

Keeping parents and carers informed

It is important to always work in partnership with parents and carers, and this is particularly effective with the topic of RSE. Students will come to school with a varying level of understanding about RSE, much of which may come from parents and carers, peers or the internet. However, not all parents and carers will find it easy to address the topic of RSE with their children. Some may rely on the school to deliver this education, whilst others might shy away from the topic altogether. Whilst teachers do have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of their students, it is also important to take into account the beliefs and feelings of the family. Teachers are also expected to work within the agreed school values outlined in the school's policy, which must be in line with current legislation.

A parents' poll conducted by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) found that more than eight in 10 (83%) say issues around pornography should form part of sex education lessons. The same proportion thought that parents and schools should take joint responsibility for teaching children about the issue, with just 13% of parents saying it is the parents' job alone and 4% saying it should be left to schools.

Consulting parents

It is important to consult parents and carers on the content of RSE lessons, school policy and national curriculum requirements. This should be done with careful consideration of the family's own beliefs and concerns. Parents and carers need to know that the work being done in school will be age appropriate and support their role as a parent. They also need to be aware that they can actively be involved in determining and shaping the school's policy.

On **page 11** you will find an example parent and carers letter about intended age appropriate RSE.

Parent's right to withdraw

Parents and carers have the right to withdraw their child from all or part of the sex and relationship education provided at school except for those parts included in the statutory National Science Curriculum. However, with careful consultation and open discussion about age appropriate RSE this withdrawal should be minimal.

On **page 12** you will find an example parent and carers consent form for RSE.

Informing parents about intended RSE education

One way of effectively working in partnership with parents and carers is to hold an RSE curriculum meeting. This will allow you to:

- Outline RSE as a subject
- Review and share specific resources about RSE
- Allay any concerns parents and carers may have

Parents and carers may be nervous about attending meetings on RSE, so you could hold it as part of a broader PSHE curriculum meeting. Consideration also needs to be given to:

- How parents/carers will be invited (phone/letter)
- The language that is used for the invitations and whether any translations are needed
- The timing of the meetings
- Whether meetings should be single or mixed gender

The Ealing Grid for Learning have produced guidance on running an effective RSE workshop which includes a session outline.¹²

Example letters and forms

On the following two pages you will find:

- an example letter for Parents / Carers – Schools and Educational Settings
- an example consent form for Parents / Carers – Schools and Educational Settings

These can be used exactly as they are or adapted to meet the needs of your school or setting and are designed to support you in effectively communicating the needs of the RSE curriculum to parents and carers.

You may wish to edit them to include:

- information about school policies
- a personal note from senior leadership
- references to the school's ethos, values and faith
- any relevant information about previous knowledge and understanding about RSE

12. www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/School_effectiveness/Health-improvement/training-resources/Running%20a%20RSE%20parent%20workshop.pdf

Keeping parents and carers informed (Continued)

Example Letter for Parents / Carers – Schools and Educational Settings

Name and address of school

Date

Dear Parents / Carers

As a school, we continually strive to provide our pupils with high-quality opportunities to learn the skills they need for a healthy, successful and happy life. This includes delivering Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

Our RSE programme is age-appropriate and taught with family, cultural and religious sensitivities in mind; we respect the backgrounds of all our children. Some parts of RSE are compulsory e.g. areas relating to the National Curriculum for Science, however you have the right to withdraw your child from all other parts of RSE if you wish to do so.

Issues that affect the overall safety of young people are constantly changing. The availability of pornography online, the creation and sharing of inappropriate images, and the presentation of sexual images in social media are an ongoing concern. It is vital that all young people are given a safe place to discuss the pressures they face and understand the gap between perception and reality, in a fully supported environment. Although not all young people will be involved in these behaviours, research suggests that it has the potential to influence young people, their attitudes and even their sexual behaviour, and the perception of what constitutes healthy relationships and interactions. Even if a child is withdrawn, many pupils will continue to discuss such issues with each other outside the classroom – so, rather than hear about the content second-hand, we hope all children will have the opportunity to take part in our carefully planned lessons.

Our RSE curriculum will be taught in line with government recommendations and guidelines from the PSHE Association. We will sensitively explore the issues surrounding pornography, body image and healthy relationships whilst also covering the laws that currently apply to these areas.

We can assure you that under no circumstances will examples of pornography, or anything of an explicit nature, be shown.

You might want to take the opportunity to talk to your child about these issues before the work is covered in school. Childnet International provide support and guidance on their website www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers, including their page on having a conversation, advice on talking about difficult topics and a hot topic about online pornography.

If you have any queries about the content of the programme, or resources used, please do not hesitate in contacting me at school. We are happy to provide opportunities for parents and carers to find out more about our RSE Programme of Study, and in particular how we teach this topic. All materials used are available for you to browse through should you so wish.

I hope that after consideration of the above information you will give consent for your child to participate in lessons by signing and returning the attached slip. Should you have any further queries or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

(Name)

(Title)

Keeping parents and carers informed (Continued)

Example consent form for Parents / Carers – Schools and Educational Settings

Dear Parent/ Carer,

Please indicate whether or not you give consent for your child to participate in the RSE lessons outlined in this letter.

These lessons will include the following;

1. The promotion of healthy, mutually respectful, positive relationships based on trust and friendship.
2. Key information on misconceptions about what is 'normal' behaviour in healthy relationships online.
3. Online safety, appropriate use of social media, and the impact being online can have on body image, relationships and sex.
4. Accurate and up-to-date information about the potential impact that underage exposure to pornography can have on body image, and personal attitudes, values and expectations regarding sex and relationships.
5. Education about the laws governing the making, viewing and distribution of pornographic material (including the use of social media).

Should you have any further queries or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Name

Title

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School RSE curriculum

I / We give consent for our child to participate in the RSE lessons outlined in this letter.

Pupil's name: _____ Year group: _____

Parent / Guardian name (in capitals): _____

Signature: _____ Date: ___/___/___

Please return to (insert name) by: _____

