

Relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) FAQs for governing boards.

From September 2020 the statutory guidance for the delivery of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) changes and schools should be preparing to implement their updated policy and curriculum.

Within the new guidance, Secondary schools are required to deliver relationships and sex education and Primary schools must deliver relationships education. All schools must deliver health education, including physical and mental health and wellbeing. Primary schools will continue to have the choice whether to deliver a sex education curriculum.

Due to the continued challenges and impact of Covid-19, schools are permitted to delay the implementation of their updated RSHE Policy and Curriculum up until the Summer term. Governing boards should maintain awareness of the school's progress towards implementing their policy and curriculum.

These FAQs will support governors to understand their own responsibilities set out within the guidance and to feel confident and prepared to monitor the school's policy and provision.

Q. What are the governing board's responsibilities in relation to RSHE provision?

A: The governing board are required to ensure that the school's policy and curriculum provision comply with the Equality Act 2019, and in particular the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) and pay due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The governing board should also ensure that:

- All pupils make progress in achieving the expected educational outcomes.
- The subjects are well led, effectively managed and well planned.
- The quality of provision is subject to regular and effective self-evaluation.
- Teaching is delivered in ways that are accessible to all pupils with SEND.

- Clear information is provided for parents on the subject content and the right to request that their child is withdrawn.
- The subjects are resourced, staffed and timetabled in a way that ensures that the school can fulfil its legal obligations

Foundation governors and trustees of faith academy trusts have wider responsibilities in relation to maintaining and developing the religious ethos of the schools, including its Christian vision and associated values.

A: How does the guidance reflect the importance of religious beliefs and faith?

The guidance includes provision for RSHE to be taught based on an understanding of pupils' faith backgrounds, religion and belief are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Pupils' faith and religious backgrounds must be considered when planning the teaching of RSHE, teaching must reflect the law which applies to relationships.

Faith schools are permitted to teach a distinctive faith perspective on relationships, with balanced debate held on issues that may be considered as contentious.

[Valuing All God's Children](#) reminds us that at the heart of Church of England schools is the belief that all children are loved by God and are individually unique. Schools have a mission to help each pupil to fulfil their potential in all aspects of their personhood: physically, academically, socially, morally and spiritually.

Q: Is the school required to have an RSHE policy in place?

A: Yes. It is a requirement for an up-to-date written policy to be implemented.

Q: Does the school have to consult with parents in advance of the policy being implemented?

A: Schools are required to engage with parents and carers when developing and reviewing their RSHE policy to ensure it reflects community and the needs of pupils and parents.

Q: To what extent should the governing board be involved in the policy?

A: Governing boards should expect to receive a report from school leaders outlining the main themes from the parent engagement process. Governors should identify any key issues and explore with school leaders if any further support is required, including pastoral support for leaders if there is a highly-charged or negative response from the parent and carer community.

Q: Is the school required to adopt the Diocese of Gloucester model RSHE policy?

A: No. However, we recommend that if the school chooses to develop its own policy rather than adopting the Diocese of Gloucester model policy that they use the policy to review against their own to ensure that the [Church of England Principles for RSHE](#) are reflected in the school's policy and embedded throughout the curriculum. The parent and carer community may feel reassured if that pupils' religious beliefs and faith will be considered if the Diocese model policy has been used to develop the school policy.

Governors of local governing boards in academy trusts should determine if the Trust has decided to implement a trust-wide policy and check the scheme of delegation to clarify the role of local governors in implementing and monitoring the policy.

Q: Who is responsible for making the decision to teach or not teach sex education in a Primary school?

A: The teaching of sex education in Primary schools is not compulsory. If a Primary school chooses to teach aspects of sex education which go beyond the required national curriculum for science – including puberty, external body parts, the development of the human body from birth to old age and reproduction in some plants and animals – then this must be included in the RSHE policy.

As explained previously, it is a requirement for schools to have a written RSHE policy in place. The governing board is free to delegate approval of the RSHE policy to a committee of the governing board, an individual governor or the headteacher.

It is recommended that the decision to teach sex education is made collaboratively between the headteacher and governing board, with robust discussion and a clear decision-making trail documented in the minutes of a governing board meeting. The decision should be made with full consideration of the school's vision and values.

Q: If we choose not to teach sex education in our Primary school will that reflect badly on us during an Ofsted or SIAMS inspection?

There is no right or wrong decision and the school will not be judged by Ofsted or during their SIAMS inspection for any decision made in relation to the teaching of sex education in Primary schools. School leaders, including governors should make a decision that is in the best interests of the pupils in the school and the parent and carer community.

Key aspects of the delivery of the schools RSHE curriculum are however in scope for Ofsted inspection; for example, through inspectors' consideration of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare; and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

If your school is exploring whether or not to teach sex education in your Primary school, a useful decision making tool has been included as Appendix I from the Diocese of Bristol [Goodness and Mercy website](#).

Q: Does the school have to teach children about LGBTQ relationships?

A; The guidance requires schools to teach pupils about the world they are growing up in but there is no requirement to teach about LGBTQ issues in Primary schools. However, as stated in *Valuing All God's Children* it is central to Christian theology that all children are loved unconditionally by God and that divergent views should not be a reason to not create through the curriculum an inclusive school environment that has at its heart dignity and respect. Secondary schools should include LGBTQ content within the RSHE curriculum.

Q: How does the teaching of RSHE relate to SIAMS?

A: Strand five of a SIAMS inspection focusses on Dignity and Respect. It is within this strand that an inspector will explore with school leaders how the curriculum, including the RSHE curriculum, focuses on Dignity and respect. Inspectors would seek to understand how the guidance [Valuing All God's Children](#) is reflected within the curriculum.

Q: What is the responsibility of the governing board in responding to parents who wish to withdraw their children from RSHE lessons?

A: Parents have the right to withdraw their child from the teaching of non-compulsory sex-education in Primary schools. They do not have the right to withdraw their child from the compulsory science curriculum or relationships and health education. Responding to a parent's decision to withdraw their child from sex-education lessons in Primary school is the operational responsibility of the Headteacher.

Governors should, however, maintain a strategic overview and should ensure the RSHE Policy includes information on the parents right to withdraw their child from lessons and a clear process for how to do this. Governors may wish to request information on the number of children withdrawn from sex-education lessons and the reasons for parent's decisions. Governors may identify a trend and can then explore if the parent engagement process has been effective and if parents have an accurate understanding of what is being taught in the lessons. Governors should also monitor parental opinion and any impact of negative views on the Headteacher and their wellbeing.

The governing board should ensure parents understand their right to access the school's complaints procedure to seek to resolve any issues they have with the school's approach to delivering the RSHE curriculum and again, should monitor the number of complaints received to identify and explore any trends.

Q: I have a question which isn't answered here, who can I contact for further help and support?

A: If you have any further questions, please get in touch with the Education Team by emailing education@glosdioc.org.uk or calling 01452 835539 and we will signpost you to the person who is best placed to answer your question.

References

DfE (2020) 'Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education: FAQs' < <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs>

Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance (2020) 'Should we teach Sex Education in our Church of England/Methodist primary school? (Decision-making questions for school leaders)' < <https://goodnessandmercy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/C4-Should-we-teach-Sex-Education-in-our-Church-of-EnglandMethodist-primary-school.pdf>>

The Church of England Education Office (2019) 'Valuing All God's Children'

The Church of England Education Office (2019) 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (RSHE) in Church of England Schools' < https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/RSHE%20Principles%20and%20Charter_0.pdf>

