

# 'RSHE Parent Consultation'



Washington  
Academy

*Enriching Lives, Inspiring Ambitions*



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# Statutory requirements in secondary education

- From 2020, Relationships and sex Education became compulsory in all secondary schools
- Following consultations with parents, young people and professionals, the Dept for Education published [statutory guidance](#) for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education.
- A new focus in the requirements was on supporting young people to have **healthy and consensual relationships** (previously, only sex education was compulsory and was covered mainly in Science).



## Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education

Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers



# Why RSHE matters in schools

PSHE and RSHE didn't used to be prioritised so much in schools. It likely wasn't when you, the parents in the room, went to school. Now young people have access to more information and risk at a younger age. Below are the main reasons why RSHE is a statutory requirement and is prioritised in this school.

## Develop life skills and knowledge

- Communication/oracy and listening
- Healthy relationships
- Resilience
- Look after your physical and mental health
- Critical thinking to make good choices

## Safety

- Preventative
- Staying safe in school, online, in the world
- Reporting concerns

## A safe space to talk

- Counter negative influence  
Incl. the web
- Consider alternative viewpoints

## School culture and behaviour

- Respect others and treat them well
- We talk about things



# Statutory requirements in secondary education

Who does the guidance apply to?

Curriculum focus	A legal requirement	Optional but recommended
<b>Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)</b>	<p><b>All schools providing secondary education years 7-11, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All through schools including academies and free schools</li> <li>• Middle schools</li> <li>• Independent schools</li> <li>• Alternative provisions and pupil referral units (PRUs)</li> <li>• Non-maintained/ maintained special schools</li> </ul>	<p>The statutory requirements do not apply to sixth form colleges, 16-19 academies or Further Education (FE) colleges, although we would encourage them to support students by offering these subjects.</p>
<b>Health Education</b>	<p><b>All maintained schools including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools with a sixth form</li> <li>• Academies</li> <li>• Free schools</li> <li>• Non-maintained special schools</li> <li>• Alternative provisions and pupil referral units (PRUs)</li> </ul>	<p>The statutory requirement to provide Health Education does not apply to independent schools – PSHE is already compulsory as independent schools must meet the Independent School Standards as set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.</p>



## 6 key areas schools have to focus on:

### Policy

All schools must have in place a written policy for RSE detailing how the subject is accessible for all pupils and with an acknowledgement that pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) are more vulnerable to exploitation and bullying.

### Safeguarding

There should always be a focus on keeping children safe and a connection between safeguarding and RSE as the school plays a part in preventative education.

### Right to be excused from sex education

Parents will have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some of all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

### A whole-school approach

All of these subjects should be set in the context of a wider whole-school approach to supporting students to be safe, happy and prepared for life beyond school.

### Support for parents/carers

Schools should communicate how RSHE will be taught as well as informing parents/carers about their rights to withdraw.

### RSE curriculum

The aim of RSE is to give young people the information to develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. Full details of topics can be found [here in the DfE's published statutory guidance](#).

Being safe

Online and media

Physical and mental  
well-being

The law in relation to  
RSE topics

**What's included**

Families

Respectful  
relationships, including  
friendships

Intimate and sexual  
relationships, including  
sexual health

Menstruation



## Specifics - By the end of secondary school, pupils should know:

<b>Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● about different types of committed, stable relationships</li><li>● how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children.</li><li>● about marriage and long-term relationships including legal rights</li><li>● the roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children</li><li>● how to seek help and support others in unsafe relationships</li></ul>
<b>Respectful relationships, including friendships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (including online)</li><li>● how stereotypes are damaging and the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality</li><li>● how to show respect towards others and show tolerance of other people's beliefs.</li><li>● about types of bullying, the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help.</li><li>● criminal behaviour within relationships including violence and coercive control.</li><li>● sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable.</li></ul>
<b>Being safe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and fgm, and how these can affect current and future relationships</li><li>● how people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn (in all contexts, including online).</li></ul>

## Specifics - By the end of secondary school, pupils should know:

### Online and media

- their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online
- about online risks, including the sharing of materials
- what to do and where to get support for any issues
- the impact of viewing harmful content specifically
- sexually explicit material and its impact on future relationships
- criminal behaviour related to indecent images
- how information is collected, shared and used online

### Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

- how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy intimate relationships,
- that all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships
- the facts about reproductive health, including fertility and menopause
- that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure
- that they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex.
- the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available.
- the facts and choices around pregnancy including miscarriage, adoption and abortion
- how the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex and the importance of and facts about testing
- how the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour
- how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment

## Specifics - By the end of secondary school, pupils should know:

<b>The law</b>	<p>Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, including for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● marriage</li><li>● consent, including the age of consent</li><li>● violence against women and girls</li><li>● online behaviours including image and information sharing (incl. nudes and sexting)</li><li>● pornography</li><li>● abortion</li><li>● sexuality and gender identity</li><li>● substance misuse</li><li>● violence and exploitation by gangs</li><li>● extremism/radicalisation</li><li>● criminal exploitation (for example, through gang involvement or 'county lines' drugs operations),</li><li>● hate crime</li><li>● female genital mutilation (FGM).</li></ul>
<b>Physical and mental well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing.</li><li>● how to seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.</li><li>● about self-control and self-regulation</li><li>● about the stigma attached to health issues, especially mental health</li></ul>
<b>Menstruation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● key facts about the menstrual cycle including what an average period is, about a range of menstrual products and the implications for emotional and physical health</li></ul>

# DfE guidance for different faiths

In all schools, when teaching these subjects, the religious background of all pupils must be taken into account when planning teaching, so that the topics that are included in the core content in this guidance are appropriately handled. Schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.

All schools may teach about faith perspectives. In particular, schools with a religious character may teach the distinctive faith perspective on relationships, and balanced debate may take place about issues that are seen as contentious. For example, the school may wish to reflect on faith teachings about certain topics as well as how their faith institutions may support people in matters of relationships and sex.

In making learning appropriate to the faith of pupils, the guiding principle should be that **teaching is responsive to their lived experiences**, and so can **reflect the religious and cultural background of pupils**, for example in the choices of resources and tailoring the curriculum to meet pupil needs. The **difference between fact and opinion** must always be made clear to pupils and information about the law and legal rights included throughout RSE.

# DfE guidance for SEND pupils

Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education must be accessible for **all pupils**. This is particularly important when planning teaching for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities who represent a large minority of pupils.

High quality teaching that is **differentiated** and personalised will be the starting point to ensure accessibility. Schools should also be mindful of the preparing for adulthood outcomes, as set out in the **SEND code of practice**, when teaching these subjects to those with SEND.

Schools should be aware that some pupils are **more vulnerable to exploitation**, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND. Relationships Education and RSE can also be particularly important subjects for some pupils; for example those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs or learning disabilities.

In special schools and for some SEND pupils in mainstream schools there may be a need to tailor content and teaching to meet the specific needs of pupils at different developmental stages. Schools should ensure that their teaching is sensitive, age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate and delivered with reference to the law.

# Age appropriateness

Schools must be sensitive to teach topics at a time that will most benefit the safety and development of the child. The maturity and development of children varies hugely and this is influenced by many factors including:

- A child's homelife – language and openness modelled by parents/carers
- The influence of other people including friends and older siblings
- Access to technology and the world of adult focussed content it opens up
- Neurodivergence



# Our schools approach to 'age appropriateness'

We use a combination of the following inputs to develop and deliver our curriculum:

1. National statistics and evidence – for example recommendations published by the PSHE Association or by national charities such as the NSPCC
2. We use a spiral curriculum format – this means themes are revisited throughout a child's time in secondary education, each time revisiting the topic in an age appropriate way.
3. An awareness of the community students are growing up within including police data
4. Surveys to students and parents
5. Our understanding of pupil maturity based upon their behaviour, language and prevalence of safeguarding concerns raised in schools
6. Two classes within the same year group could in theory receive different lessons based upon a judgement of maturity and need.
7. There is potential for us to deliver interventions with a pupil(s) who needs education on a specific topic without a whole class receiving that lesson.
8. Feedback from parents!



## An example of 'age appropriateness' decision making - Pornography

National statistics:

**The average age at which children first view pornography is now 13 years old.**

([The Children's Commissioner report 2023](#))

- The report findings, based upon a survey of over a thousand 16–21-year-olds and focus groups with teenagers, also showed substantial proportions of young people had seen pornography viewed it at a much younger age than 13 – 27% by age 11 and 10% by the age of 9.
- Young people spoke about the unbearable pressure to view hardcore pornography even if they do not want to, much of which depicts degrading acts and violence against women

In response to this report, the PSHE Association have recommended in strong terms that pornography should be **taught before year 11** and that this topic should be revisited as part of a spiral curriculum of study throughout secondary education.

Our school RSHE resource partner Life Lessons recommend that pornography is introduced as a topic in year 8. However schools can teach the subject sooner or later than year 8 based upon their understanding of the maturity, attitudes, prevalence of sexualised language and behavior and how active students are on digital media.



# Life Lessons

## Introduction to Life Lessons



# Why we have partnered with Life Lessons

- Life Lessons take an **evidence based approach**, using best practice recommended by the government endorsed PSHE Association to create their lesson materials.
- Unlike other providers, Life Lessons update their materials ongoing so their **lessons reflect what's going on in the world and in the lives of young people**.
- Life Lessons materials are **100% flexible**. So what we teach, to who and when is all in our control as a school and parent community.
- Life Lessons support our **whole school approach** with materials designed for use to deliver the curriculum but also to reinforce important themes elsewhere in form times and assemblies.
- Life Lessons do not have any 'agenda' with their materials other than believing that topics that affect a young person's life now, and in the near future need to be talked about. Their materials, in particular **their videos, make discussion much easier** as they model the conversation in the classroom.
- Our **teachers benefit from ongoing training and support** from the Life Lessons team



# The Life Lessons approach

Life Lessons' approach to teaching RSHE and healthy school culture follows **3 simple principles**



**Discussion  
based**



**Connects directly  
with lives of  
young people**



**Inclusive**



# Life Lessons put young people at the heart of relationships, sex and health education

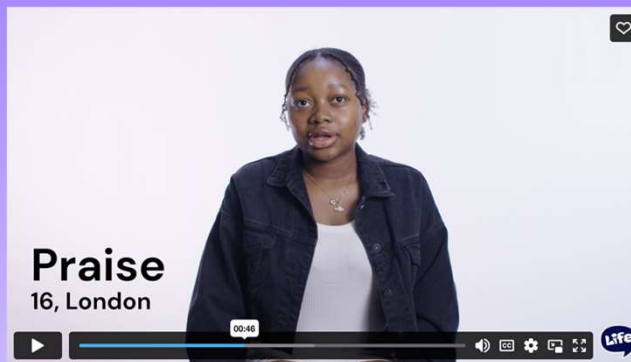
Across 3 Seasons, Life Lessons have filmed 62 young people aged 14–25 from all over the UK, representing **different sexualities, cultural and faith backgrounds**.

Schools access **320 peer-led videos**, embedded into lessons that model the discussion to students in the classroom

Click to view



How you start a conversation with their parent/guardian about your mental health?



Thinking about diversity and equality, what kind of society would you like to live in?



How does your faith or cultural background—influence your relationship decisions?



# Life Lessons brings the best experts into schools in a cost effective way

How can we expect a non-specialist teacher to be an expert on FGM, gangs, diversity and inclusion or STIs? We shouldn't expect this – Life Lessons bring the experts to schools in a sustainable way. Schools access **210 expert videos**, embedded into lessons that model the expert view to the classroom

Click to view



How can you challenge a friend who makes a sexist joke. Why is it important?



How to treat others respectfully and without bias



What does the law say about consent? What does it look like in reality?



# How the Life Lessons approach supports your child's RSHE education

## We support students to:

- Be **safer** in school, out of school and online
- Develop the **knowledge** and **skills** to look after themselves in the world
- **Respect** others in the community and in wider society
- Have **healthy attitudes** to relationships of all kinds
- **Read between the lines** of what they see online

## Your child will develop skills useful for a successful life:

- **Critical thinking** to support good decision making
- The **vocabulary** and **confidence** to talk about matters that affect them now and their lives ongoing
- **Reflection** skills
- **Active listening**



# How parents can help



# How to support your child in their RSE journey

## \*our recommendations\*

- **Celebrate individual differences** to promote a greater sense of belonging for everyone in society
- **Talk openly** with your child to model confidence in discussing tricky topics
- **Listen to your child** without judgement
- **Engage** with the school's parent consultations about RSE topics
- **Stay up to date** with what is being taught and when so you can follow up on these topics at home
- **Ask for support** if you need it – you are not expected to know everything!



# Useful resources for parents

## Online safety

- Support your child to be **safe online** by monitoring their device usage. There are free courses available via National Online Safety on how to do this.
- Be aware of **social media age restrictions**. Guidance available at Internet Matters.
- Find support on the NSPCC website related to social media use and staying safe online.
- **Specific advice** available around the use of tablets, smart TVs, games consoles and smart speakers at UK Safer Internet Centre.

## Communicating with your child

- The BBC parent toolkit has a wealth of resources including how to speak to your child about mental health and support in talking to them about LGBTQ+
- David Chambers' (a masculinity and relationships coach) video on understanding and communicating emotions
- Find support around **alcohol and drugs, racism, mental health, and how to speak to your child about difficult topics** on the NSPCC website.



# How to get a balanced view online



<https://vimeo.com/794802336/a1202c67a3?share=copy>



# Your right to withdraw

[Right to be excused from sex education \(commonly referred to as the right to withdraw\)](#)

**Q: Do I have a right to withdraw my child from Relationships and Sex Education?**

## Entitlement to withdraw

- Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of 'sex education' delivered as part of broader statutory RSE.
- The precise definition of sex education, and what is included, is determined by the school.
- Parents cannot withdraw their child from lessons on sexual reproduction and body development. Effectively biological content that could be taught within the science curriculum.

## The school's responsibility

- The school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16.
- After the age of 16, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

## The process and discussion

Head teachers should discuss with parents the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child. This could include any social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly said by the teacher (although the detrimental effects may be mitigated if the parents propose to deliver sex education to their child at home instead).

Schools will want to document this process to ensure a record is kept.



# Ongoing support

- <https://www.washingtonacademy.co.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=673&type=pdf> – this is our RSE policy available on our website.
- If you have any questions about the topics your child is learning, please contact the members of staff below

## Mrs Oakland

Assistant Headteacher–Personal  
Development

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## Mrs Archer

Head of Personal Development

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# Your questions



# Glossary of terms

Relationships sex and health education can have an overwhelming amount of jargon and acronyms. Here are some of the key terms that could be useful to share with parents at the start of a talk.

Word or acronym	Definition
RSE	Relationships and sex education
RSHE	Relationships, sex and health education
Statutory requirement	Compulsory under law
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
PSHE / Personal development	Personal Social Health Education
Ofsted	The government Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.
DfE	Department for Education



# Glossary of terms continued

Relationships sex and health education can have an overwhelming amount of jargon and acronyms. Here are some of the key terms that could be useful to share with parents at the start of a talk.

Word or acronym	Definition
Neurodivergence	A term used to describe brains that work in different ways to the predominant neurotype. Examples include ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, DCD/Dyspraxia.
PSHE Association	The industry body for the teaching of RSE in schools and who directly translated the government's statutory requirements for schools to follow,
Spiral curriculum	Teaching and returning to a topic in increasing detail and complexity matched to the needs and maturity of a year group

