

What is the difference between relationships education, health education and sex education?

Relationships education is statutory and teaches the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults.

This starts with children being taught about what a relationship is, what friendship is, what family means and who the people are who can support them. From the beginning of primary school, building on early education, children are taught how to take turns; how to treat each other with kindness, consideration and respect; the importance of honesty and truthfulness; permission seeking and giving and the concept of personal privacy. Establishing personal space and boundaries, showing respect and understanding the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical contact — these are the forerunners of teaching about consent. The principles of positive relationships also apply online especially as, by the end of primary school, many children will already be using the internet.

Health Education is also statutory and ensures teaching the characteristics of good physical health and mental wellbeing. It enables pupils to articulate how they are feeling, develop the language to talk about their bodies, health and emotions. It teaches what pupils can do to protect and support their own and others' health and wellbeing, including being safe online and it prepares both boys and girls for the changes of an adolescent body.

Some parts of Sex Education are covered in the statutory content of the Science curriculum, such as the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction and life cycles in some plants and animals. As part of the non-statutory content, children are taught how a baby is conceived and born.

Can I withdraw my child from lessons?

From September 2020, Relationships and Health Education are compulsory in all primary schools in England: Parents will not be able to withdraw their child from relationships education and health education in primary school.

Parents will only be able to withdraw their child from the non-statutory primary lessons taught in Y6, which address how a baby is conceived and born. Letters will be sent out prior to teaching if you wish to withdraw your child from this non-statutory element.

It is my job to teach my child about sex and relationships — you are taking away my right to bring up my child within my values.

The role of parents in the development of their children's understanding about relationships is vital. Parents are the first teachers of their children. They have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships.

We work closely with parents when planning and delivering these subjects and will ensure that parents know what will be taught and when. Please refer to the long-term maps and the Christopher Winter Project overview to see which objectives and vocabulary is being taught in each year group.

Teaching children about sex just encourages it — I don't want my child to know about adult matters so young.

Once the child starts school they will learn more about their body in the context of the natural world: how it works and how to look after themselves as they grow, as well as understanding how animals and plants reproduce. With many children experiencing signs of the onset of puberty during primary school, it is important they learn about what is happening and why. It educates children on the importance of loving respectful relationships along with biological information regarding how the body changes during puberty and conception.

Does school encourage marriage? I believe this is the most stable way to live.

Marriage between two loving adults is very much recognised within relationships education along with other relationships which people decide upon. Relationship education does not focus on one particular narrative but gives factual unbiased information which allows for children to make their own informed choices in adulthood.

I believe that a family should be a man and a woman. How does this match up with what is taught in schools?

In school, we teach that families are made up in many different forms and can include, for example: single parent families, LGBTQ+ parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, and foster parents/carers amongst other structures. An underlying theme taught through-out relationships education is that a family provides a nurturing environment for children.

I teach my child that being gay is wrong in our culture. Surely school should respect this?

Under the provisions of the Equality Act, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against people because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation (collectively known as the protected characteristics). To undermine the rights of one of the protective characteristics is to undermine the rights of them all. Relationship education nurtures respect allowing children to grow up to be respectful of people who are different.

Why does my child have to know about homosexuality?

Everyone in Britain is protected by the Equality Act 2010. This act protects people against discrimination because of the protected characteristics. Relationship education prepares children for adulthood in modern Britain, teaching respect for other people's human rights and respect of those that are different from themselves. This includes respecting people from different religions, different ethnic backgrounds as well as people of different sexuality.

Surely learning about homosexuality and transgender issues is going to encourage my child to consider this as an option for themselves.

Raising awareness around LGBTQ+ issues does not encourage or teach children to become homosexual or transgender. It does however teach respect for others. We ensure that we do not focus on one particular narrative but give factual unbiased information. It can also provide support and comfort to those who may be homosexual or transgender or have family members or friends that belong to this group.

How will teaching about RSE keep my child safe on the internet?

Children are taught the rules and principles for keeping safe online. This includes how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how and to whom to report issues. Some children are exposed to harmful behaviours online, and via other forms of media. A focus on healthy relationships and broader Relationships Education can help young people understand acceptable behaviours in relationships. We also have a safeguarding responsibility to equip children with the knowledge of how to keep safe online and offline.

