

Relationships Education and Health Education – FAQs from teachers

Note: answers in black are the brief summary; answers in blue provide more in-depth guidance.

1. **Does the new DfE statutory Relationships and Health Education guidance replace PSHE?**

No. From September 2020, you'll need to be delivering the DfE's Relationships Education and Health Education statutory guidance and it's recommended that you do this within the wider, PSHE curriculum. This will require new or increased curriculum content for many schools, new policies and renewed consultation with parents. But the new guidance doesn't cover everything needed for a comprehensive PSHE curriculum. Vital elements such as the rights of the child, caring for the environment, economic education, and parts of British Values and SMSC are not included.

A SCARF subscription gives schools access to a comprehensive PSHE programme that delivers all this. We also provide a free Relationships Education policy template and guidance document – find this in [RSE guidance and support materials under the My SCARF tab](#).

We asked the PSHE Association for their advice on this and received this from their Deputy CEO Jenny Barksfield:

“The new DfE guidance states that schools must have policies for Relationships Education. Schools may choose to have a PSHE policy (this has never been mandatory) as they are likely to have other subject specific policies which will obviously link to their Relationships Education and RSE policy. I would think separate policies are better but schools may choose to incorporate them together.

Likewise, we continue to advise and campaign for PSHE education in its entirety. Relationships Education and Health Education are part of PSHE education but the other aspects that have not been made statutory are just as important – including the aspects from the 3rd section of our Programme of Study: Living in the Wider World. We are updating our Programme of Study and this will be released in due course but we would not recommend that schools only teach the statutory aspects of PSHE education.”

2. **Do we have to teach about LGBT identities and families?**

Yes, the statutory guidance states that schools must teach about families of many forms and this includes LGBT parents.

The public sector equality duty, created under the Equality Act, also requires schools to eliminate discrimination and to advance equality in its everyday business, in the design of its policies and curriculum. At Coram Life Education we also believe that we have a responsibility to normalise the diverse range of trusted people in children's lives.

3. My understanding is Sex Education is non- statutory and therefore parents can withdraw from it. Which parts of SCARF include Sex Education?

We interpret sex education to mean puberty, conception, reproduction and birth. All of these themes, with the exception of conception, are statutory included in either Health Education or National Curriculum Science.

The statutory guidance states that sex education should ensure children know how a baby is conceived. We interpret 'how a baby is conceived' as referring to what happens during sexual intercourse before an egg and sperm meet (reproduction). We therefore include sexual intercourse as well as IVF in our Year 6 Making Babies lesson. NB: this lesson can be adapted to ensure no non-statutory sex education is taught (this would be by omitting the sexual intercourse elements).

The DfE statutory guidance states (p. 23) the following in relation to Sex Education:

"The national curriculum for science also includes subject content in related areas, such as the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals."

"It is important that the transition phase before moving to secondary school supports pupils' ongoing emotional and physical development effectively. The Department continues to recommend therefore that all primary schools should have a sex education programme tailored to the age and the physical and emotional maturity of the pupils. It should ensure that both boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings and – drawing on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the national curriculum for science - how a baby is conceived and born."

We have interpreted this to mean that Sex Education includes puberty, conception, reproduction and birth. Puberty is already statutory under Health Education and National Curriculum Science (no right to withdraw). Birth and reproduction is also included in Science (again no right to withdraw) and so this leaves conception. We have interpreted 'how a baby is conceived' to refer to what happens during sexual intercourse before an egg and sperm meet (reproduction). We therefore include sexual intercourse as well as IVF in our Year 6 Making Babies lesson, to help children understand how babies are conceived, particularly before they transition to secondary school to support the pupils' ongoing emotional and physical development effectively, as stated by the DfE.

We also believe this to be a safeguarding issue, as children starting secondary school will be mixing with 16 year olds and possibly 18 year olds who will legally be able to have sex – and so by providing sex education in Year 6 we are laying the foundations to further sex education in secondary school, as well as helping children to identify what sexual intercourse is and its potential consequences (pregnancy), should anyone be trying to coerce them to engage in sexual activity.

Menstruation/puberty are technically not Sex Education but Health Education, and are therefore statutory. Naming parts of the body comes under the **Being Safe** category of **Relationships Education**, statement number 7: *How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence to do so*, as well as National Curriculum Science and is again statutory. However, if you feel that your pupils are not ready for this information in the year group it has been suggested within the SCARF curriculum, then you have the flexibility to deliver the lesson in a later year, when you feel it would best meet your pupils' needs.

4. How early do I need to be delivering menstruation to the girls? I've heard it needs to be Year 3 which feels too early for my pupils.

The statutory guidance states puberty should be covered in Health Education and should be addressed before onset so, as far as possible, pupils are prepared in advance for changes they will experience. Best practice states that menstruation education should be delivered to both boys and girls, as learning about menstruation is a concept of reproduction, as covered by the national curriculum science and fosters good relationships by breaking down the stigma of going through these changes leading to less bullying. However schools retain the freedom to determine an age-appropriate, developmental curriculum which meets the needs of young people, so can deliver themes at a later stage if that best meets their pupils' needs.

The NHS states that girls as young as 8 years old start menstruating. Children turn 8 in Year 3, so it is a timely point for them to receive the information *before* the changes take place.

In a Sex Education Forum survey, nearly a quarter of respondents identifying as female did not learn about periods before they started having them. Anecdotally we hear of girls who thought they were dying when they first discovered blood in their knickers, because they had been unprepared. The shame and stigma surrounding menstruation has a big impact on a girl's identity and mental wellbeing. Head teachers have told us of the positive impact that early teaching about the changes can have in reducing bullying and increasing empathy and understanding as children go through puberty.

The statutory guidance states that both boys and girls are to be prepared for the changes that adolescence brings. Best practice states that menstruation education should be delivered to both boys and girls, as learning about menstruation is a concept of reproduction, as covered by the national curriculum science and fosters good relationships by breaking down the stigma of going through these changes leading to less bullying. However schools retain the freedom to determine an age-appropriate, developmental curriculum which meets the needs of young people, so can deliver themes at a later stage if that best meets their pupils' needs.

5. How do the RSE elements of SCARF support the values of faith schools and their delivery of RSE?

The RSE elements of SCARF are based on the SCARF values of Safety, Caring, Achievement, Resilience and Friendship. We believe that all children deserve to be safe, cared for and to learn the skills they need to develop healthy relationships. We feel there is a natural fit between these values and the ethos of schools with a religious character.

The themes within the RSE elements of SCARF help children from all backgrounds to build positive and safe relationships, and to thrive in modern Britain. Schools with a religious character must deliver Relationships Education as described in the statutory guidance, with the flexibility to teach their distinctive faith perspective on relationships too, whilst being clear what is opinion or belief and what is information regarding the law and legal rights.

6. What are the requirements to consult parents?

Schools must consult parents when developing and reviewing their RSE policy. This should include providing examples of resources to be used to reassure parents and support them to continue the conversation at home.

To consult means to have discussions with (someone), typically before undertaking a course of action. Therefore schools must have discussions with parents when developing and reviewing their RSE policy. They should provide examples of the resources that they plan to use as this can be reassuring for parents and enables them to continue the conversations started in class at home. Where a maintained primary school chooses to teach aspects of sex education (which go beyond the statutory elements of the Science National Curriculum), the school must set this out in their policy and all schools should discuss with parents what is to be covered.

Schools will retain freedom to determine an age-appropriate, developmental curriculum which meets the needs of young people, is developed in consultation with parents and the local community.

Where primary schools choose to deliver sex education they should have discussions with parents before the final year of primary school about the detailed content of what will be taught. This process should include offering parents support in talking to their children about sex education and how to link this with what is being taught in school. Meeting these objectives will require a graduated, age-appropriate programme of sex education. Teaching needs to take account of the developmental differences of children.

7. How can we communicate with parents?

Schools are expected to communicate with parents regarding their RSE policy's content, including resources of any sex education they choose to deliver. The key to this process being effective is to use this as an opportunity to dispel any myths regarding what might be taught – and to build trust. Consider running workshops and training with staff before talking with parents, so that staff can talk confidently about the subject as the questions arise.

It is important for parents to have a chance to learn what we mean by Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) to help dispel any myths they may have heard from the media. Historically some newspapers and websites have led society to believe that sex education for 5 year olds involves teaching them how to have sex; this clearly isn't the case. Parents need to know that RSE for 5 year olds is about exploring themes around

- Children's families and their special people
- The importance of respecting others including those that are different from us
- Recognising that genitals are private and their correct names
- Developing understanding of the difference between surprises and secrets (good or bad secrets)
- When not to keep adult secrets
- Develop judgement of what kind of physical contact is acceptable or unacceptable and how to respond to this (including who to tell and how to tell them).

This will help parents see the role RSE has in keeping their children safe whilst laying the foundations to further information in an age-appropriate way.

In order to communicate these messages to parents, schools themselves need to feel confident in communicating about the importance of delivering RSE; not just because it's statutory but because it keeps children safe and healthy. We encourage schools to take advantage of the support available from Coram Life Education and their local delivery partners by accessing letter templates, staff workshops, parent sessions, and our one-day teacher training.

8. What about Mental Health?

The Health Education section of the new DfE statutory requirements have a whole section on mental wellbeing. This also comes into many of the Relationships Education outcomes – particularly the categories of **Respectful Relationships** (including bullying behaviours) **Online Relationships** and **Being Safe**.

Our mobile classroom and LifeSpace sessions have been updated this year to deliver key mental health and wellbeing learning. Your educator will explain the changes, which are also detailed in our new Programme Overview Leaflet. The new session content includes the NHS Wellbeing Wheel and children learn how to maintain good mental health through a balance of activities and strategies.

9. Is there any training available?

Coram Life Education offers regional one-day teacher training every spring term. Look out for dates coming soon on our website or contact us directly. Should these dates not be convenient we can also run full or half-day twilights and come to your school working in partnership with our local delivering partner, where appropriate.

Our sessions provide:

- Guidance on what schools are expected to deliver in Relationships Education, with reference to Coram Life Education's SCARF resources (our SCARF resources are used for demonstration only and you do not need to have them to benefit from the workshop).
- Resources and strategies to help teachers identify the needs of their own pupils and plan how to meet them.
- Strategies to enable schools to communicate effectively with parents.
- The confidence to deliver Relationships Education (as part of PSHE) and to identify and respond to pupils' needs in regard to keeping safe, healthy relationships and puberty.

10. Are the SCARF resources accredited by the PSHE Association?

SCARF has undergone a rigorous quality assurance process and because it's so new, is still going through the formal accreditation process – though other Coram Life Education resources have gained this quality mark.

The PSHE Association are currently not accrediting large-scale resources, including SCARF, but it's on their pending list. This is because they're updating their accreditation criteria to take account of the new DfE statutory guidance.

Any resource gaining the quality mark prior to these updates will need to be re-accredited, to ensure that it's up to date with the new DfE guidance.

We're the largest charity provider of PSHE and Wellbeing resources and training - and we're here to help you at this time of change.

If you have a question that's not covered here, then please email us at: cle@coram.org.uk

For more information visit www.coramlifeeducation.org.uk