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# School Checklist (Secondary)

## for Relationships and Sex Education School Policies

From September 2020 there will be a new requirement to teach Relationships and Sex Education in every secondary school in England (with schools having been encouraged to teach the subject from September 2019).

According to the Government's RSE guidance<sup>1</sup>, "all schools must have in place a written policy for Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). Schools must consult parents in developing and reviewing their policy. Schools should ensure that the policy meets the needs of pupils and parents and reflects the community they serve."<sup>2</sup>

Schools will also want to consider how they engage with some of the directives within the guidance as it itself notes that it is "statutory", which means "schools must have regard to the guidance, and where they depart from those parts of the guidance which state that they should (or should not) do something they will need to have good reasons for doing so". The guidance goes on to distinguish between "what schools should do and sets out legal duties with which schools must comply when teaching Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education, and Health Education".

### **Before the policy has been developed**

- Schools are required to have written policies in place by September 2020. Decide when and how your school will be consulting with parents as part of the policy formulation.
  - Decide if your school is planning to use both/either parental surveys or parental meetings as part of the consultation and how you will encourage parents and carers to participate. [This can include asking what topics and in which years they think particular content should be taught.]
  - Decide if and how you will provide faith perspectives on these issues (and whether this needs to be included in your statement). If you are a religious-ethos school you may also wish to consider how your statement articulates that you will be teaching your specific religious perspective on these topics as the guidance allows you to do (paragraph 21).

## When creating your School's policy

When drafting your school's Relationships and Sex Education policy, you may wish to consider the following:

- If you will be using particular pre-packaged curriculum(s) (and if so which) and how this will be communicated to parents and carers.
- What examples of content you are giving parents and carers, and whether they give them a good idea of what will actually be taught. You might wish to include a question on this in any surveys you conduct.
  - This could also include when parents and carers think particular topics should be taught.
- Decide how, as required by the guidance, your policy mentions that the religious background of all pupils is taken into account when planning teaching and how specifically you propose to do this (for example parental surveys, internal school checks on the suitability of teaching etc).
- Decide if you will use external providers for the delivery of some of these lessons.
  - If you decide you will, state explicitly in your policy that parents and carers will be notified beforehand about the name of the organisation and the specific content and topic that organisation will be teaching on.
- You may wish to clarify which parts of the RSE teaching are "Sex Education" and therefore eligible for parents and carers to request an opt-out.
  - Concerning the opt-out, due to the Government changing the law, if a child is over 15 it is their decision whether they want to be opted out, not the parents. (More details on how schools should administer the opt-out are found in paragraph 45-50.)
  - Note, while it is not entirely clear in the RSE guidance what is Relationships Education and what is Sex Education within RSE at secondary age, all those topics/ issues listed in the "Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health" section (page 27-30) could be presumed to be Sex Education by the fact they are not listed in the Relationships Education taught in primary.

- Consider how you will teach the sensitive issues, knowing that the guidance says pupils “should” know about numerous topics that include:
  - Abortion
  - Contraception
  - Consent
  - Pornography
  - Pregnancy
  - Sexually transmitted diseases
  - Confidential sexual and reproductive health advice
  
- The RSE guidance expects that “all pupils have been taught LGBT content at a timely point” (paragraph 37) and this includes “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” (paragraph 75).
  - Therefore you may wish to decide and document what you consider to be a “timely point” for pupils (which may be different for different pupils) and what the content for those lessons includes.
    - This can also include how it is “age-appropriate” and, like all RSE teaching, “takes into account the religious background of the pupils”. (Paragraph 20)
  
- Consider how, as required by the RSE guidance, your policy mentions that the religious background of all pupils is taken into account when planning teaching and how specifically you propose to do this (for example, parental surveys or internal school checks on the suitability and sensitivity of teaching).
  
- Consider if you will use external providers for the delivery of some of these lessons.
  - If you do plan on using external providers, consider whether your policy should explicitly state that parents will be notified beforehand about the name of the organisation and the specific content and topic that organisation will be teaching on.

## Endnotes

1. [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)
2. RSE Guidance (July 2019), Para 13, p.11