



## Government ignores parents on plans for new relationships lessons

Parents and others overwhelmingly disagreed with the Government's plans for the two new compulsory school subjects coming into schools in England in September 2020. They gave their views in the Government's public consultation (July – November 2018) on the upcoming new school subjects of Relationships Education in primary schools and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in secondary schools. But the Government has made no changes at all to the final Regulations and no changes of substance to the final Guidance for schools.

### Key points from the results of the consultation:

- **31%** of respondents were parents and represented the largest group.
- **11%** of people who responded were grandparents, making **42%** of people who responded those with the greatest vested interest in the welfare of children.
- **58%** of those who responded **disagreed** (including 40% 'strongly') that the content of Relationships Education for primary schools is 'age appropriate'.
- **60% disagreed** (42% 'strongly') that the subject will help pupils at primary school 'have positive relationships'.
- **64% disagreed** (50% 'strongly') that the content of Relationships and Sex Education for secondary schools is 'age appropriate'.
- **66% disagreed** (50% 'strongly') that the subject will help pupils at secondary school 'have positive relationships'.
- **58% disagreed** (41% strongly) that at secondary schools, taking the right of withdrawal for sex education away from the parent, and giving the decision to the head teacher, was 'an appropriate and workable option'.
- Over **twice** as many respondents were **against** the teaching of LGBT issues as were in favour.



### BAD NEWS

The government is still refusing to listen regarding the right of parents to withdraw their children from any part of Relationships Education, despite more than 250,000 campaign postcards, dispatched from SPUC, to enable concerned people in England to call upon the Secretary of State for Education to uphold this right.



### GOOD NEWS

The Government has now said: 'Primary schools are enabled and encouraged to cover LGBT content if they consider it age appropriate to do so, but there is **no specific requirement for this.**' (Emphasis added. For reference see inside no.10.) Make sure every primary school head teacher knows this.



# FAQs for

## on Relationships Education and Rel

### 1. Do I have any say in how Relationships Education and RSE will be taught in my child's school?

In theory, yes. The Government's guidance states that schools are required to consult with parents when developing their policies for Relationships Education and RSE.<sup>1</sup>

**Action:** Ask your child's school when they plan to hold a consultation and how they plan to ensure that all parents in the school are enabled to give their views. The consultation should include unambiguous questions about issues such as LGBT relationships.

### 2. Will I be able to see the policy?

Yes, the policy on Relationships Education or RSE must be made available to parents. The policy must 'meet the needs of pupils and parents and reflect the community they serve'. The policy must also include information about 'how the policy has been produced and how it will be kept under review, in both cases working with parents'. The policy must be published on the school's website.<sup>2</sup>

**Action:** Ask your child's school to publish the results of the consultation so you can see whether the policy is a fair reflection of the responses received from parents.

### 3. Will the school show me the resources they will use to teach my child?

The Government has said that schools must show 'examples' of the resources.<sup>3</sup>

**Action:** Ask your child's school to show you all resources that will be used to teach your child. This will help to ensure that schools are completely open with parents.

### 4. Who has the final say about what is taught in Relationships Education and RSE?

The school. The Government has made it clear that what is taught and how it is taught is a decision for the school and that parents cannot veto any part of the curriculum on these two new subjects. Ultimately, this means that a consultation with parents will be completely meaningless if the school ignores the views and feelings of its parents and goes ahead with its own agenda.

### 5. But hasn't the Government said that parents are the primary educators of their children?

Yes, the Government has said: 'We are clear that parents and carers are the prime educators for their children on many of these matters'.<sup>4</sup>

However, saying this means absolutely nothing when the school can override parents' views. In addition, the legal right to withdraw children from Relationships Education lessons is a critical acknowledgement by the State that parents come first in their children's moral education. After September 2020, because you will not be able to withdraw your child, you will lose the one way of truly asserting your position as the primary educator of your child.

### 6. Is it still worth engaging with my child's school?

Yes. Polite and well-informed engagement with your child's school is critical. This is an important way to try to protect your child from teaching which is unacceptable or inappropriate. If parents stay silent, the State will encroach even further into the rightful role of parents.

**Action:** Talk to other parents in your child's school to help ensure that they are fully informed about the new compulsory subjects. You may want to organise parents' groups to explore ways in which you can further influence your child's school.

### 7. Can I still take my child out of sex education lessons in primary school?

Yes. You will still have a legal right to do this after September 2020. The school governors must make sure that clear information is given to all parents about withdrawal from these classes.<sup>5</sup>

**Action:** Ask your child's school to show you all the materials which will be used in sex education lessons. Also, ask for the timetable so that you know exactly when these lessons will be delivered. Exercise your right to withdraw your child if you are not happy.

<sup>1</sup>Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers. 2019. Page 10

<sup>2</sup>As above. Pages 11-12

<sup>3</sup>As above. Page 13

<sup>4</sup>As above. Page 4

<sup>5</sup>As above. Page 16

# parents

## Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

### 8. Is there a clear distinction between Sex Education and Relationships Education in primary schools?

No. This has been a concern since the new compulsory subject of Relationships Education was announced. Schools may decide to include explicit sexual content into Relationships Education, knowing that parents cannot withdraw their children, in the same way that some primary schools incorporate sex education topics in National Curriculum science lessons.

**Action:** If you find that your child's school is including explicit sexual content in Relationships Education raise your concerns with the headteacher, the school governors, the Local Authority and ultimately the Department for Education and Social Care. Do not stay silent about this.

### 9. Can I take my secondary age child out of the sex education component of RSE?

Yes, but only with the permission of the headteacher. You do not have an automatic right to do this and for three terms before your child's 16th birthday your child can go against your wishes and attend sex education classes.<sup>6</sup>

### 10. Will my primary age child be taught about LGBT relationships?

Not necessarily. The Government has stated that there is no specific requirement for this.<sup>7</sup>

**Action:** Make a point of highlighting this to your child's primary school. This is important because it supports those primary schools which would prefer not to cover this area of relationships.

### 11. Will my secondary age child be taught about LGBT relationships?

Yes. The Government is clear that pupils must receive this teaching at some point while they are at school.<sup>8</sup> So if your child escapes LGBT teaching at primary school, he or she will certainly be taught this at secondary school.

### 12. Will the school simply be educating my child about LGBT relationships rather than promoting them?

No. The Government is trying to sugar coat its policy on LGBT teaching by saying that the new compulsory school subjects 'don't "promote" anything, they educate'.<sup>9</sup> Educating a child about LGBT relationships cannot be done in a neutral manner in the same way as, for example, teaching maths.

It is clear from the Guidance that schools must present LGBT relationships and marriage as equally beneficial and as morally valid as between one man and one woman. In addition, the Guidance states: 'At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT, they should ensure that this content is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson'.<sup>10</sup> In this way, same sex relationships will be normalised, especially for children at primary schools.

### 13. If my child goes to a faith school will he/she be exempt from Relationships Education and RSE?

No. These new subjects are compulsory in all schools in England, including faith schools. The Catholic Education Service has welcomed the Government's new subjects saying: 'The proposals announced by the Government... are compatible with the Catholic model curriculum'.<sup>11</sup> You may like to raise this with your bishop if you are a Catholic.

However, other faith groups question whether schools with a religious character can teach pupils about LGBT relationships at the same time as staying true to their beliefs.

A father with children at a Jewish school has already launched a legal challenge to the Department for Education stating that the Government is violating his human rights by requiring teachers to teach his children about 'different genders and sexualities'.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers. 2019. Page 18

<sup>7</sup>Information from the Department for Education about the introduction of compulsory relationships education and RSE from September 2020. 5 April 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs>

<sup>8</sup>As above.

<sup>9</sup>As above.

<sup>10</sup>Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers. 2019. Page 15

<sup>11</sup><http://catholiceducation.org.uk/component/k2/item/1003661-government-announcement-on-relationships-and-sex-education-ces-statement>

<sup>12</sup><https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/charedi-father-claims-human-rights-violation-over-childrens-sex-education/>



# The Equality Act 2010 and schools

Parents have reported that their child's school insists that LGBT relationships must be taught in order to comply with the 2010 Equality Act. Here is a short explanation of how the Act impacts on schools:

## There are two parts to the equality duty for schools:

1. A 'general' duty to have 'due regard' to eliminating any unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, as well as advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations, and
2. a 'specific duty' to publish information to show they are complying with the Act and to prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives at least every four years.

## This means that:

- These duties can be met in a manner consistent with upholding the rights of parents to raise their children in line with their own religious and moral values, and
- there is no obligation under the Act for schools to promote or affirm same-sex relationships and different family structures.

## GET INVOLVED WITH THE SAFE AT SCHOOL CAMPAIGN!

For further information and to sign up for our email updates please visit [www.safeatschool.org.uk](http://www.safeatschool.org.uk). You can also write to us at Safe at School, SPUC, 3 Whitacre Mews, Stannary Street, London, SE11 4AB. Or email us at [info@safeatschool.org.uk](mailto:info@safeatschool.org.uk). For confidential support / advice on RSE in your child's school please call: 020 8407 3463

### REPLY FORM

Please send me more copies of this bulletin to distribute to others  10  20  100 Other quantity \_\_\_\_\_

Please add my email address to the special Safe at School email list to get updates on RSE matters.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (include only if you are happy to be contacted by phone): \_\_\_\_\_