John Perry Primary School

Frequently Asked Questions about Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

The Department for Education has announced changes to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). These changes will come into effect from September 2020 and all schools will be required to comply with the updated requirements, making Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education. It has been 20 years since the last review of these curriculum areas, and in that time the world has changed significantly. Children now face new challenges: they have to process lots of information from different sources such as TV, the internet, social media, understand how society is changing, understand risks they may face, all putting pressure on their physical and mental health.

We believe relationships and sex education is important for our pupils and our school because:

- It is giving children the knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships
- It is about giving children the opportunity to put knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts.
- It is the recognition that everyone faces difficult situations in their lives and how relationship and sex education can support young people to develop resilience, to know how and when to ask for help, and to know where to access support

We view the partnership of home and school as vital in providing the context to both complement and reinforce what pupils learn at home about healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online, as well as how to be healthy.

Below, we have explained some of the common questions around these subjects.

So why now?

The Equality Act came into force in 2010. The Equality Act 2010 states that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex/gender
- Sexual orientation

The public sector Equality Duty came into force on 5th April 2011 and requires that public bodies (including schools):

- Have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

(Government Equalities Office 2013, p1)

This makes it clear that promoting some of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act while ignoring others is against UK law.

What is teaching about equality?

It is teaching about:

Difference

- Acceptance
- Tolerance
- Diversity
- How to challenge discrimination

Teaching about equality helps our children to prepare for the next stages in their lives.

Is school the best place for discussions about Sex and Relationships?

We know from surveys of children, that if they do not get the correct and accurate information about sex and relationships from a reliable source, they will find the information from other sources (friends, older siblings, website, tv) which may not be true or age appropriate. The information gathered during the Government consultation found that most children wanted this information and discussion to be provided in school with their teachers so that they could ask their questions in a safe space, and have them answered in an age-appropriate way.

Does the new Relationships Education and RSE curriculum take account of my faith?

The RSE curriculum is designed to help children from all backgrounds and religious beliefs build positive and safe relationships, and to thrive in modern Britain.

Do I have a right to withdraw my child from Relationships and Sex Education?

In a Primary School, you have the right to withdraw from any sex education **lessons that go beyond that of the science national curriculum.**

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education at Primary or Secondary school as the contents of these subjects – such as family, friendship, safety (including online safety) – are important for all children to be taught.

Has the government listened to the views of my community in introducing these subjects?

The Government undertook a wide public consultation which involved discussions with over 90 organisations, as well as the public consultation on the draft regulations and guidance. This has informed the key decisions on these subjects.

Will these subjects promote LGBT relationships?

No, these subjects don't 'promote' anything, they educate. We are teaching about equality. Our school ethos says that we are respectful of everyone. We value ourselves and all others: this means that all ethnicities are welcome in our school; all people with or without mental or physical disabilities are welcome in our school; all people regardless of their sexual orientation are welcome in our school.

Pupils should be taught about the society in which they are growing up. These subjects are designed to foster respect for others and for difference, and educate pupils about healthy relationships. RSE

should meet the needs of all pupils, whatever their developing sexuality or identity – this should include age-appropriate teaching about different types of relationships in the context of the law.
In our school the teaching of LGBT will be delivered through teaching about different types of family, including those with same sex parents. All our planned learning will be taught in an age-appropriate way.

Are primary children too young to be taught about gay or lesbian people?
Some children grow up in families with gay or lesbian people. We can't say to a child who has two dads, 'You can't talk about your family!' We want all of our children to know that their family is normal and accepted in school.

Our children will interact with people from different backgrounds and we want them to treat all members of the community with the same respect. Just like racism, school has a duty of care to challenge any language that may cause offence to others, whether used intentionally or not. Phrases such as "that's so gay" or "that's a girls/boys toy" when used in a negative manner may unintentionally cause offence to a child or adult. School will challenge this language if it is used by children, parents or visitors as we want everyone to feel welcome.

There are no children who are gay or transgender here, so why does it need to be mentioned?
We want our children to grow up respectful and tolerant members of our community. As they grow up, make more friends, watch tv, go to different places they will meet people who are gay or transgender. We want them to understand that this is okay that some children when they grow up may be gay. We don't want children growing up thinking something is wrong with them or with people they recognise who are gay or transgender.

My religion says that gay is wrong, so why are you teaching about different sexuality choices? We are teaching about equality. We understand and respect all faiths. We recognise the tension that it can present. We are teaching children not to be afraid of difference but to celebrate difference. Any discussion or resources used will be to help your child be respectful and tolerant towards others. We are preparing the children for life in Britain. Britain is diverse and they are going to meet people who are different to them as they grow up.

You are confusing my child because at home they are learning that being gay is wrong but at school you are telling them that being gay is OK.
As a parent it is your right to talk to your child about religious beliefs. In school we build our curriculum around UK law. We are teaching children that all people and relationships are equal. We are teaching children that all families are different and your child as they grow up are going to meet people who live in different families. It is important that children learn about people who are different. They need to learn to be tolerant and respectful of people with different views. When they grow up they can make up their own minds about what is right and wrong.

Who will be teaching RSHE?

Class teachers deliver RSE teaching with support from the Support Staff and the PSHE Lead where appropriate.

What training will staff be given?

The PSHE Lead attends external training facilitated by the Local Authority, the PSHE Association and other agencies to ensure best practice and so that they can support colleagues as necessary. All class teachers are then trained by the PSHE Lead, SLT and an external EqualiTeach trainer to deliver RSE.

What are the topics covered in RSE?

The teaching of RSHE at John Perry Primary School is informed by the law, national RSE guidance and the national curriculum set out by the DfE, as well as the school ethos and policies already developed.

The teaching of RSE at John Perry Primary School is delivered within and influenced by all relating school policies:

- Positive behaviour policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Equality policy & statement
- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- Computing policy

In school, RSE topics will be taught within our Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education curriculum. Our PSHE curriculum is split into 7 strands. RSE is one of them.

How will we ensure lessons are taught sensitively?

Puberty and menstruation and human reproduction are seen as sensitive topics to teach in RSE and therefore we will put in special measures to make sure that pupils feel at ease when talking about these topics. *There will be single sex classes for some lessons in Years 4 and 6 so that children feel less self-conscious and students may be more relaxed and feel able to ask questions. The students will also be able to include questions in anonymous question boxes. Where appropriate, these will be answered by the class teacher.

How will we know what is being taught so I can talk to my child about it at home?

The units of work taught as part of the RSE strand of PSHE are available on our school website. If you need to discuss this further, teachers will be happy to discuss this with you or signpost other resources that can be use at home to support discussions.

Will this work prompt my children to ask challenging questions?

Possibly, your child or children trust you and will be likely to ask you questions to test your beliefs and opinions. Please don't avoid them, talk openly about diversity and equality.

How do I explain what 'gay' means to my child?

'Gay' is when a man loves a man. 'Lesbian' is when two women love each other. 'Bisexual' is when a person can love both men and women. 'Transgender' is when a person feels different about the body they were born into; we are all assigned a gender at birth and sometimes when we get older we may feel differently about this.

Some people say there are 'boy' things or 'girl things' but we say this is not the case and boys and girls can do the same sort of things if they want.

But brothers love brothers and sisters love sisters and fathers love sons. Does that make them gay? When two brothers or sisters love each other, it doesn't mean they are gay. This is a different kind of love. We may love our mum but we don't want to marry them. Some people grow up and fall in love with a person of the same gender.

What do I say when my child comes home and asks, 'How can two men love each other?' People are different. Some men do love other men. In the UK two men or women can get married in the same way that a man can marry a woman.

What do I say if my child comes home and asks, 'how can two men/women have a baby?'
Lots of people have children in different ways, like fostering, adoption or step families. These are all families. They look after one another and love one another so they are the same in many ways.

Some families have a mum and dad. Some families have a mum and a mum. Some families have two dads. Some families have one mum or dad or one grandparent. All families are different and that is okay.