**New RSHE Guidance – What you need to know**

You may be aware of the DfE updating their Guidance on Relationship Education last month (May 2024). Here we break down what the guidance is, what you can do to best follow it and what (if anything) is set to change in the coming months.

The DfE published their statutory relationships [education guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education/relationships-education-primary) in 2021. **This is still the guidance that schools need to be following now.** There is [new guidance](https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/05/16/new-rshe-guidance-what-it-means-for-sex-education-lessons-in-schools/), but this is non-statutory and open to consultation until the 11th of July 2024. There may be further changes beyond this, especially given the upcoming election (4th July).

**Current guidance**

Here are the **DfE’s 6 main teaching points** of creating a solid relationship for positive relationships:

* **Fundamental Concepts:** The definitions and significance of relationships, friendships, and family. This includes understanding support networks, turn-taking, kindness, respect, and personal privacy.
* **Respect and Boundaries**: Personal space, appropriate versus inappropriate contact, and the importance of consent.
* **Online Safety**: Respectful online interactions, recognising online risks, understanding data sharing, and maintaining privacy.
* **Family Diversity**: Ensuring inclusive education that acknowledges various family structures without stigmatising children based on their home circumstances.
* **Character Development**: Promoting traits like honesty, integrity, resilience, and kindness through school-wide practices and activities.
* **Emotional and Mental Wellbeing**: How friendships support mental wellbeing and recognising signs of abuse and reporting them.

There are **5 key learning outcomes** for children and schools to aim for by the end of primary school:

* **Families and People Who Care for Me**: Know the importance of love, security, and stability in families, recognise different family structures, and know how to seek help if needed.
* **Caring Friendships**: Understand the significance of friendships, the characteristics of healthy friendships, and handling conflicts.
* **Respectful Relationships**: Emphasise respect for others, understand the impact of bullying, and the importance of permission-seeking in relationships.
* **Online Relationships**: Recognise risks and maintain respect in online interactions.
* **Being Safe**: Know appropriate boundaries, understand privacy, and how to report concerns.

**New Guidance - What you need to know** [See Full Guidance](https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/05/16/new-rshe-guidance-what-it-means-for-sex-education-lessons-in-schools/)

With the new guidance being open to change following the 2024 election results, here's what schools could consider in the meantime:

**What is actually new or updated?**

**Age Limits:** New age limits ensure that sensitive topics are introduced only when children are “developmentally ready”. For example, online gaming and social media risks are not taught before Year 3, puberty before Year 4, and sex education before Year 5.

**Gender Identity:** The new guidance currently states that gender identity is a complex and highly contested concept and that in primary schools this should not be taught. *This is one of the most controversial elements of the update and is part of the consultation process.*

**Parental Transparency:** A new section gives parents' legal right to know what their children are being taught in RSHE, and to request to see teaching materials. *Schools may wish to send home guidance and materials ahead of the new school year.*

**Additional Topics:** The consultation seeks views on including new subjects like suicide prevention, sexual harassment and violence, loneliness, deepfakes, healthy behaviours during pregnancy, illegal online behaviours, the dangers of vaping, and menstrual and gynaecological health, though many of these are likely to be looked at in secondary school.

**Implementation and Parental Involvement**

**Use of Guidance:** The new guidance is optional upon release, giving schools time to plan for its mandatory implementation after the consultation period.

**Parental Rights:** Parents have the right to withdraw their child from sex education but not from relationships education, and this will remain the case even with this new guidance. However, they can request to see teaching materials and share them (under certain circumstances) for transparency and review.

**10 Tips for Covering the Content**

1. **Plan interactive and engaging lessons**, considering events that celebrate different families and promote inclusion such as [pride month lessons](https://classroomsecrets.co.uk/?s=pride).
2. **Challenge harmful stereotypes** through school policies, [specific lessons,](https://classroomsecrets.co.uk/uks2-gender-stereotypes-teaching-ppt/) and the use of a wide range of books that cover sensitive topics in engaging ways.
3. **Create a safe culture across your school** that ensures children from different families feel seen and valued. This could be done through policy and delivering [assemblies](https://classroomsecrets.co.uk/ks2-pride-assembly/) that show these values.
4. **Use teaching materials that represent diverse family structures** and relationships, even when lessons are not specifically about these topics.
5. **Involve parents and caregivers** through workshops and regular communications to help them understand and support the curriculum at home. This will help to alleviate concerns they may have based on scaremongering media headlines.
6. **Develop a clear policy** for addressing sensitive questions about sex and sexuality, ensuring teachers are prepared and supported.
7. **Attend training sessions** on the new guidance and best practices in RSHE teaching.
8. **Embrace mental health and wellbeing** teaching across your school to help children develop compassion and resilience. One great place to start is with our friends at Happy Confident Company!
9. **Take part in** [**Safer Internet Day**](https://classroomsecrets.co.uk/safer-internet-day-activity/) and use it to cover the new content around online safety.
10. **Participate in the consultation!** If anything about the new guidance isn’t something you agree with, you have the chance to [make your voice heard](https://consult.education.gov.uk/rshe-team/review-of-the-rshe-statutory-guidance/) until the 11th of July 2024

By actioning the tips above, teachers can provide effective and inclusive Relationships Education that supports the wellbeing and development of their pupils. We ensure all our resources follow all DfE guidance, you can always use them in complete confidence too. If you’re ever in doubt, our email or social channels are always open!