



Relationships, Sex and Health Education

Frequently Asked Questions

The documents and resources referred to here can be found and accessed via the Diocese of Chichester Education website. In this document RSHE is used as a shorthand for Relationships, Sex Education and Health Education. Statutory Sex Education is only applicable to secondary schools.

What does RSHE stand for?

RSHE refers to the new Relationships Education, Sex Education and Health Education curriculum which is statutory in schools from September 2020. Relationships education is part of the basic curriculum and becomes compulsory in all primary schools in England (maintained, academies and independent). Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is compulsory in all secondary schools. Health Education will be compulsory in all state funded schools. Many primary schools already teach Sex Education and can continue to do so, though there is no statutory requirement to do so. The specific requirements for the new RSHE curriculum are set out in the DfE guidance booklet.

What is the point of statutory RSHE?

RSHE is designed to help children and young people from all backgrounds build positive and safe relationships enabling them to thrive in modern Britain. At the primary phase RSHE focuses on the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of developing positive and healthy relationships, with particular reference to family relationships and friendships. Teaching about family and friendships focuses on the range of relationships that children are likely to encounter, including on-line relationships. The specific knowledge outlined within the RSHE curriculum is designed to go hand in hand with the cultivation of positive character traits and virtues and it is envisaged that much of the RSHE curriculum will be integrated with wider PHSE and character education programmes.

Secondary RSHE builds on the teaching at primary level and is designed to enable young people to live healthy lives and develop positive, healthy and nurturing relationships of all kinds, including intimate relationships. In RSHE pupils will focus on what healthy

relationships look like, what makes a good friend and colleague and what elements contribute to successful marriages and committed relationships. They will also be taught about intimate relationships, what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships and how to resist social media pressure and pressure from peers in their developing friendships and relationships. In Sex Education pupils will also be taught about intimate relationships, sex, sexual health and gender identity. In all RSHE pupils will be given factual information and the language and skills necessary to help them mature, build confidence and develop their self-esteem. The specific content for RSHE is set out in the DfE guidance document.

How should we prepare for RSHE?

A clear 'roadmap' for statutory RSE sets out the steps schools need to take in order to prepare and then implement the statutory requirements for relationships and sex education effectively. The roadmap can be downloaded from our website. Schools are required to consult with parents before the new curriculum comes into effect in September 2020.

The Church of England has produced materials to support schools with this process. School leaders need to ensure that they are familiar with the requirements and will need to consider training and resource implications. We advise that all schools allocate a named governor/governors who can liaise with senior leaders/ RSHE lead as part of the Governing Board's monitoring and evaluation framework.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the DfE has issued updated guidance around the implementation of RSHE. RSHE remains statutory from September 2020 and the DfE hopes that most schools will be in position to teach RSHE from September 2020. However, where schools have not been able to prepare sufficiently, they will now have a further 2 terms (Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021) in which to prepare. The expectation is that all schools will implement RSHE from the start of the summer term 2021.

[‘The new curriculum will be compulsory from September 2020. Schools should start teaching from that date if they meet the statutory requirements. If they are not ready, or are unable to meet the requirements, they should begin teaching by at least the start of the summer term 2021’.](#)

What does the Church of England say about RSHE?

All Church of England schools are required by law to meet the Equality Act 2010 and from September 2020 the statutory requirements for RSHE. The Church of England supports and endorses the new RSHE curriculum and encourages school leaders, governors and clergy to embrace fully the teaching of RSHE in line with the new statutory requirements. The Church of England recognizes that issues relating to relationships, human identity, sexual orientation and sex are sensitive and important.

The DfE guidance to schools is clear that all schools may teach about different faith perspectives in relation to RSHE. Schools may teach pupils the distinctive faith perspective on relationships and should encourage age appropriate and balanced discussion about issues which may be seen as contentious. Church of England schools should reflect the Church's teachings on certain issues, but must reflect the law, so that pupils are clear about what the law allows and does not allow. The Diocese of Chichester RSE Guidance provides further information.

How does our Church school status affect RSHE?

All church schools should teach RSHE and fulfil the statutory requirements. All schools should ensure that they have a good understanding of pupils' faith backgrounds and try to build positive relationships with parents and local faith communities to establish a constructive context for teaching RSHE. The religious background of all pupils must be taken into account when planning the teaching of RSHE and must comply with the Equality Act 2010 (religion and belief are amongst the protected characteristics).

In church schools the approach to the curriculum and to relationships, identity and sexual orientation should be informed by and reflect the distinctive vision of the school, which should be an inclusive Christian vision. Schools should ensure that pupils and young people are given accurate information as a basis for understanding difference and removing prejudice. Pupils should be taught about the world in which they live and equipped with the language and skills necessary for them to understand and articulate their own feelings and choices, whilst being considerate and understanding of the views, beliefs and life choices of others.

Pupils are entitled to learn about relationships and sex education in a positive and safe environment, where they can develop the knowledge, skills and vocabulary to help them understand themselves and others and to develop healthy, loving and resilient relationships. This is especially important in an internet age, where they have far greater exposure to information than before and where much of that information reaches them from outside the safety of the family context or the classroom.

In a church school RSHE should be rooted in the teachings of the Church of England, including the Christian understanding of marriage as the context for sexual relationships and the importance of trust, loyalty, fidelity and choice as the basis for all relationships. Further guidance and information can be found in the Diocese of Chichester RSE Guidance booklet.

How do we teach RSHE effectively?

The RSHE curriculum sits alongside the development of personal attributes and the specific content of the RSHE curriculum should support the wider work of schools in fostering well-being, resilience and character education. The new RSHE is designed to provide the building blocks for children and young people to establish healthy and respectful relationships and an understanding of how to live a healthy and happy life and builds on the work that many schools already do.

Schools have the flexibility to teach the compulsory content in a way that suits their own context. Many schools will integrate RSHE within wider PSHE Education. Some aspects of the RSHE curriculum will also link closely with topics explored in other curriculum areas such as Science, computing and RE. Schools are encouraged to integrate RSHE into a broad and balanced curriculum and to establish meaningful links with other subjects where appropriate. The DfE discourages stand-alone lessons taught in isolation. A school's vision should be the starting point for RSHE curriculum design and intent. The RSHE curriculum should be structured and organised with clear progression and end points.

What does the new curriculum say about LGBT relationships?

The new curriculum is designed to foster respect for others and recognize and respect difference and diversity. Specific content about LGBT is taught within RSHE at secondary school and it is important that RSHE should meet the needs of all pupils, whatever their own developing sexual identity. The RSHE curriculum includes age-appropriate teaching about different types of relationships within the context of the law. Pupils need to understand issues of equality and respect. When schools consider it is appropriate to teach pupils about LGBT they should ensure that the content is fully integrated into the programme of study. It should not be delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. The DfE expects that all pupils will be taught LGBT content at some point: that point will depend upon the context of the school and individual cohorts of pupils.

At primary school there is no statutory requirement to teach Sex Education. The Relationships and Health education requirements are designed to help children grow up to be healthy, happy and safe and to equip them with the knowledge and skills to make informed and positive decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships. Pupils are taught about what relationships are, within the context of family and friendship, how they can develop positive and healthy relationships within family and with friends and how to access support. In teaching about family and friendships schools should ensure that they reflect British society and the diversity of families and loving relationships which exist in society. There is no requirement to teach about LGBT within primary schools.

Can pupils withdraw from RSHE?

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some aspects of or all of Sex Education. At 16 pupils can request to withdraw themselves from sex education. Pupils cannot be withdrawn from any aspects of Relationships Education or Health Education in both primary and secondary schools. More information can be found on www.gov.uk website and within the DfE guidance.

Schools should try to work with parents before implementing the RSHE curriculum in September 2020. They must consult with parents before RSHE becomes statutory in September 2020, so that parents are informed and feel confident about what will be taught and how it will be taught.

If parents request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of Sex Education the headteacher should meet with the parents to establish and try to understand the parent's wishes and concerns and to clarify the purpose and content of the Sex Education curriculum with them. Once these discussions have taken place a school should respect the parent's request. If a pupil is excused from Sex Education, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that the pupil receives appropriate purposeful education during the period of withdrawal. In primary schools the school must automatically grant the parental request to withdraw their child from Sex Education, other than the statutory content covered in Science.

How do we manage difficult questions?

Pupils in both primary and secondary settings are likely to ask difficult and occasionally inappropriate questions that will go beyond the content of the curriculum. School leaders should consider how the school will deal with these before they arise and the RSHE policy should set out clearly how difficult questions will be handled. Discussions with staff about classroom sessions need to take place prior to September 2020 and all schools should ensure staff have appropriate training in order to deliver content effectively and handle classroom discussions.

Will RSHE be inspected?

Ofsted inspectors will look at RSHE alongside PHSE, SMSC etc. RSE is included within the current SIAMS Schedule which states:

'Church schools should meet the statutory requirements in a way that ensures that children and young people are able to cherish themselves and others as unique and wonderfully made, and to form healthy relationships where they respect and offer dignity to others'

A SIAMS inspector will evaluate the quality of RSE as part of Strand 5: Dignity and Respect.

Schools have flexibility as to how they meet the statutory requirements for RSHE, but they should ensure the following:

- there is a clear vision which reflects the school's context – both the community context and its CE status (the context of faith, belief and religion). This vision should be an inclusive and aspirational one and inform all aspects of school life and decision making, including decisions about when and how to teach RSHE.
- policy and practice reflect and develop the school's Christian vision
- it complies with all the statutory requirements for RSHE
- the quality and effectiveness of RHSE is evaluated by senior leadership and governors

During the current COVID-19 pandemic all inspections are suspended. When inspections are reinstated inspectors will be sensitive to and take account of the context and circumstances of individual schools.

What is the role of the Governing Board?

In addition to the legal obligations of the Governing Board governors should ensure that they are fully informed about the RSHE curriculum and its content and expectations, so that they can evaluate effectively the progress pupils are making. The Diocese advises that schools appoint a governor/governors who can liaise with the RSHE lead. Governing Boards need to ensure the subject is well led and managed and that teaching is accessible for all pupils, including those with SEND. Governing boards should ensure that the RSHE curriculum is adequately resourced, staffed and timetabled. Foundation governors will need to ensure that RSHE reflects and develops the school's Christian vision.

Where can I find additional help and support?

The DfE has produced detailed guidance for schools and parents. From Summer term 2020 additional online materials and resources will be available to support schools. A number of organisations and Local Authorities have also produced excellent support materials. More information can be found via the RSHE section of the Diocese of Chichester Education website.

Diocese of Chichester Education website: <https://schools@chichester.anglican.org>