

RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION

- Relationships Education is now compulsory in all primary schools, including faith schools, free schools, independent schools and academies. Parents may not withdraw their children from these lessons.
- Sex education in primary schools remains non-compulsory, so that parents may withdraw their children from these lessons. However, there is no safeguard against sexual content being transferred to the compulsory Relationships and Sex Education lessons, in much the same way as explicitly sexual materials are often used in primary school science lessons, even though the science curriculum does not require this.
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) has been made compulsory in all secondary schools. The Government claims it is committed to retaining the parental right of withdrawal from 'sex education' within RSE. However, it has also stated that it intends to make a decision on the age at which children have the right to make their own decisions on attendance at sex education — effectively allowing children to override their parents' wishes.

Note: A fundamental concern about making Relationships and Sex Education compulsory, is that the government is now the lead educator in a child's social, moral and sexual development. Many parents will of course continue to engage with their children on these sensitive aspects of their child's growth to maturity. But parents are now denied the freedom to introduce these topics at the time and in the manner they feel is best for their child. Sir Edward Leigh MP said in the House of Commons that many would see these new compulsory school subjects as **"a state takeover bid for parenting"**.

SPECIAL NOTE

The rationale behind this new compulsory subject is to introduce children at the earliest possible age to the idea of diversity of relationships. Indeed, the Government has stated clearly that the new subject will be LGBT inclusive. Very young children will be told that two men or two women in a relationship or marriage is as valid and natural as a man and a woman. The promotion of same-sex relationships opens up the scope to introduce gender issues, with children encouraged to question their

gender and the very idea of there being two distinct sexes. There is already a plethora of young children's story books, resources and teaching programmes to enable teachers to deliver this content. A further aspect of this new subject is the emphasis on keeping children safe from sexual abuse. Many schools already invite groups such as the NSPCC to give classes or assemblies on staying safe from sexual abuse. But talking to children about staying safe from sexual abuse is not the same as talking about matters like road safety. However child-friendly the approach may be, there are risks attached to introducing the subject of child sexual abuse to young children. A child's sexual innocence may be disturbed or children may worry unduly that they might be victims of abuse. Children may become suspicious of normal interaction with their parents. A very worrying aspect of class lessons on children's sexual safety is that children are encouraged to bypass their parents and to contact organisations like Childline or confide in an adult other than their parents on any issues that concerns them. The overwhelming majority of children are not being abused and classroom discussions on sex abuse can undermine the relationship between children and their parents.

SPECIAL NOTE

As with primary schools, the LGBT agenda is being promoted in Secondary schools, especially as part of anti-bullying programmes and initiatives. However, in secondary schools, this agenda is more aggressive and explicit. **Stonewall, a homosexual pressure group**, has a wide outreach to schools, **including faith schools**. Secondary schools are becoming increasingly sexualised and this is likely to get worse now that Relationships and Sex Education is a compulsory subject.

Many schools are tackling issues such as **pornography**, but many parents will not be aware of exactly how this topic is presented. Pupils do not necessarily get strong messages that pornography is dangerous and damaging. Instead, the widely accepted approach is to be non-judgmental and simply to encourage children to be more critically discerning and self-aware consumers of pornography. In other words, school children are told pornography is fine as long as you don't confuse it with real life. For example, a resource for a lesson on pornography is the card game "Planet Porn" where pupils decide whether images come

from planet porn or the real world. Playing a game is not an appropriate way to protect children from the scourge of pornography.

- **PARENTS** should be fully involved when decisions are made about which teaching resources are to be used.
- Parents should be the ones to determine what is age-appropriate regarding teaching materials. Many sex education resources aimed at primary school children contain sexually explicit content which most parents would not use when talking about this topic to their children.
- Where parents want to withdraw their child from sex education, the school should have a clear, easily accessible system for achieving this.
- Regarding Relationships and Sex Education, parents should have full disclosure of what is going to be taught.
- Parents must be able to determine which aspects of relationships education they consider are sexual and from which they should be able to withdraw their child.
- Parents should also be consulted about the way in which human relationships are presented in the classroom. Teaching children about subjects such as same-sex relationships and transgenderism are inherently sexual and therefore the parental right to withdraw must be respected and applied in such cases.

SPECIAL NOTE

This question is really about encouraging schools to promote the LGBT agenda within PSHE lessons. A typical situation would be the presence of one pupil questioning his or her 'gender' or declaring his or her 'sexual orientation' giving rise to the promotion of these issues to the whole class. While it is important that any young person facing difficulties with such personal matters should be properly cared for, we should question whether the correct pastoral care for such a person is to affirm and encourage harmful lifestyle choices. This can be troubling and potentially harmful for other young people in the class.