on the wellbeing (including mental wellbeing) and health of themselves and others. These are things we all want for our pupils.

### 3. *Why has there been so much fuss about it in the press?*

There has been a lot of unnecessary misinformation and misunderstanding surrounding the new guidance in the press. Most schools have, for some years, been delivering excellent PSHE programmes which cover everything expected by the new guidance. In many schools, very little will change. Schools aren't being encouraged to teach pupils anything inappropriate. The new guidance will not encourage pupils to enter into intimate relationships: quite the contrary. Nor does the guidance contain anything which is not compatible with living as a Christian.

### 4. *Is it compatible with our Vision and Values as a Church of England school?*

Absolutely. The new guidance supports each of the strands of the Church of England Vision for Education. Pupils will be encouraged to:

- make well-informed choices (*Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills*);
- have self-worth and achieve their God-given potential, free from the barriers of unhealthy or oppressive relationships (*Hope and Aspiration*);
- build healthy relationships and live well in their school and local community, recognising the value of all and loving all their neighbours (*Community and Living Well Together*); and
- respect and value diversity and the worth of every individual (*Dignity and Respect*).

### 5. *Is it compulsory?*

Yes. **All** schools have to comply with the new guidance from September 2020.

### 6. *What is Relationships Education?*

Relationships Education aims to teach pupils to:

- cherish themselves and others as unique and wonderfully made;
- recognise what a healthy relationship looks like and how to form healthy relationships (including being part of a family, behaving well towards others, disagreeing well, forgiving and repairing broken relationships);
- keep themselves and others safe;
- make sense of the world around them (including the online world);
- develop the skills to express their own views and make their own informed decisions.

These are important skills will need to be developed from the earliest age to enable pupils to form positive friendships and behave well towards others at both home and school so that they can share, play and listen well with others.

## **7. What's new in Sex Education?**

Absolutely nothing. The new guidance has not changed the current position on teaching Sex Education. It is still up to primary schools to decide whether and, if so, when they teach Sex Education to their pupils. Many primary schools already teach sex education to help pupils make sense of the changes taking place in their bodies and to support them emotionally with the reproduction education they have learnt about in science. The Diocese of Carlisle strongly encourages and supports appropriate teaching of sex education to pupils at primary school. Pupils who aren't taught the facts at school are likely to look for answers to their questions from friends, or on the internet, and may be told things that are untrue, or find information or images which are upsetting. We want our pupils to feel as safe and comfortable as possible and for them to be taught in an age-appropriate way that matches their emotional development.

## **8. Do parents get a say in what is taught about Sex Education?**

The new guidance leaves it to schools to decide what is taught and when. Schools must consult with parents and take their views and suggestions into account when reviewing policy. Schools will also ensure that parents are fully informed about what their children are taught and when, so that parents can support them at home.

## **9. Can I ask to have my child removed from Relationships Education?**

No. Relationships Education is part of the compulsory curriculum and parents cannot ask to have their child removed from these lessons. Parents of primary school pupils can ask to have their child removed from Sex Education. Schools will meet with any parent making such a request to discuss it with them. Schools will explain to parents the advantages for their child in participating in Sex Education sessions.

## **10. If I remove my child from Sex Education lessons can I be certain that they won't learn about sex at school?**

No. Our compulsory science curriculum includes (in Year 5) sexual reproduction and how the human body changes during puberty, including the reasons why these changes take place. In addition, pupils are understandably curious about this topic and will inevitably hear it discussed by friends.

## **11. Why do I keep hearing about pupils being taught about homosexuality?**

The new guidance makes it clear that schools should teach pupils what it means to belong to the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) community as soon as it is appropriate to do so. It is very important that pupils are taught to value and respect diversity and to make sure all members of the school community feel included and cherished. Where pupils with same sex parents belong to the school community or where pupils self-identify as actual or potential members of the LGBT community, the need to address this area could arise at an early stage in school life. The Diocese of Carlisle is committed to preventing all forms of bullying or prejudice against children.

## **12. What is Health Education?**

The new guidance recognises the importance of mental wellbeing (as well as physical wellbeing). It aims to support pupils to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing (including what they eat and the danger of drugs), to know what is normal and healthy, to spot issues for themselves and others and know how to find support when they identify an issue.

Schools are being encouraged to reduce the stigma attached to mental health issues and make this something that pupils feel able to speak about openly. Pupils will also be taught about strategies to help their wellbeing (good sleep hygiene, having hobbies, being part of a community, "rationing" time spent online etc).

## **13. Where can I find more information?**

The new guidance: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/805781/Relationships\\_Education\\_Relationships\\_and\\_Sex\\_Education\\_RSE\\_and\\_Health\\_Education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805781/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf)

Diocesan Guidance: <https://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/documents/rse-guidance-schools/>