

Could Do Better!

How Ideology
is Pitting Schools
Against Parents

Could Do Better

How Ideology Is Pitting Schools Against Parents

Yusuf Patel



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Published by Muslim Family Initiative, Office 7915,
182-184 High Street North, London, E6 2JA

www.muslimfamilyinitiative.org

ISBN: 978-3-21629-575-0

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About The Author

Yusuf Patel is the Founder and Managing Director of Muslim Family Initiative (formerly SREIslamic). He has supported Muslim parents to navigate Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in schools since 2008. Since then, he has delivered over 1000 events across the UK and supported tens of thousands of parents. He gave oral evidence to the Education Select Committee when they were looking into SRE in 2014. He is a great believer in empowering parents to make a difference in their children's lives. Throughout his career he has worked for educational, homelessness and mental health charities.

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Foreword

Most schools strive to establish strong and positive working relationships with parents, who are equally eager to reciprocate. When these relationships are nurtured, children thrive. However, when they break down, no one benefits. It is crucial to create environments that foster positive relationships between schools and parents and to address situations that may jeopardise these relationships.

There is substantial qualitative evidence indicating problems with the way many primary schools are implementing Relationships and Health Education (RHE) and non-statutory sex education.

Politicians have raised concerns, prompting the government to order a review.¹

Many parents are sounding the alarm about inappropriate content and teaching,² leading to unnecessary conflict in schools. This conflict is likely to increase unless changes are made.³

Parents have the greatest influence on their children's lives, driven by an unparalleled and irreplaceable emotional investment in their success. However, many parents feel their concerns are not adequately considered by schools.

Many parents worry that raising legitimate concerns with schools will result in being labelled as 'bigots,' 'homophobes,' or 'transphobes,' whether explicitly or implicitly.

Recognising parents as significant stakeholders in education, it is crucial to reflect on how the treatment of parents by many—though not all—schools, either supports or undermines their vital role. How does this treatment affect the positive relationships we strive to cultivate between parents and schools?

Many parents were disappointed when Relationships and Health Education (RHE) was made statutory in England's primary schools and Relationships, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) became a statutory subject in secondary schools. This disappointment was mitigated by the reassurances in the statutory guidance: parents would be meaningfully consulted; schools would seek to understand the religious backgrounds of pupils and establish positive relationships with faith communities. Although schools would make the final decisions about content and delivery, there would be dialogue and collaboration.

Parents had a reasonable expectation that teaching would be factually based, would not promote contested values, and that schools would recognise the breadth of protected characteristics rather than create a hierarchy of values not grounded in law.

There is a dire need for a comprehensive review of RHE/RSHE, including a reappraisal of the statutory guidance. Emphasis should be placed on collaboration with parents and providing clear guidelines to prevent teachers from imposing their personal, ideological positions on children. Currently, the flexibility intended by the guidance for how and when topics are taught is often disregarded due to the prescriptive programmes schools choose to purchase. Parents should not have to fight for the right to be heard. When schools fail to follow the law, there must be a clearer path for parents to escalate their concerns.

Promoting harmonious relationships in schools is in everyone's best interest. We must work together to ensure potential conflicts are resolved early. Parents must collaborate with schools in a spirit of consensus and compromise, while schools must genuinely listen to and work with parents when planning and delivering RHE/RSHE programmes.

¹ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/03/08/stop-sex-education-radicals-infiltrating-schools/>

² <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tory-mp-miriam-cates-says-government-guidance-on-sex-education-is-a-mess-7dpzw32sg>

³ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11834553/Tory-MPs-demand-Rishi-Sunak-blocks-inappropriate-sex-education-lessons.html>

⁴ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12210119/Eury-radical-sex-education-lesson-plans-pre-teen-kids.html>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-66120447>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

Parents have the most significant influence and investment in their children's lives. They are the primary educators of their children, but they are often sidelined and made to feel like troublemakers when they speak up.

This situation is creating unnecessary tensions in schools, as parents feel unheard. Statutory guidance and the supplementary guidance direct schools to work with parents in developing and implementing a programme that meets the needs of communities, considers the religious backgrounds of pupils, and promotes genuine partnerships with parents.

Over the past year, the government has initiated many positive changes. These include launching an independent review into RHE/RSHE, issuing two letters from the Education Secretary directing schools to show parents the materials they use, drafting guidance for schools on 'gender-questioning children,' and revising the statutory guidance.

While there are instances of commendable practices, there remains a pressing need to ensure accountability for schools that deviate from the statutory guidance.

Our parental survey aimed to empower parents to share both their positive and negative experiences with the implementation of RHE/RSHE.

While qualitative evidence suggests parental dissatisfaction with the implementation of RHE/RSHE, this survey aimed to collect quantitative data from a diverse sample to substantiate these findings. Following its design, we promoted the survey across national and regional platforms, urging parents, regardless of their experiences, to participate. We received 637 responses nationwide, predominantly from mothers. The survey findings are detailed on pages 24-36.

Although 78% of parents report never having been invited to a consultation session, among those who were, 48% felt their feedback wasn't taken into consideration by schools. Only a small fraction (10%) expressed satisfaction that some of their suggestions resulted in changes to the delivery of RHE/RSHE. It's disheartening that 60% of parents believed their feedback during consultation sessions was disregarded, with only 27% describing their engagement with schools as positive.

Within the framework of the online survey, we prompted parents to share their experiences with RHE/RSHE teaching in schools, encompassing both positive and negative experiences. Parents contributed their anecdotes through the online survey. The majority expressed a desire for their case studies to be anonymised, citing concerns about potential repercussions in the prevailing environment. Consequently, we opted to provide minimal details about respondents, such as their city of residence and parental status.

Parents highlighted the following concerns:

Schools exhibit a lack of transparency and communication, including:

- Introducing teaching topics prematurely.
- Promoting controversial values regarding 'sexuality' and 'gender identity'.
- Refusing to disclose teaching materials to parents.
- Teachers imposing their personal beliefs about sex, relationships and 'LGBTQ' on students.
- Discrepancies between schools willing to engage with parents and those resistant, indicating the potential for establishing trusting relationships based on cooperation and openness.
- Teachers obstructing the expression of diverse moral perspectives in the classroom, with students facing repercussions for voicing opinions protected under the Equality Act.
- Schools denying any flexibility in adjusting RHE/RSHE teaching materials.
- Failing to fulfil their legal obligation to consult parents.
- Promoting social transition among children.
- Insisting that teaching the names of sexual body parts in Key Stage 1 is statutory.
- Teachers encouraging children to use pronouns without parental knowledge or consent.
- Schools promoting a limited view of equality, overlooking 'religion or belief'.
- Integrating non-statutory sexual content into mandatory subjects.
- Compelling children to celebrate sexual identities conflicting with their moral perspectives.
- Teachers falsely claiming theological expertise to justify their views on 'sexuality'.
- Introducing masturbatory practice to children as young as six or seven.
- Labelling children as 'homophobic' or 'transphobic' for expressing alternative viewpoints.

The quality of RHE policies in primary schools varies significantly. Many schools rely on generic templates that inadequately reflect the specific approach to RHE within their school. Parents should have access to policies that accurately outline the curriculum content, timing of teaching, materials utilised, options for withdrawal, and avenues for providing feedback on the curriculum.

Our in-depth look at RHE policies across 34 cities in England reveals:

- The majority of schools are not meeting their legal obligation to consult parents.
- Many schools have established a hierarchy of equalities, which does not exist in law. While schools actively safeguard one protected characteristic (sexual orientation), they often overlook faith and belief as protected characteristics in their policies.
- Many policies fail to offer sufficient guidance for teachers in fulfilling their legal obligation to accurately teach about values.
- Many policies do not specify the names of the teaching materials used.
- There is ambiguity in many policies regarding which aspects parents are legally entitled to withdraw their children from.

- Schools are including non-statutory elements in mandatory classes, effectively bypassing the parental right to withdraw.

The lack of transparency and failure to adhere to the statutory guidance by many schools is heightening the potential for conflict between parents and schools; a situation that benefits no one.

In response to this we make the following recommendations:

1. Teachers need to be reminded to separate their personal views from their professional role
2. Schools should be reminded to respond to the needs of the communities they serve
3. Schools must be cautioned against teaching that goes beyond the statutory requirements
4. Ofsted must ensure that schools meaningfully consult parents
5. RHE policies must be clear and detailed
6. Regulation of RHE/RSHE materials providers is needed
7. Schools must involve parents when pupils raise a request to socially transition
8. The definition of what is inappropriate must be made clear
9. Meaningful channels for parents to escalate concerns must be put in place

We firmly believe that implementing the recommendations detailed in this report can lead to positive transformations in schools for all children. While the statutory guidance offers valuable advice, it requires refinement and clarification. Schools must be reminded of their duties and held accountable for any deficiencies.

The guidance sets out expectations for the organisation and implementation schools of RHE/RSHE by schools, such as consulting parents, establishing a clear written policy on the organisation of RHE/RSHE, considering students' religious backgrounds in lesson planning, collaborating closely with parents, and ensuring materials are appropriate. Unfortunately, the reality is that a significant number of schools are failing to fulfil their obligation to consult and involve parents.

This situation requires immediate action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

1. Teachers must be reminded to separate their personal views from their professional role

Many teachers are overstepping their boundaries by advocating for contentious 'gender ideology' perspectives and allowing their personal opinions on sexual relationships to influence the presentation of a fair approach that acknowledges diverse viewpoints in the classroom. They are doing so in a manner that presumes their viewpoint is universally accepted and disregards any space for dissenting views. In matters concerning relationships, diverse viewpoints are influenced by various factors, including religious beliefs.

Parents do not enrol their children into schools with the expectation that teachers will impose their own moral beliefs onto them.

The statutory guidance needs to be revised to underscore the importance of teachers separating their personal beliefs from their responsibility to provide factual instruction.

Valuable lessons can be learned from Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) practices in Wales.

Although the implementation of statutory RSE in Wales is not without its own problems, one thing they have got right is the inclusion of the pluralistic requirement. The Welsh Government's emphasis on pluralism necessitates:

"In all schools and settings, RSE must be objective, critical, and pluralistic as to its content and manner of teaching (see the case of 'Dojan and Others v. Germany 2011 application no. 319/08'). By pluralistic we mean that where questions of values are concerned, schools and settings must provide a range of views on a given subject, commonly held within society. This also means providing a range of factual information on RSE issues. In all schools, where they explore specific beliefs or views, this must include a range of other faith and non-religious views on the issue."¹

While this requirement is legally binding across England, Scotland and Wales, it's crucial for it to be explicitly stated in the RSE guidance, as many teachers overlook the importance of acknowledging that diverse viewpoints exist within society and should be reflected in the classroom.

Schools should function as neutral environments that recognise diverse viewpoints, rather than seeing it as their duty to advocate for ideologically biased positions.

¹ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation/#relationships-and-sexuality-education>

2. Schools must be reminded to respond to the needs of the communities they serve

Upon the implementation of mandatory RSE in schools across England, the government deliberately integrated flexibility into the curriculum, allowing schools to tailor the content to meet the needs of their students and communities. This approach was widely welcomed. However, constrained by time and resources, schools are increasingly turning to pre-packaged materials, inadvertently transforming the initially flexible approach into a rigid, one-size-fits-all model for educators juggling busy schedules.

Whilst the government has outlined the essential RHE/RSHE topics that should be covered by the time students complete primary or secondary school, materials providers have concretised the specific year groups for each topic. Consequently, this has restricted the flexibility of schools to engage with their communities and respond to parental input.

The government must reiterate to schools that externally purchased materials should not unduly dictate the timing of RSE topics. Schools must demonstrate a readiness to adapt materials and adjust the scheduling of various topics based on feedback from parents through consultation processes.

3. Schools must be cautioned against exceeding the statutory curriculum requirements

Parents have expressed concerns about how schools interpret the curriculum. For instance, while the curriculum underscores the importance of children understanding safe and unsafe physical contact to safeguard them from abuse, many schools are introducing terms such as 'penis', 'vagina', 'vulva', and 'anus', as early as Year 1. This has sparked worries among parents who feel that children aged 5-6 might not be developmentally ready for such explicit information. Many schools are misrepresenting the statutory requirements by telling parents that teaching the 'correct names' of intimate body parts is a statutory obligation and must be covered in Year 1 or Year 2.

However, there is a need for clarity regarding this interpretation of what is required to be taught in RHE. The widely utilised resource, the PANTS Rule from the NSPCC, educates children about private parts without requiring them to learn the names of intimate body parts at such a young age.

Moreover, certain materials like 'Jigsaw' are surpassing the statutory requirements. For example, they incorporate activities on transgenderism when addressing unfair stereotypes and assert that teaching about 'LGBTQ' individuals is compulsory in Relationships Education classes. There is a pressing need to clarify the existing guidance.

In the science curriculum, primary schools are required to teach reproduction as a process. However, some schools are misinterpreting this requirement by delving into the mechanics of human reproduction in lessons from which parents cannot withdraw their children.

It is imperative to remind schools to strictly adhere to the statutory requirements.

4. Ofsted must ensure that parents are meaningfully consulted

The guidance clearly stipulates the necessity for meaningful consultation with parents, yet many schools are failing to meet their legal obligations in this regard. To ensure compliance, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) must evaluate whether schools meaningfully engage and consult parents into their inspection system. Just as the Secretary of State for Education's directive to schools emphasises the significance of not hindering parental access to teaching materials, schools must also be reminded of their legal duty to consult parents during policy reviews and engage them in programme development.

Unfortunately, many schools treat consultation as a one-time obligation. This approach means that parents whose children enrol in a school in 2024 might be informed that a consultation occurred four years earlier, with no further consultations planned. This practice contradicts guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), which underscores the significance of ongoing consultation. **"The Department for Education recommends that schools engage with parents on these policies on a regular basis, as the parent body does not remain static and the programme may need to be adapted to meet new needs and ensure continuous improvement."**¹

The statutory guidance should offer clearer delineation of the responsibilities regarding consultation and parental engagement. Ofsted must actively ensure that schools adhere to these obligations and incorporate reporting on both exemplary and deficient practices.

5. RHE Policies must be clear and detailed

According to legal requirements, primary schools must publish their RHE policies on their websites.

However, our research indicates that a significant number of these policies lack clarity and sufficient detail, which diminishes their usefulness for parents seeking insight into how RHE is implemented at their child's primary school. Our analysis of RHE policies in primary schools throughout England reveals notable disparities in content.

Statutory guidance mandates that all primary schools develop a written policy for RHE, with requirements for parental consultation whenever its reviewed. The guidance sets out typical policy components concerning RHE content, schemes of work, policy reviews, and parental consultation.

However, there is room for improvement, as RHE policies should explicitly mention the names of materials, outline measures to mitigate bias in teaching, and detail the procedures for meaningful consultation with parents.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eba6938d3bf7f5d4043932b/Parental_engagement_on_relationships_education.pdf

This offers a chance to actively involve the primary stakeholders in our schools. Parents should have clear comprehension of a school's RHE policy and how these subjects are structured at their child's school. Ofsted should rigorously evaluate whether schools are meeting their legal obligations and engaging effectively with parents during inspections.

The statutory guidance should emphasise that the RHE/RSHE policy must be a comprehensive document, offering adequate detail on how a school arranges these subjects.

6. Regulation of RHE/RSHE resource providers is needed

Numerous commercial organisations provide RHE/RSHE materials to schools, asserting compliance with the statutory curriculum. However, many of these materials surpass statutory requirements, incorporating content that leans towards indoctrination, particularly on topics with diverse perspectives. It is worth noting that a 10-year-old attempting to watch a film rated 12A in a cinema would be denied access, yet certain educational materials expose children to adult content in primary schools without adequate regulation.

There is an urgent need for regulation of materials providers and the materials they offer to schools. Introducing a rating system could ensure oversight of materials, preventing the exposure of inappropriate content to children. Materials should clarify the aspects that surpass statutory requirements, promoting transparency and informed decision-making.

7. Schools must involve parents when pupils decide to socially transition

Many schools are actively promoting social transition among children, embracing different names, a multiplicity of pronouns, and different 'gender identities' or 'gender expressions.' Unfortunately, parents are often unaware of these changes in their children's lives. Schools may justify this lack of transparency by citing safeguarding concerns, but without clear guidance, they may be influenced by ideologically driven lobby groups advising schools to shield children from their 'dangerous' parents.

The guidance provided in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023' offers vague advice to teachers on creating **"a safe space for them (children) to speak out or share their concerns"**¹ about their 'sexuality' or 'gender identity.' In situations where clarity is lacking, schools tend to fill in the gaps, leading teachers to potentially overstep boundaries while parents remain in the dark.

Schools should actively involve parents when a child expresses dissatisfaction with their 'gender identity' or 'sexuality.' It is crucial that schools refrain from unilaterally engaging in social transition for children. Both the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) guidance and statutory guidance must explicitly emphasise and clarify this requirement.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1181955/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2023.pdf

8. The definition of what is inappropriate must be made clear

Schools often offer definitions of what constitutes inappropriate teaching or materials, but interpretations of this term can differ among various communities. This underscores the importance of consulting and engaging with parents, as their understanding of appropriateness is often influenced by factors such as culture and faith.

Parents are in the best position to assess what is developmentally suitable for their children, and schools must acknowledge the impact of these factors. It is crucial to remind schools that their RHE/RSHE teaching must align with the distinct characteristics of the communities they serve.

Clearer guidance is necessary to effectively address these considerations.

9. Meaningful channels for parents to escalate concerns must be put in place

When schools decline to consult or engage parents on the RHE/RSHE policy and programme, they often leave parents feeling disempowered and frustrated. This heightened sense of powerlessness increases the likelihood of conflict in schools, a situation that all parties should actively strive to avoid. To mitigate the potential for conflict, the government must provide clearer guidance on meaningful structures through which legitimate parental concerns can be heard, thoroughly investigated, and appropriately addressed.

One potential solution could involve creating a position similar to an ombudsman, providing parents with a channel to escalate their concerns. After parents have utilised internal school processes, such as the complaints procedure, and are still dissatisfied with the resolution, they should have the option to elevate their complaint to an independent RHE/RSHE Ombudsman.

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE TO SCHOOLS

Government Guidance to Schools

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers¹

The statutory guidance sets out the requirements for how schools must plan and organise RHE/RSHE programmes.

Parents are the prime educators of their children and their first teachers

"We are clear that parents and carers are the prime educators for children on many of these matters. Schools complement and reinforce this role and have told us that they see building on what pupils learn at home as an important part of delivering a good education." (Page 4)

"Parents are the first teachers of their children. They have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships." (Page 17)

Schools have the flexibility to adapt teaching to meet the needs of pupils and their communities

"We are determined that the subjects must be deliverable and give schools flexibility to shape their curriculum according to the needs of their pupils and communities." (Page 4)

Schools must consult parents when developing and reviewing their RHE/RSHE policy

"All schools must have in place a written policy for Relationships Education and RSE. Schools must consult parents in developing and reviewing their policy. Schools should ensure that the policy meets the needs of pupils and parents and reflects the community they serve." (Page 11)

Schools should build positive relationships with faith communities

"A good understanding of pupils' faith backgrounds and positive relationships between the school and local faith communities help to create a constructive context for the teaching of these subjects." (Page 12)

The religious background of all pupils must be taken into account when planning teaching

"In all schools, when teaching these subjects, the religious background of all pupils must be taken into account, when planning teaching, so that the topics that are included in the core content in this guidance are appropriately handled." (Page 12)

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1090195/Relationships_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf

Schools should work closely with parents when planning and delivering RHE/RSE

"All schools should work closely with parents when planning and delivering these subjects." (Page 17)

Learning materials must be age and faith appropriate

"Schools must also ensure that their teaching and materials are appropriate having regard to the age and religious backgrounds of their pupils." (Page 24)

Schools must develop their programme in collaboration with parents and the local community

"Schools will retain freedom to determine an age-appropriate, developmental curriculum which meets the needs of young people, is developed in consultation with parents and the local community." (Page 41)

Schools have flexibility to adapt materials to meet the needs of their communities

"Flexibility is important as it allows schools to respond to local public health and community issues, meet the needs of their community and adapt materials and programmes to meet the needs of pupils." (Page 41)

Parental Engagement on Relationships Education (Supplementary Guidance)

In preparation for the introduction of statutory RSE in 2020, and to aid schools in understanding their responsibilities, the government issued supplementary guidance¹, placing specific emphasis on the significance of consulting and engaging with parents.

Schools must seek out the views of parents through the consultation process

"Consultation is a process by which an organisation, over a specific period of time, seeks the opinions of relevant people about particular activities or proposals, to better understand their views and take them into account when making final decisions. For schools, consultation is about them providing formal channels through which parents can express their views about certain aspects of the school's work." (Page 2)

Consultation should not be a one-off exercise

"Consultation must be carried out when the policy is formed and subsequently whenever it is updated. The Department for Education recommends that schools engage with parents on these policies on a regular basis, as the parent body does not remain static and the programme may need to be adapted to meet new needs and ensure continuous improvement..." (Page 3)

Engaging parents gives parents a voice

"Engagement is a positive step – it helps to ensure that everyone involved understands what is being taught, when and how. It helps develop a shared set of values between parents and schools on these subjects. It gives parents a voice and the knowledge that their views are being listened to...it creates an opportunity to build stronger relationships with parents." (Page 4)

Any strongly held views expressed by parents should lead a school to make changes

"Engagement means schools providing the opportunity for parents to feed in their views on the school's proposed Relationships Education policy and includes considering whether any strongly held views of their parent body should lead the school to adapt when and how they approach certain topics with their pupils." (Page 5)

Schools should be sensitive to pupils given the context of the school, their age and religious background

"Schools should in particular consider whether aspects of their curriculum may be sensitive to the pupils or to the parents of their particular cohort and, if so, should ensure they have properly engaged them on this content...What is sensitive may vary according to the context of the school. In all schools, when teaching Relationships Education, the age and religious background of all pupils must be taken into account when planning teaching." (Page 11)

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eba6938d3bf7f5d4043932b/Parental_engagement_on_relationships_education.pdf

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

Government Intervention

Over the past year, we have observed positive government interventions. This response to parental concerns marks a step in the right direction. While there remains much room for improvement, we want to highlight some of these positive interventions in the hope of reshaping long-term practices in schools.

Review of Relationships, Sex, and Health Education to Protect Children

In March 2023, the government responded to parental concerns about inappropriate sex education materials by convening an independent panel. This acknowledgment of existing issues at the highest levels of government was a highly welcomed intervention. The commitment to an independent review, along with the recognition that the statutory guidance needs revision, has been well-received by parents. We eagerly await the final report.

Schools Refusing to Share RSE Materials with Parents

Education Secretary Gillian Keegan has communicated with schools on two distinct occasions, firstly on March 31, 2023, and then on October 24, 2023, reiterating their responsibility to provide curriculum materials to parents. This clarification from the Department for Education unequivocally tackles the contractual obligations schools undertake and renders any clauses hindering material sharing with parents void. This intervention addresses a longstanding worry among parents, meeting a pressing need for clarity.

Guidance for Schools on Gender-Questioning Children

Schools have encountered difficulties when dealing with 'gender-questioning children', occasionally favouring ideology over ensuring safety. The unveiling of new preliminary guidance, subject to consultation, is warmly embraced. We foresee that these policy revisions, addressing parental concerns, will initiate a shift towards prioritising parental involvement over influence from ideologically motivated lobby groups.

Revised Guidance

The updated guidance incorporates age ratings aimed at shielding children from complex topics beyond their comprehension and firmly states that 'gender identity' should not be part of the curriculum, which are commendable changes. Nonetheless, these measures fail to encompass all the worries voiced by parents.

We expect that through the consultation process, parents will have the opportunity to provide comprehensive feedback, thereby improving the final guidance.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6453d448faf4aa009ce1334f/RSHE_letter_SoS_to_schools.pdf

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65377f9226b9b1000faf1dd5/LETTER_TO_SCHOOLS_ON_SHARING_CURRICULUM_MATERIALS.pdf

**ARE SCHOOLS
CONSULTING
PARENTS?
(PARENTAL
SURVEY)**

Are Schools Consulting Parents? (Parental Survey)

We extended invitations to parents to participate in our online survey.

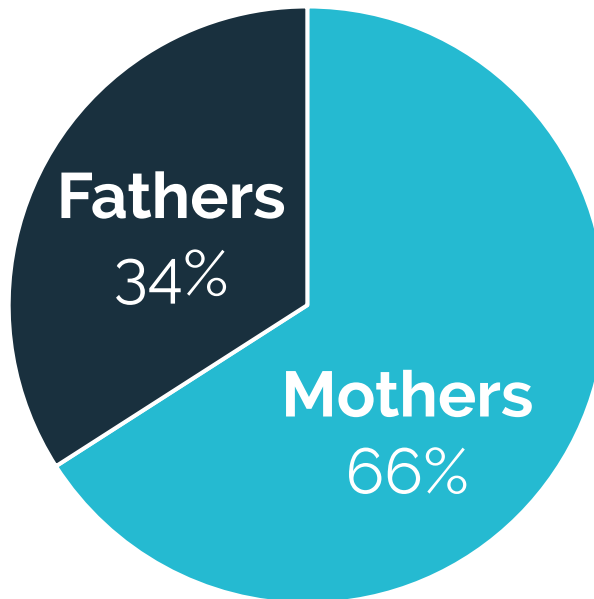
We created an online survey to assess parental satisfaction with the implementation of mandatory RHE/RSHE. After its development, we actively promoted the survey across national and regional platforms, urging parents to share their experiences, whether they were positive or negative. In total, we garnered 637 responses from diverse regions across the nation, with the majority of feedback originating from mothers.

Our Respondents

Demographic Information

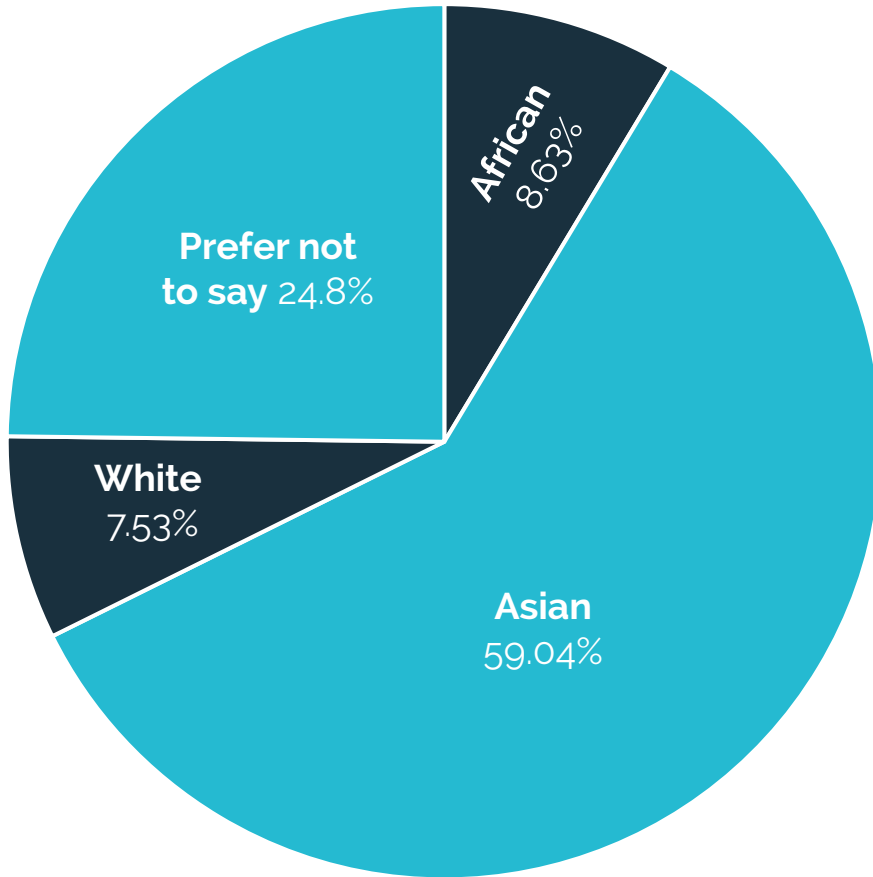
Over 60% of respondents were mothers.

Are you a Mother or a Father?



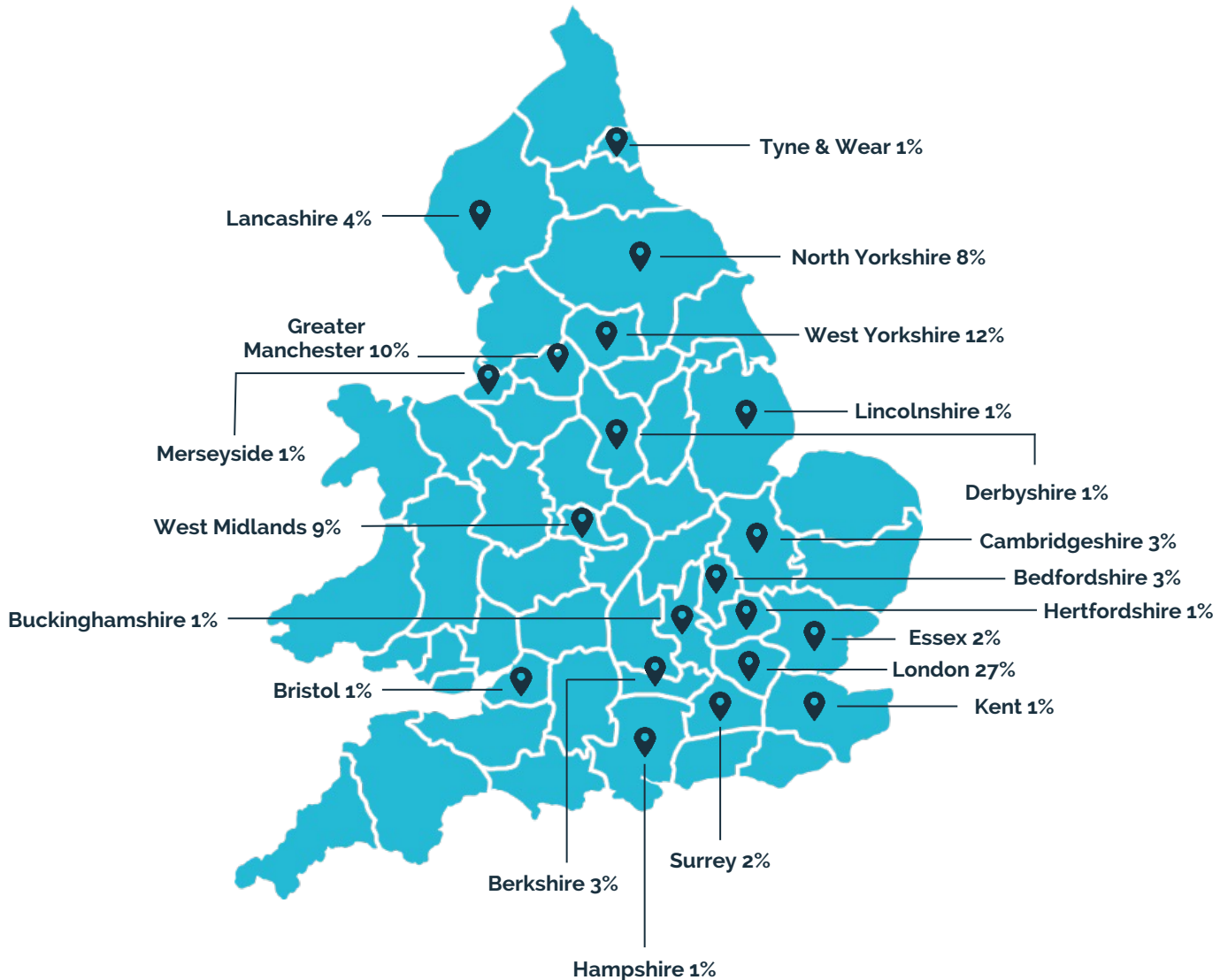
Which ethnicities are respondents from?

What is Your ethnicity?



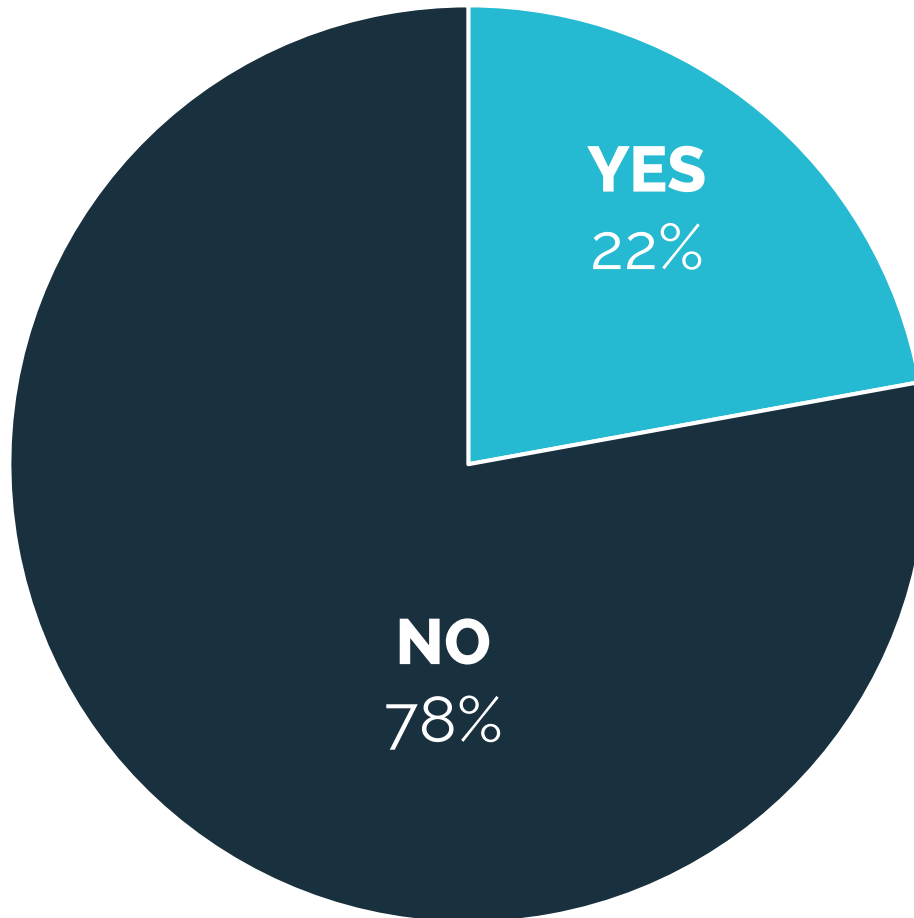
Which parts of England are respondents from?

The participants in the survey were drawn from 20 different areas across England.



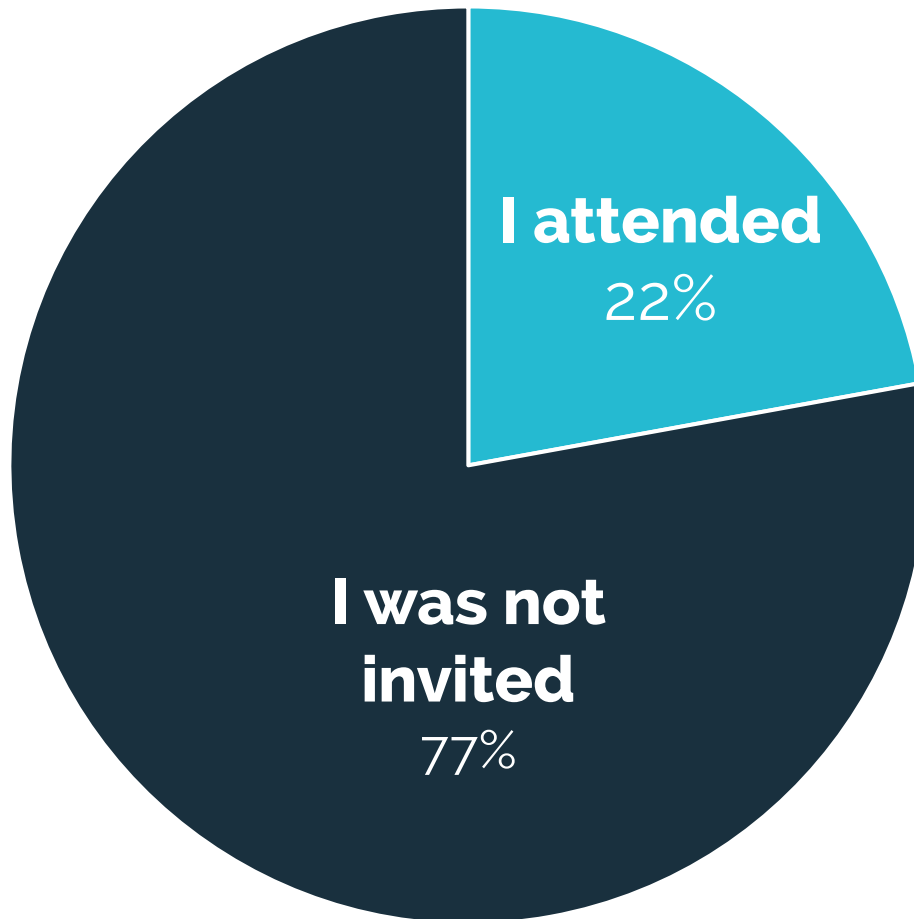
Have you ever been invited to attend a consultation session with your child's school?

A significant proportion of parents (78%) did not receive invitations to participate in consultation sessions held by their child's school. This observation raises concerns. What does it imply regarding how schools perceive parents? Do they understand their legal duties? There is a pressing need to delve deeper into schools' understanding of their responsibilities following statutory RHE/RSHE..



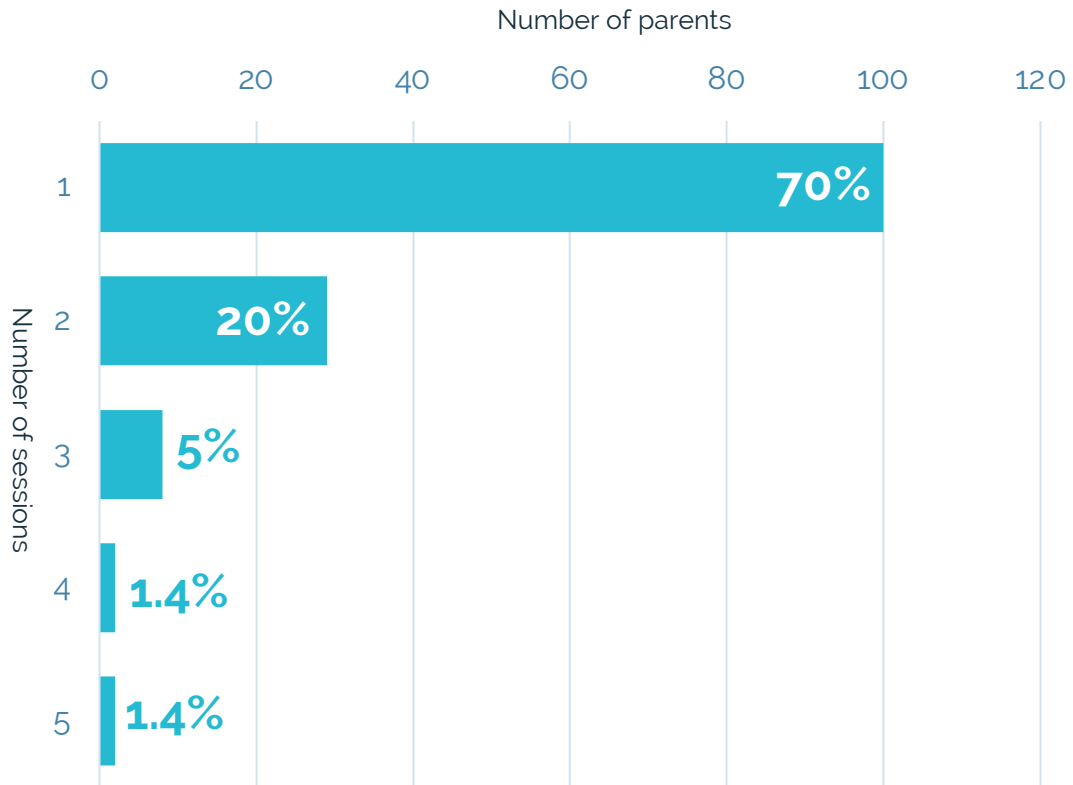
Did you attend?

Those parents that were invited did attend a consultation session. This reflects the willingness of parents to engage with schools.



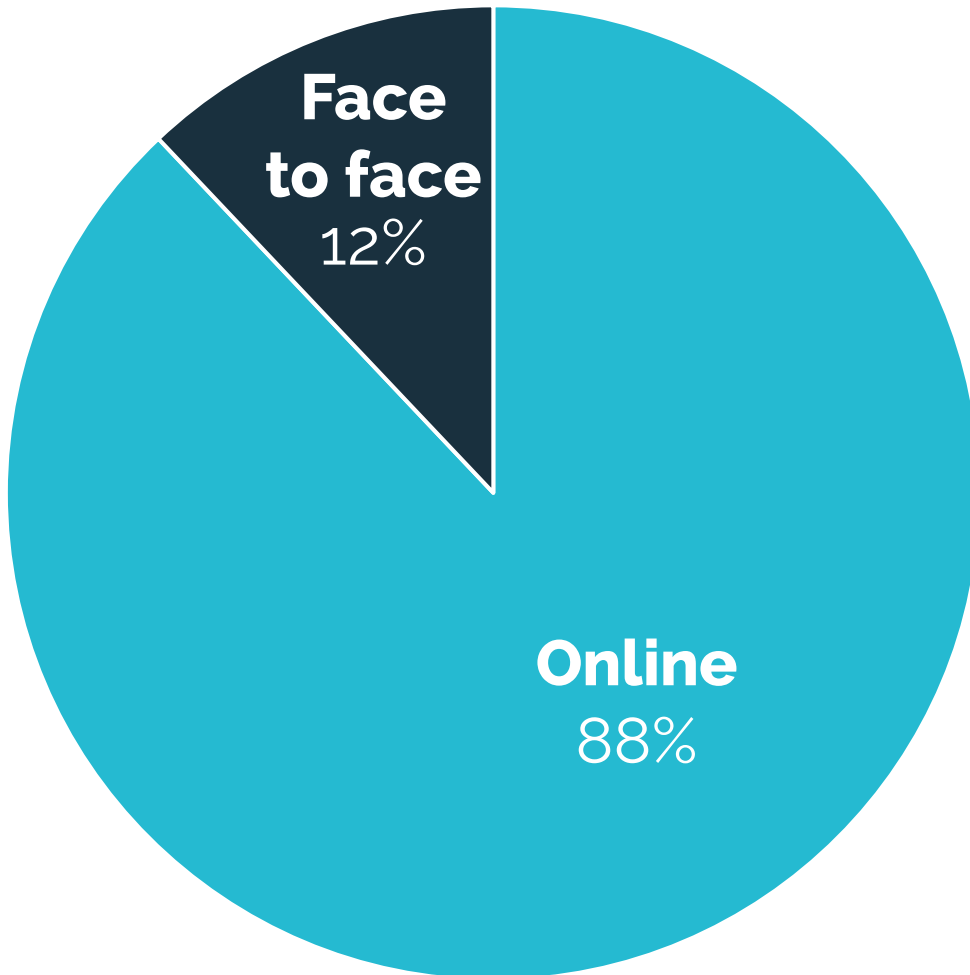
How many sessions were there?

Most schools (70%) ran a single consultation session.



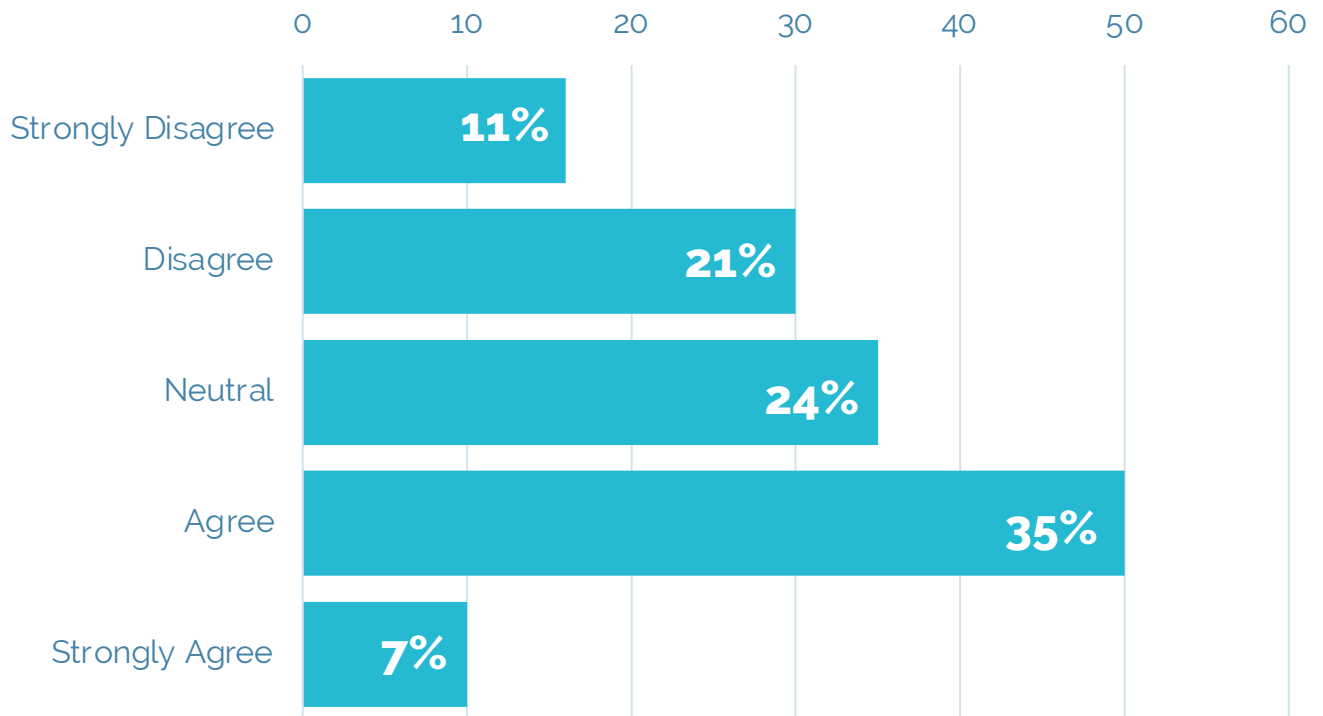
Were the sessions online or face to face?

The vast majority (88%) of consultation sessions were conducted online, which is understandable given the context of the pandemic. However, holding sessions online instead of in person imposes several limitations on effectiveness. We received numerous anecdotal accounts from parents about some of these online sessions, which are worrying. For instance, there were reports of facilitators (the school) restricting parents' ability to speak during these meetings.



At the consultation event I was given the opportunity to provide feedback

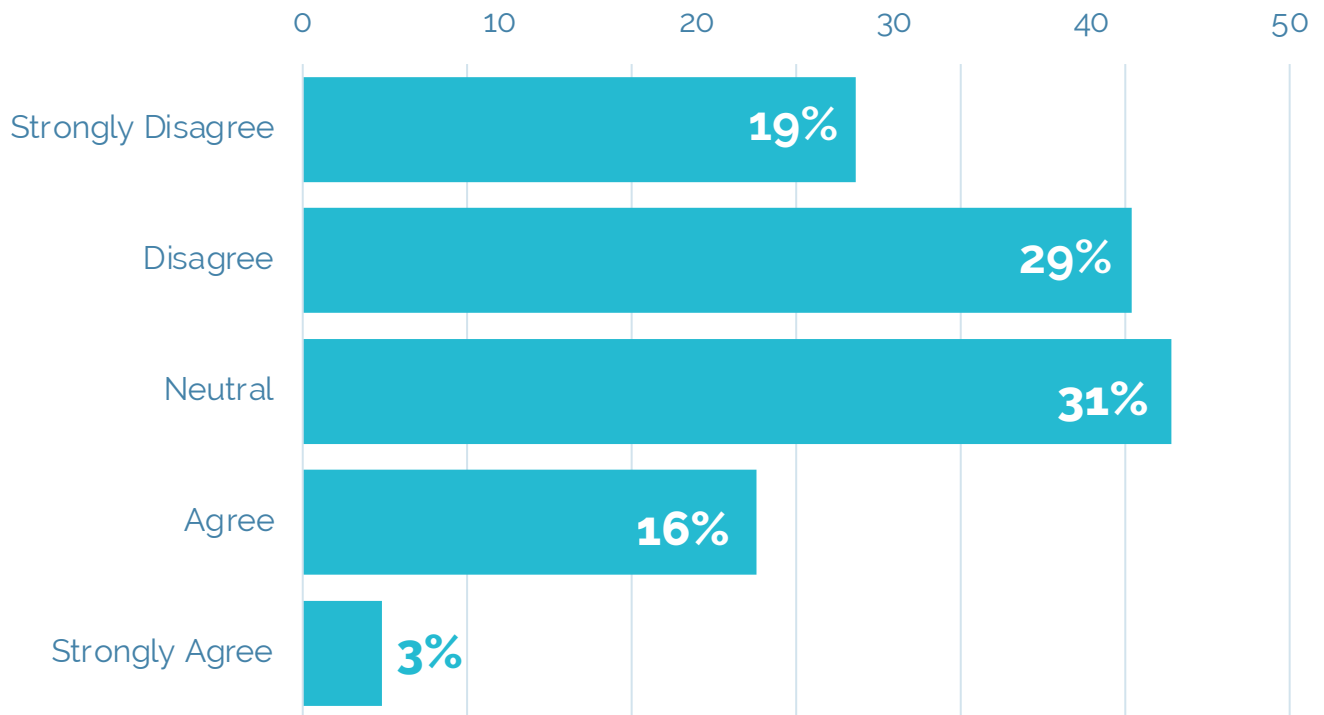
The majority of parents (42%) indicated that the school provided them with an opportunity to offer feedback, whereas 32% disagreed with this assertion. While many parents acknowledged having the chance to provide feedback, the data suggests that a crucial aspect of consultation sessions is not uniformly implemented across all schools.



At the consultation event my feedback was considered

While 19% expressed agreement that their feedback was considered, 48% of respondents disagreed.

It is imperative to ensure that parents, as significant stakeholders in schools, have a voice in fostering lasting partnerships between schools and parents. Hence, it is troubling that a considerable number of parents feel their feedback was disregarded.

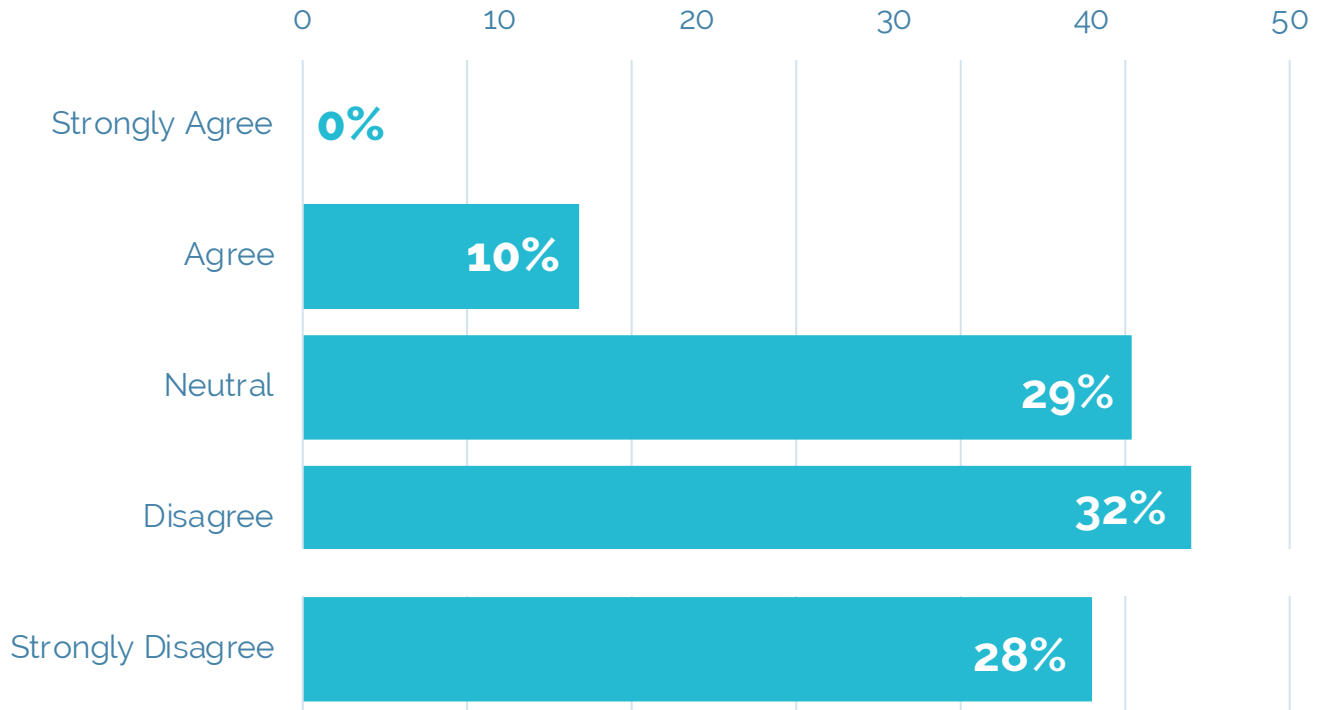


At the consultation event some of my suggestions were accepted and led to changes to the way RHE/RSHE is delivered

It's disheartening that 60% of parents felt that none of their suggestions were embraced.

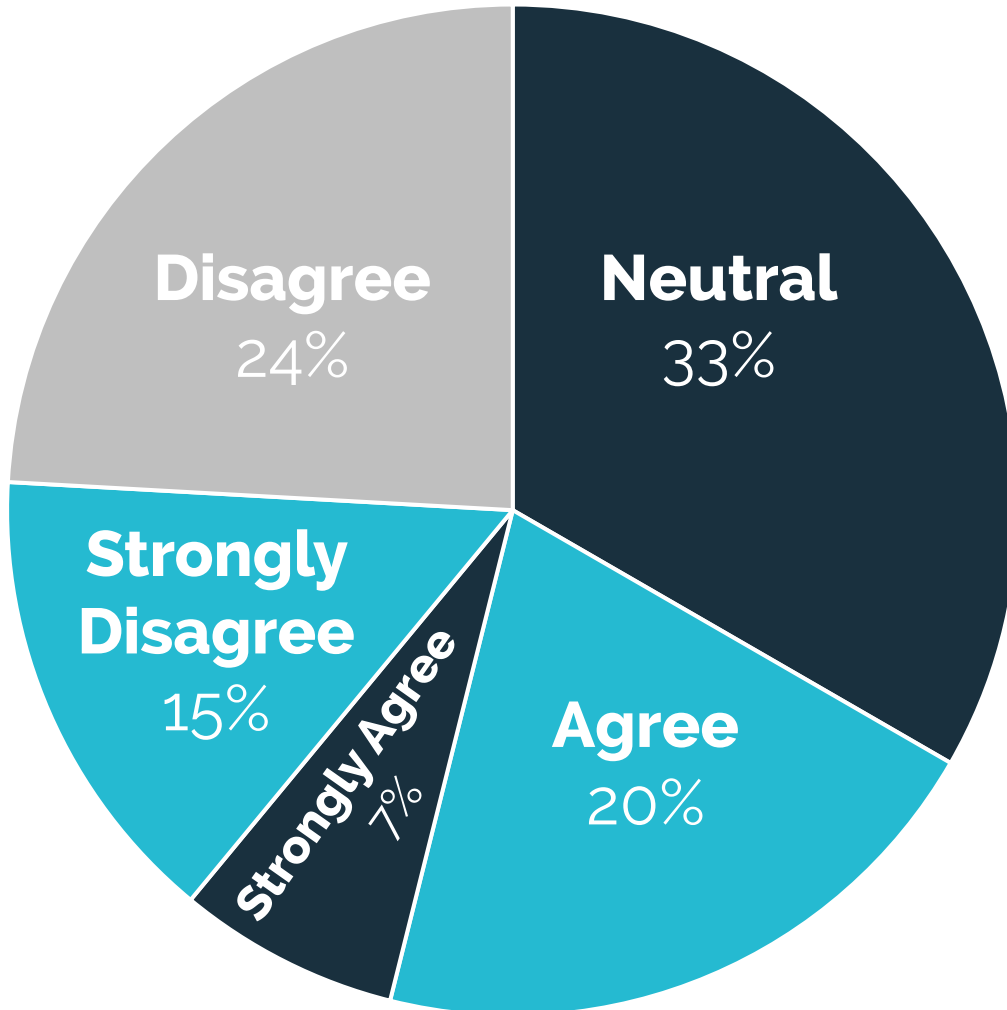
In contrast, only 10% acknowledged that some of their suggestions were acknowledged and changes were implemented.

An essential aspect of any consultation process involves not only providing parents with opportunities to offer feedback but also acting based on some of the feedback. While schools are not required to act on every suggestion, they should consider 'whether any strongly held views of their parent body should lead the school to adapt when and how they approach certain topics with their pupils'. If most parents indicate that their feedback was disregarded, it suggests that schools are falling short of their obligation to engage with parents.



I would characterise my engagement with the school as positive

While 27% agreed that their engagement with the school was positive, 39% disagreed. When parents have negative experiences with schools, particularly in areas they are passionate about, it undermines the goal of fostering strong partnerships between schools and families. In the aftermath of strained relationships, it is the children who suffer the most.



The findings from the parental survey indicate the following:

- Most schools did not hold consultation events leading up to the statutory implementation of RHE/RSHE in September 2020. While the pandemic may have disrupted plans, the government provided some flexibility by allowing schools to delay implementation until September 2021.
- The minority of parents (22%) who were invited to a consultation session did attend. This aligns with anecdotal evidence indicating that parents are keen to be involved in shaping when and how their children are taught RHE/RSHE.
- Most schools that held 'consultation sessions' only conducted a single online session. The number of sessions does not necessarily reflect effective consultation. One session that genuinely allows parents to be heard is far better than multiple sessions that merely go through the motions. Schools must recognise the limitations of online consultation sessions, as it can be more challenging to create an open space for meaningful feedback. A common complaint from parents is that these online sessions were often informational rather than interactive. They did not truly provide an opportunity for parents to understand the school's RHE/RSHE plans and voice their opinions. At a minimum, parents need to be given the respect to be heard.
- The survey reveals that while most parents (42%) were given the opportunity to provide feedback, a significant minority (32%) were not. This highlights a considerable discrepancy in practices among schools. Although many schools strive to do right by parents and value their input, those that do not are not held accountable for neglecting their duties. These schools foster a group of disaffected parents who feel unheard and marginalised, increasing the likelihood of conflict within the school community.
- While many schools offered opportunities for parents to provide feedback on the RHE/RSHE programme, nearly half (48%) of parents felt their feedback was not considered. It is crucial for parents to feel heard and for their feedback to be valued. When schools take parental views into account, it fosters a positive partnership between school and home, leading to greater parental engagement in their child's overall education. Conversely, when parents feel their opinions are disregarded, it can result in parental disengagement.
- Our survey indicates that during typical online 'consultation' sessions, where parents are given the opportunity to provide feedback and be heard, most schools do not subsequently implement the changes parents request, such as modifying resources or teaching certain topics in later year groups. It is understandable that a school cannot accommodate all parental requests. However, if the decisions made at the start of the 'consultation' process remain unchanged by the end, despite parental feedback, can this process be considered genuine consultation as defined in the supplementary guidance? The answer is clear to most: no. When 60% of parents feel their feedback led to no changes, it results in a significant number of dissatisfied and disengaged parents.
- The overall parental dissatisfaction is evident in how parents described their engagement with schools. While 27% considered their interaction positive, 33% viewed it as neither positive nor negative, and 39% reported a negative experience.
- Schools should view engagement with parents as an opportunity, rather than just a checkbox to tick. Many schools face significant issues in how they engage with parents in this area. If these issues are not addressed, the chances of both disengagement and conflict only increases. Ultimately, it is the children who will lose out.

**WHY ARE PARENTS
CONCERNED?
(PARENTAL
CASE STUDIES)**

Why are Parents Concerned? (Parental Case Studies)

Parents often express feeling unheard, with their concerns seemingly overlooked in discussions, and their experiences minimised. In an attempt to rectify this lack of attention to parental voices, we invited parents to share their experiences with schools, whether positive or negative. To protect the anonymity of parents, we have chosen to anonymise all case studies.

World Book Day

During World Book Day, my 4-year-old daughter received a book called 'Billy's Bravery', which she was excited about. She was looking forward to me reading it to her. I was interested in the theme of bravery and the girl superhero on the front cover.

When we read the book, it equated bravery to a boy wearing a skirt and dressing up like a girl. There are many manifestations of bravery, but to boil it down to 'gender ideology' was very disappointing. When I received the book, I was open to enjoying the story with my child. But it pushes a dangerous perspective to children and promotes the 'trans' agenda. Planting the seed in young minds that biological sex has no reality, whilst 'gender ideology' does, is both deceptive and dangerous to the wellbeing of children. My daughter is 4 years old and very curious, and I don't want her to think about why a boy wears a dress. My daughter would have definitely asked lots of questions that I would not want her to even think about at her age.

Mother, London

Too much, too soon

My daughter is 7 years old and joined the school during the last week of Year 2. She was previously home-educated and this was the start of her school experience. She came home and mentioned that she had learned about different sexual body parts. She was saying they learnt about animals needing to feed babies using tits (I believe she meant teats). From what my daughter said they seemed to have rushed through the subject, at the end of the last week before the summer break, all in order to tick a box.

I approached her teacher and complained I hadn't been informed that this was going to be taught. The teacher responded that 'this is statutory'. If I had known this was going to be taught, I would have discussed it with her in anticipation.

I later found out that what is statutory is to teach children to stay safe by the end of primary school. Why was this so important to be taught in the last two days of term? This is her lasting memory of infants school.

There are ways of safeguarding children from abuse without introducing them to words that they don't need to know at this young age. We are essentially exposing children to the adult world far too soon. From time to time, she mentions these words. I feel schools are exposing children to adult topics at such a young age.

Mother, Luton

"There are no real differences between males and females"

My daughters are in Year 1 and 4, during the whole school assembly they were told there's no real differences between boys and girls, that differences may be biological but that's not a real, fixed difference. I was very concerned by the messaging and how 'gender ideology' has taken hold of schools and teachers.

When I enquired about when the school had consulted with parents about RSE, they claimed they had undertaken consultation with parents the previous year. They said they sent an invite to all parents. I said I hadn't received an invitation and when I checked with parents on my school's WhatsApp group if they had been invited, all parents confirmed they hadn't.

My main concern is they were showing explicit videos in my daughter's year 5 class. Children were mentally affected; boys and girls were together, and my daughter did not want to go back to school. My friend is a teaching assistant, and she is told to give stock answers to questions that parents ask, that underplay what is being taught.

They refused to show me the materials. They said they use the Tom and Yasmin resource but every time I asked to see them, I was told they were not allowed to show them to me. In the end I just gave up.

Mother, London

A tale of two schools

The primary head teacher invested so much time in speaking to parents and listening to their views. We understood she couldn't accept all our suggestions, but changes were made, and we felt listened to. We were a group of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh parents who expressed our concerns about some aspects of the Jigsaw resource, the head was very happy to remove some aspects of it.

In my older child's school, which is a secondary school, the head refused to even entertain a discussion. There seemed to be a blind adherence to local authority guidance and so parents were not listened to. The school was unwilling to utilise any of the flexibility in considering different materials and year groups in which the topics could be covered, the school was not open to any dialogue.

The school seemed to be unwilling to make changes. They claimed that the mistreatment of LGBTQ+ young people welfare was the biggest issue at the school, despite the fact the school did not have any statistical data to back this up. One of the real issues in the school was the sexualised treatment of girls by boys, for which there were lots of real-life examples at the school. Yet the school celebrated Pride for two straight months but were unwilling to even address anything besides that.

My son came home when he was in year 9 and said that a 'gay' couple facilitated an entire hour-long session talking about their sexual relationship. We complained that this was the school imposing an ideologically driven view of one protected characteristic (sexuality). We asked whether the school would bring in a black speaker to speak about race or a Jewish speaker to speak about their faith and relationships, but the school was not amenable to those suggestions.

Mother, Redbridge

The 'gay' gene exists because I say so!

My daughter is in year 9. During a PSHE class, the teacher talked about 'sexuality' being innate. This was brought up when Philip Schofield came out as 'gay'.

She said that Philip Schofield was born this way otherwise why would he put his family through this. The teacher said there is a gay gene, and someone's 'sexuality' is a born trait and not a choice. Some of the children started to argue that it is a choice and not genetic. She refused to entertain any alternative perspectives.

In the end the teacher said that if pupils didn't stop talking, they would be asked to leave the classroom and get a detention.

I think schools should not enforce unscientific ideas. Opinions should not be dressed up as fact and a range of views should be entertained. Teachers should not feel that they can impose their personal views on children. They are in a position of power, and they should not abuse their power.

Mother, Sheffield

“Martin Luther King was ‘gay’”

My son has just completed year 6. Earlier this year he came home and said that his teacher told the class, ‘it’s okay to be ‘LGBTQ+’.

She also said Martin Luther King was ‘gay’ and because he was such a well-known figure, that makes being ‘gay’ acceptable. My son is autistic and was confused by what the teacher had said. As a Muslim, I teach my son to be kind to everyone, but he also knows we have certain moral positions on sexual relationships outside of a marital relations between a man and a woman. Teachers should separate their personal moral positions from what they teach. They should not impose their personal morality onto children like they are universal.

Father, Barking

My child’s school was sensitive to our needs

My son is in Reception class. The school’s RSE reception lead was immediately open to showing me all of the materials, they were very kind and courteous and understood the sensitive nature of my concerns.

I asked what was taught, I explained that I would rather my child learn facts and beliefs and choices were to be left to us as a family to discuss with them. I explained I have had talks with my child regarding their private parts and so the school did not need to discuss this.

Any topics concerning life choices and ‘LGBTQ+’ materials are not appropriate for his age group and up until he leaves the infant school and beyond.

My child’s school seemed extremely sensitive to the needs of the children at the school, they seemed to understand that the majority of pupils were from the Islamic faith and imposing values on children would be counter-productive to the children’s learning and wellbeing, it would not be helping the children rather hindering them and the school’s relationship with their families. Their primary concern is to teach children reading, writing, and maths and to give them basic skills. Families of pupils are very active within the school and are active in their children’s learning.

The school’s focus on the children ensures there are no safeguarding issues, as a parent I expect the school to focus on empowering them, it’s a safeguarding issue when their mental health or physical health is impacted by choices given to them at a young age they cannot possibly comprehend or understand, and which are at complete odds with their own beliefs.

Mother, Birmingham

"We won't be changing anything in the curriculum"

My child goes to a primary school in Manchester.

I met with the deputy head teacher to express concerns regarding the RSE curriculum, and she said that she would pass my concerns on. I did not hear anything following this.

When I did not hear back, a fellow parent and I attended a school coffee morning again to express my concern about the curriculum. Again, there was a note made of my concerns, but I did not hear back and there was no follow up.

I had a final meeting with the RSE curriculum lead. My husband and I attended the meeting to learn that the head teacher and deputy head teacher would also be in attendance (we were not informed of this prior to the meeting). Before even saying hello, the head teacher started the meeting by saying, "We won't be changing anything in the curriculum". The tone was that the school is not interested in feedback and has a curriculum that it will push regardless of what we believe. I was shocked that this was his response. I asked the head whether the school accepts parental feedback. He responded by saying parents are free to make their views known. I made clear, "the reason I asked this question is because I feel your earlier response suggested our views don't matter." He laughed and said the school is open to feedback. His response was baffling, since his initial response was so closed and definitive that the school was not interested in the views of parents.

When I initially approached the school, I was referred to the website. I was told all the information is there. When I went to the website the entirety of the school's information about RSE was contained within a single page! All of my interactions with the school gave me the impression they just wanted me to become so frustrated I would give up.

Academic excellence is not enough, I would like a school to be open and accept different families have different values.

I did consider complaining to the school about the way it has handled my engagement over RSE but there is a fear that the school may treat my children differently if I do.

I feel the guidance to schools isn't clear. Consultation is legally required but the consultation happened in 2020 before my children joined the school. When I approached the school, they said they have undertaken their responsibility and do not need to repeat it. I would've expected that they would re-run the consultation when the policy is reviewed next year, but this didn't seem to be the case.

There needs to be greater transparency and schools need to publish how they've undertaken consultation, what feedback was given by parents and what the school has done with it.

Before my engagement about RSE I was very happy with the school, the teachers are lovely and my children love going there, but this has placed an unfortunate taint on my view of the school. I am now searching for other schools to transfer my children to.

Mother, Manchester

You can change 'gender', no longer be Muslim nor do you have to listen to your parents!

When my daughter was 8 years old, the school started using the No Outsiders Programme. My daughter was told she could be whatever she wanted to be, even if she wanted to be a boy that was okay and if she no longer wanted to be a Muslim that was also her choice. She was told she didn't have to listen to her parents, especially if they were forcing her to be something she does not want to be. We raise our children to treat everyone well, but we also teach them our values. After these sessions, my daughter was very upset. We complained to the school. They were willing to listen to us, but they could not accept that the teacher had overstepped the mark from education into indoctrination. After lengthy discussions, the school did apologise but what they taught was watered down but was essentially the same.

I think schools need to be more upfront about what they're planning to teach and work with parents to shape their policy and the development of their RSE programme, as the government mandates.

Father, Birmingham

"It's okay to be gay because God made them 'gay'!"

My son said in the last week of school, the teacher, who is a self-proclaimed atheist, said "It's okay to be gay because God made them 'gay'." The children protested that this was inaccurate, but the teacher shouted them down. I am concerned that teachers enforce their own personal views on children and children are not even allowed to express an alternative viewpoint, especially since faith and belief is protected under the Equality Act

Mother, Dewsbury

Lack of sensitivity

We received a timetable of what will be covered and when but don't get shown the material used, when I asked if they would take my religious beliefs into consideration I was not responded to. It was though I was making an unreasonable request, rather than referencing the government's guidance.

My child said he was sat in the room while the slide show was uploaded then he was asked to leave the room. There is no sensitivity at all and no respect for parents' wishes. I am a parent at the end of the day and the prime educator for my children, yet I cannot decide what my child is exposed to.

I can understand that children need to be taught to be kind to everyone but why do they have to learn about other people's sexual preferences?

Mother, Liverpool

No respect for the child's religious beliefs

During our sacred month, my daughter was taught about sex. She felt very uncomfortable, I felt upset because they had no consideration and respect for the child's religious beliefs, never asked for our permission and never given us the option to opt out. That was rude and inconsiderate.

Mother, Croydon

Four-year old children should choose their own pronouns

I am sending my child to nursery. They are very nice people working there. My only concern is they don't call the children he or she as they say they should choose their own pronouns. Four-year-old children should question whether they are in fact a boy or a girl! I find that very worrying because I think they will confuse my child and all children.

Mother, London

Teaching 7-year-old children about sexual body parts

My children's school informed the parents about what is being taught.

They insisted that my 7-year-old should know the names of the private parts for males and females (penis, vulva, vagina, anus, nipples and breasts). They insisted that this is statutory. Despite reminding them that the curriculum requirement is about keeping children safe from abuse and that can be done without naming the private parts, they kept saying, mantra like, 'it's statutory'. I asked them if they insisted on teaching these parts of the body, they can do it in a later year group. They refused. The government provided schools with flexibility, yet they deny they can make any changes.

My daughter was affected by these lessons. She kept repeating the private parts publicly in settings where it was inappropriate. The school gave her permission to use these words but didn't contextualise when it is appropriate or not. She's a child so she can't be held responsible. But the school is driven by a desire to keep up with other schools, who also do the same. There's a real lack of thinking about what they're teaching and why. They just want to be able say they have educated children and kept them safe when all they've done is tick a box and exposed children to adult topics.

Mother, Leeds

A safe space for all questions, except the ones we don't like!

My son was in year 7 last year when this incident happened. It changed the way he views school.

Before the half-term break, an LGBTQ+ organisation called Diversity Role Models came into my son's secondary school to deliver a session on 'LGBTQ+'. At the end of the session the pupils were told to place any questions that for reasons of time, were not answered during the session. They were told this was a safe space and they could ask anything. My son submitted the following question, 'As 'LGBTQ+' relationships are against my religion, why are we learning about it'.

When the children returned back from the break, the head of year addressed my son's class. She said that someone had written a homophobic message. She proceeded to read out the question and ask for the person who had written it to come forward. My son was obviously petrified and did not own up to writing the question, he did not have any ill intent.

When my son didn't come forward the entire class was threatened with detention. The head of year asked the children to come forward and identify the 'homophobe'. When my son was identified, he was marched into another room. In a Kafkaesque manner, he was told, 'you know what you did was wrong, don't you'. When he replied he didn't know he had done something wrong, he was met with a teacher who rolled his eyes and shrugged his shoulders. He did not even take the time to explain to explain to my son why he was in trouble.

When he returned home, he told me what had happened, and he was in tears. The other children were asking him what punishment he would receive and why he wrote 'that homophobic message'. This placed a huge amount of pressure and stress on him.

I wrote to the school to challenge this, and the deputy head called me to apologise. I made sure that they changed the school's policy so that this wouldn't happen to someone else's child and my son was offered a public apology.

Mother, London

My new baby ~~brother~~ 'gender non-specific sibling'!

My son enjoys going to school. He is 6 years old and likes the teachers and his fellow classmates. That is why I was shocked when he came home recently visibly upset.

When I asked him what was wrong, he responded that when he shared the news that we were going to have a new baby in the family and that it was a boy, the teacher responded angrily. Instead of congratulating him, she said, 'how do you know that it's a boy? When he grows up, he'll decide what 'gender' he is.'

My son only wanted to share his good news with his favourite teacher, he didn't expect a lesson in made-up 'gender' ideology.

Mother, London

How dare a 10-year old child refuse to look at videos of naked men and women!

When my daughter entered year 7, within the first month in school they were showing her pictures of naked women and men. Having just come from a primary school, my daughter had never looked at such things or heard about them. So, she turned her face away from those images and refused to look at them despite the teacher's demands. The PSHE teacher, Ms *****, also her Geography teacher, called me expressing concern about my daughter's behaviour and refusal to participate in the lesson.

She did not give me any more details or context to go by and just put it down to my daughter's behaviour, which I knew for a fact to be very uncharacteristic of her. I assured the teacher I'd speak to my child when she gets home.

When my daughter described to me the pictures she was shown, I was outraged and immediately emailed the teacher expressing my approval of my daughter's behaviour and support for her refusal to look at such filth. In addition, I asked to see the rest of the PSHE materials. The head teacher invited me for a meeting and refused to show me any materials, claiming everything they use in the school is approved by the DfE and how important it is for teens to understand the world and how things work.

I explained that my daughter has been raised in a religious family with morals and respect for others. At the age of 10 it is highly inappropriate to be talking with children about sex, how to do it, masturbation and showing imagery for that purpose. That is sexualisation of children. She was not happy with my words, she made clear I could not remove my daughter from PSHE because it was a statutory lesson, she tried to justify this by saying 'what would the school do with only one student outside class?' 'She will hear about things from her classmates outside the controlled environment of the classroom'. I pushed back against her arguments and the meeting ended. I felt that the school was unwilling to listen and rather than recognising me as a stakeholder, I was treated like a troublemaker.

Mother, London

My child's school is always open

My child's school is very open about what topics they teach our children and are very understanding and sensitive about how they approach certain topics which most parents appreciate. This creates trust amongst children, parents, teachers and the school in general.

Mother, Leicester

Teacher or 'gender-identity' cheerleader?

Earlier this year I was having a casual conversation with my 12-year-old daughter as she had watched a programme on TV which depicted a young, female character who wanted to be a boy. I asked her what she thought about that. She replied that a girl in her class was also going through this. When I asked her to explain further, she talked me through the whole story.

She goes to an all-girl school, her classmate was confused about her 'gender' and one of the teachers, who identifies as lesbian took her under her wing. She started to address her with 'gender-neutral' pronouns and used a masculine name to address her by. She asked the class to do the same. The girl started to slowly change the way she dressed and cut her hair short. The teacher told the class that the girl was going through an important journey, and no one should tell anyone outside of the school, especially 'your parents'.

Her parents were also kept in the dark and when they came in during parents evening, she was addressed by her birth name and also with the pronouns 'she/her'.

I think it's unacceptable that schools are becoming places where children are being coached into embracing identities behind their parent's backs and teachers are essentially imposing their 'gender ideology' onto children.

Mother, London

Two schools, two very different approaches

I have children in two schools, one school is understanding and takes into account our religious beliefs (which is basically following the statutory guidance). This school communicates to us and supports us as the primary educators of our children and treats us like human beings. We can have a sensible discussion where our views are considered, and we are kept updated.

The other school fobs parents off by saying they are not teaching anything inappropriate. Our kids are coming home saying they are being taught things which the school denies they are teaching.

Father, Sheffield

"Showing 9–10-year-old children videos of a naked man and woman is statutory!"

When my child joined year 5, they showed a video with a naked man and woman as part of a Relationships Education class. We have raised our son not to look at these things. So, he kept his head down. When the teacher saw this, she marched over to his desk and demanded he look up. My son felt embarrassed and deeply traumatised. When I complained to the school, they responded that this is statutory. I asked them what is statutory? Showing 9–10-year-old children, videos of a naked man and woman? The school was unable to justify its decision-making, but I don't think they really cared as they have all the power at the end of the day and parents have no recourse to make complaints, as these tend to be upheld in the school's favour.

Mother, Manchester

Life in modern Britain recognises only two protected characteristics

My son's secondary head was hell-bent on sticking to the local authority's curriculum guidance and kept sending the same letter out about how they are obliged to follow the borough's guidelines (when this of course was not true)

There has been a noticeable and excessive push towards ignoring the faith and cultural sensitivities of the majority of children at this school and the head's logic has always been that they need to prepare children for life in modern Britain. Apparently, life in modern Britain recognises the equality rights of two protected groups ('sexuality' and 'trans') over others ('faith and belief').

They have also had 'LGBTQ+' speakers deliver lengthy assemblies to the children and failed to offer the same right to speakers who represent the other protected characteristics.

Mother, London

This map is 'gay'

A male teacher who identifies as a female told all the boys to call him Ms.

He/she delivered a geography lesson where the students had a map of the world and had to colour in countries that were pro-'LGBTQ+' in one colour and ones who punish 'homosexuals' another colour and other shades in between.

This was absolutely ludicrous, he/she went off-piste, this was not a real geography lesson. The teacher clearly was trying to push his/her views and agenda. What has this got to do with the national curriculum? Happy to say, parents complained, and school sent an email with an apology.

Mother, London

Biological boys in the girls' toilets

We have learnt that two children in the school, both boys are identifying as girls. What individuals do is not our concern, however if they are biological boys, who haven't transitioned, using the girl's toilets, then we have concerns. And believe as parents we ought to know about this, or a provision be made to provide correct facilities for those children who are still biologically different to what they're identifying as.

Mother, Manchester

This is not a safeguarding problem

As a result of what they're teaching in schools and what children are exposed to as part of an increasingly hypersexualised society, my kids are using slang, sexualised language. They are having inappropriate conversations with each other of a sexual nature. My son is going to year four this year. Some of the students from different age groups approach my son's friends and say that they feel like sucking their private parts!

Other students reach into each other's underwear to touch their private parts. Even though teachers have been informed about this they have not taken any action.

This is a clear safeguarding problem, but the school is focused on ticking boxes and delivering sex education classes, which talk to children about masturbation, rather than addressing the fall out.

I was shocked but don't really know what to do in this situation.

Father, Oldham

Outsourcing pornography

Our primary school has a large proportion of children from religious backgrounds, and they make up the majority of the school, yet our feedback seems to fall on deaf ears.

A humanist speaker was outsourced to deliver a series of assemblies to year 5 children. His basic message went far beyond treating people well, which we can all subscribe to. He said you must accept 'LGBTQ+' identities and if you don't, you're homophobic.

During assemblies, children are told that their 'gender' is not fixed. They may decide to change from a boy to a girl or a girl to a boy and that's normal.

They incentivise and induce children to deliver speeches supporting 'LGBTQ+' in class. They don't care about the families those children come from. None of this was shared with parents.

During the puberty lessons they outsourced the lesson to an organisation which used extremely graphic videos. They showed videos of naked men and women, zooming in on their body parts. My children cannot watch films at the cinema with adult content, but schools can show this to children with no repercussions!

When I approached the head teacher and deputy head teacher they made excuses and no clarification was provided. They avoid meetings and keep on forcing us to accept it as 'statutory' aspects of the curriculum we can't opt out of according to government rules.

Mother, Manchester

Lack of transparency

We were informed about the lessons due to take place on the Monday of the week of the lessons being delivered, via a class portal message, without any detail of content. My child is in Year 1 - we were not happy about exposure at this early age without a proper conversation or consultation.

We did enquire about the lessons and there was mention of use of diagrams, we have requested to see the content, but this has not been followed up, despite reminding the class teacher of my request. The school year ended without the material being shared and the teacher has since left the school.

Father, Birmingham

Primary school 'gender-ideology'

The school decided to share a few American based videos with parents prior to teaching the Year 5 children about 'gender dysphoria'. A lot of the content we didn't agree with. Some other parents objected but for other reasons and with a follow up email of concern to the teachers directly, the school decided not to show the children those videos. Instead, it gave me an opportunity to talk to my son about this particular topic and what our beliefs as Muslims were. This was a positive change that was brought about through open communication and partnership between parents and the school.

However, there are so many bad practices from the school that it's difficult to be specific. Creating an RSE policy without parental consultation is the first. Ignoring genuine parental concerns from us that the content is not age appropriate is another example. We were given the option of taking our child out of certain sessions that were going to be taught but we were not informed when they were going to be taught. The school have a very open-minded policy about celebrating and embracing 'LGBTQ' that even the toilets at school have become gender neutral. Children as young as Year 2 and 3 were being taught detailed names of private parts and these short lessons were repeated numerous times. Again, not age appropriate.

Mother, Hertfordshire

It's fine for 9-year olds to masturbate alone or with another person

My daughter was taught about masturbation in Year 5 and that there was nothing wrong with this. She was told that you can do this with another person but in private, not in public. I had no idea this would be taught as there was no sharing of materials like in previous years. My daughter was left quite traumatised and confused. Since I was unaware this would be taught it was a shock and I didn't have much time to think about how to explain this to her.

Mother, London

Use your pronouns but keep mum!

The school has been promoting the rights of 'LGBTQ+' by encouraging children to change themselves/use pronouns without informing their parents. The pupils in the class became confused. Rather than concentrating on their studies the pupils are once again exposed to a new norm.

Mother, Bradford

Selectively 'inclusive'

I spoke to the head about the Jigsaw programme that is being used and how their claim to its age appropriacy is questionable. She was very aggressive and confrontational. She was a new head in a CofE school seemingly ultra-keen to show she was 'inclusive' in her way of understanding. For her this meant a singular, myopic focus on embracing 'LGBTQ+' wholeheartedly to the detriment of every other protected characteristic at the school. She didn't seem to want to even hear anything that might challenge that partial perspective. More genuine discussion came through the class teacher but as she was new she was not that aware of the curriculum. We just want to be heard and not treated like we're the problem.

Mother, Bedfordshire

Schools are becoming ideological-driven battlegrounds

I told the teacher that we have rating system for films for a reason. I said I'm an adult and I don't watch this stuff and looking at this makes me feel more then uncomfortable. She just replied by saying well you don't have the right to withdraw. She couldn't seem to grasp the point I was making. The topics a school must cover are set out by the government but the materials a school uses and when they choose to teach them are choices a school makes. But where is the consultation the government has legally mandated? I know lots of parents who cannot stomach the treatment of our children as a social experiment by those who are no longer interested in ideologically-driven education, but they are too frightened to say anything for fear of being labelled.

Mother, Sheffield

'Love is love', get over it!

They showed a YouTube clip at my child's primary school which furthered the 'LGBT' slogan 'love is love'. It was trying to promote 'LGBT' and my child felt uncomfortable. She was not being asked to treat people well, she was asked to celebrate a lifestyle which goes against her values, yet she was made to feel bad, as if she was 'homophobic'.

The class discussed different scenarios, including how two Mums and two Dads are possible. The answer was the parents are 'gay'. Many kids still don't understand romantic love and there is a risk of them confusing friendship with romantic love. Also, I feel that if my child doesn't accept 'LGBT' in a positive way, he will be discriminated against.

Mother, Surrey

Primary indoctrination

My year 4 daughter had the following experience. The teacher asked the whole class to stand at the front and move to the left if they thought relationships could be just boy and girl or to the right if they could be girl and girl and boy and boy as well. She was completely embarrassed and didn't move. It was an unnecessary exercise which made the classroom an unsafe environment to express her opinion.

During "Pride Month" they were shown an inappropriate episode of Newsround where the reporter who identified as gay interviewed young adults and discussed their experiences of being 'gay' and 'coming out'. The message of the piece was that it used to be difficult to be 'gay' but it's so much easier and everyone is more accepting of it nowadays. I felt there was a step too far into promotion of sexual ideology.

My year 2 daughter had the following experience. Her class teacher read 'I am not a prince' by Rachael Davis and Beatrix Hatcher to the class. She came home to tell me it was really funny because the frog wanted to become a princess not a prince, she also mentioned a few things about rainbows and whispering a secret into the man's ear. I contacted the school, and they allowed me to borrow the book. I was shocked to see the repeated motifs of rainbows and the word "pride" is used repeatedly through the book. I spoke to the headteacher, she wasn't familiar with the book but assured me it was in the pack recommended by Jigsaw and therefore it was pre-approved by the county council. It disturbed me that the headteacher wasn't familiar with the books recommended for this curriculum and that she relied on the defence that someone else said it was OK.

Mother, Watford

Pornography and sexual ideology in the classroom

Students are being taught PSHE during form time every other week and during this lesson, there is a constant promotion of LGBTQ identities including getting children to question their biological sex, as 'they may have been born into the wrong 'gender''. Assemblies are also opportunities for this kind of teaching to take place, some teachers display the colours of the 'LGBTQ+' flag and classes are also decorated with the colours. One particular teacher showed a movie with graphic scenes of a man and a woman in bed, when my child covered her ears and looked away, she was told to get over herself and grow up. Students aren't listened to when they say they don't want PSHE sessions promoting the 'LGBTQ+' agenda, they feel upset and embarrassed, upset that something that goes against their beliefs and values are being forced onto them.

Mother, Leeds

School 'Pride'

My son was reading a book called 'Bill's New Frock' in guided reading as part of their English lesson. We weren't informed about this book being used. I spoke to his class teacher, and she took considerable time to listen to my concerns. She said that going forward she would inform me if any similar books would be used and if I didn't feel comfortable then they would not use that book.

The school organised an ad-hoc 'pride' celebration day as part of the football World Cup activities advising all students to wear a rainbow-coloured item to school. They advised in the school newsletter that this was to support those from the 'LGBTQ+' community in light of the stance of the Qatari government. Many parents of a faith background wrote to the school complaining that it was wrong of the school to take a political stance, when the World Cup is actually a celebration of different countries, cultures and faiths coming together and the school should be educating about this. We pointed out that the school did not raise any protest when the Winter Olympics were being held in Beijing regarding the oppression of the Muslims in China, so why the political stance now? The school wrote to all the parents that there would be no 'pride' celebration however the day would be used to celebrate diversity so those wishing to wear rainbow colours would still be able to do so as an option. I did not send my son to school on that day as I was not happy about the school's stance and double standards.

Mother, London

Teachers as experts in theology

My daughter is in year 7. She told me about a PHSE lesson that took place earlier this year.

During this class, the children were shown images/videos about 'LGBTQ+' identities, and some of the Muslim girls were reacting negatively?

The teacher, in response, challenged the girls as to why they were reacting and remarked that the Muslim view is also in line with this. She showed them a photo image of a person in hijab at a PRIDE march with the caption: 'Allah Loves Equality'.

I have a strong concern when staff/teachers/tutors give the wrong information to my Muslim daughter about what Islam unequivocally has to say about same-sex relationships. As is the case with most world religions.

For example, in a lesson, is it okay to show a picture of a Muslim eating pork. And then use it as an example to state that Muslims eat pork too, therefore Muslims are allowed to eat pork? No, because showing person x doing act y does not equate to y being okay. That is a logical fallacy. A teacher who has no expertise in Islamic theology should not be promoting mistruths such as this.

I then wrote to the head teacher to look into the incident. The response was to deny the incident had happened despite being verified by many pupils, including my own daughter.

Mother, London

Positive engagement

When RSE was introduced and parents raised concerns about the content and age groups its being delivered in, the headteacher invited parents to join in shaping the policy for the school. A group of parents volunteered and took the Government's general guidance given to schools and shaped it to suit the needs of our school a whole year before it became law. A few meetings and discussions later our school produced a simple, succinct policy document, easy to understand and even marked at which age group certain topics were taught at the request of parents. The final version was discussed and approved with the group. Overall, a positive experience.

The primary driver for this collaborative approach was the head teacher, who was very open and understanding. He is now retiring, and we're worried that the new head teacher won't be as open minded.

Mother, Coventry

Inappropriate teaching masquerading as statutory

When my child was in Year 1, I had serious concerns about what the school was planning to teach. They were going to cover different relationships, the names of sexual body parts and the idea that a child can 'be whatever they want to be'. They were planning to use a RSE programme 'All About Me', which suggests that teaching about self-stimulation (masturbation) is an acceptable action to teach 6–7-year-olds. It also teaches children that they can choose to be 'trans', 'non-binary' or 'cis'.

I arranged a meeting with the school, and they told me that the concerns I mentioned were against equality law. After the meeting, I realised the school is promoting a dangerous agenda to confuse children. I sent an email to the school to deregister my daughter giving 1 weeks' notice to leave.

Schools need to focus on teaching children English, Maths, Science, and other subjects for education. That is their purpose. They should support children where they see concerns,

They need to let children practice their beliefs. It is the role of parents and carers to talk about their religion, equality, love for humanity, cultures, traditions, 'sexuality' and community. The schools need to give up on this agenda to confuse children about their 'identity' and 'sexuality'.

One of the main reasons I decided to home educate is because of what schools have become.

Mother, Reading

Children labelled as homophobic for expressing an alternative perspective

My son is 14 years' old. In an RSE lesson, the teacher was asking the students to celebrate and accept 'LGBTQ+' identities and was talking about 'gay' sex. Children from faith backgrounds responded that they didn't want to hear about sex, let alone 'gay' sex. The teacher was visibly angry and labelled them all 'homophobic'. She went into a 15-minute rant about how her cousin's life had been made a misery by bigoted religious people.

As a result, the entire class was held back in detention as a punishment.

I was angry, and even though I was advised to complain I was unable to, because most of the senior leadership team visibly identify as 'LGBTQ+'.

I think teachers should follow a standardised way of teaching so that there's no proselytising of an opinion (as happens in Religious Studies) i.e. scripts and material that have been reviewed for impartiality.

Father, Redbridge

**WHAT DO RHE
POLICIES TELL
US ABOUT
PRACTICE IN
PRIMARY SCHOOLS?**

What do RHE Policies Tell Us About Practice in Primary Schools?

Parents are expressing frustration that many schools are falling short in fulfilling their statutory duties. They are not engaging in consultation with parents, unwilling to consider changes to materials that parents deem inappropriate, and failing to recognise they have the flexibility to adapt when and how they teach various elements of RHE.

To address this concern, we examined a variety of RHE policies from primary schools across the country. Our objective was to identify examples of effective and innovative practices, while also highlighting instances of poor practice and areas needing improvement.

We conducted a random selection of schools across 34 cities in England, covering every region of the country. RHE policies were accessed through primary school websites in these cities, allowing us to assess both positive and negative practices.

1. **Birmingham** (96-100)
2. **Blackburn** (115-116)
3. **Blackpool** (116)
4. **Bolton** (110-112)
5. **Bournemouth** (59-60)
6. **Bradford** (124-125)
7. **Brighton** (68-70)
8. **Bristol** (63-64)
9. **Cambridge** (82-83)
10. **Coventry** (103-105)
11. **Derby** (94-95)
12. **Huddersfield** (128-129)
13. **Hull** (119-120)
14. **Leeds** (126-127)
15. **Leicester** (90-91)
16. **Liverpool** (117-118)
17. **London boroughs** (73-81)
18. **Luton** (86-87)
19. **Manchester** (108-114)
20. **Milton Keynes** (70)
21. **Newcastle** (121-123)
22. **Northampton** (88-89)
23. **Nottingham** (92-94)
24. **Oxford** (70-71)
25. **Peterborough** (84-85)
26. **Plymouth** (61-62)
27. **Rochdale** (113-114)
28. **Sheffield** (130-131)
29. **Southampton/Portsmouth** (65-67)
30. **Stoke on Trent** (106-107)
31. **Sunderland** (112-113)
32. **Walsall** (104-105)
33. **Wigan** (111-112)
34. **Wolverhampton** (101-102)

South-West

Bournemouth

Queens Park Academy

Good practice:

- There's a good set of ground rules to create a supportive environment for staff and pupils.
- The policy states, "At Queen's Park Academy, we respect the right of pupils, their families and our staff, to hold beliefs, religious or otherwise, and understand that sometimes these may be different with our approach to some aspects of RSE and Health Education."
- The policy states, "Parents' have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory components of sex education within RSE. These components are highlighted in Appendix 1 and are currently only taught in the Year 6 curriculum."
- The policy states, "We recognise that parents and carers are the primary providers of RSE for their children. Our RSE curriculum is designed to support and complement this. We aim to build a positive and supportive relationship with parents and carers through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation."
- It also says, the school will "Take seriously any issues or concerns that parents raise."
- The policy clarifies, "parents have the legal right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all non-statutory sex education (these components are highlighted in Appendix 1)".
- The policy says the school will inform parents in the summer term, before the non-statutory sex education classes are taught. This enables parents to decide if they wish to withdraw.
- The policy clarifies, "We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, taking into account the age, needs and feelings of pupils."
- The policy sets out clearly what is taught in each year group and also the non-statutory lesson in year 6, which parents can withdraw from.
- The policy clarifies that non-statutory sex education is taught in year 6 and parents are able to withdraw from these lessons.
- The policy states, "All parents have access to the PSHE and RSE policy and are invited to feedback directly to the school and participate with surveys and questionnaires as part of our consultation process."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states, "We teach children to accept difference and foster good relationships with others. LGBT is included in lessons about similarity and difference along with a range of other characteristics such as personality, physical appearance, opinions, beliefs, culture, ethnicity, ability and special needs. We teach children to respect and celebrate differences." How does a child whose religious perspective (a protected characteristic) does not accept the moral acceptability of same-sex relationships 'accept' and 'celebrate' difference? Fostering good relations is entirely reasonable and expected in a diverse society, but acceptance and celebration is unwarranted.

- The policy was approved in July 2022, the policy sets out an annual review, so the policy should've been reviewed in July 2023, it wasn't.

<https://www.queenspark-academy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/PSHE-RSE-QPA-July-2022.pdf>

Winton Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy starts with a generic statement about consultation found in lots of policies, but It also backs this up with a clear commitment to involve parents. "The school believes that it is important to have the support of parents, carers and the wider community for the PSHE and RSE program. Parents and carers are/will be given the opportunity to find out about and discuss the PSHE/RSE program (sic) through: Parent/carer PSHE/RSE awareness session, Parents'/carers' evenings, Involvement in policy development, Involvement in curriculum development, Information leaflets/displays.
- The policy states, "We are mindful that parents/carers do have the legal right to withdraw their children from the RSE that is part of the PSHE program, whilst we hope they do not feel the need to do so."
- The policy clarifies the materials that are used, the Jigsaw Programme.
- The policy includes some sensible ground rules for effectively managing discussions.
- The policy contains some good guidance for teachers in answering challenging questions.
- The policy states that parents have the right to withdraw from non-statutory sex education lessons. The policy highlights what lessons parents can withdraw from.
- There is a clear review date.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states that teachers will, "ensure all teaching and learning is inclusive, avoids heteronormative assumptions". This sentence is found in some policies, so it is understood that has been chosen by the school rather than written by them. The mere use of the term 'heteronormativity is problematic, stemming from queer theory, it is often understood to be a field of post-structuralist critical theory, something which is contested ideology, which should not appear in a school's policy.

<https://wintonprimary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/RSE-policy-2023.pdf>

Plymouth

Pilgrim Primary School (Stonehouse)

Although there's reference to the RSHP policy on the website, there isn't one anywhere on the website. Despite searching all sections of the website, including the policies section, using the school's search facility as well as external search engines, it could not be located.

High Street Primary School (Stonehouse)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents..."
- The policy clarifies, "When teaching these subjects, the religious background of all pupils will be taken into account when planning teaching so that core topics are appropriately handled."
- The policy clarifies that parents can withdraw their children from the non-statutory sex education classes.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed on 15/10/23, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.
- The policy does not clarify when the non-statutory sex education classes take place.
- The policy does not clarify which materials are used at the school.
- The policy includes a generic statement about consultation rather than how the school practically consulted parents.

http://www.highstreet.plymouth.sch.uk/storage/secure_download/U3hYSkVpaThSUEd1TXZoRVA4WUF4Zz09

Lipson Vale Primary School (Lipson)

Good practice:

- The school sets out the right for parents to withdraw from non-statutory sex education
- The policy has a clear review date
- The initial programme was subject to an extensive consultation pre-2020.

Areas for improvement:

- The process to fulfil the statutory right to withdraw is overly lengthy. After parents write to the head, they must attend a meeting, after which the head writes to the parent and then the parent must send back the reply slip attached to the letter. There is no statutory requirement to attend a meeting, although this may be considered good practice by the school, the school's internal processes must not interfere in a legal right.
- The PSHE long-term overview does not differentiate between RHE statutory topics and the rest of PSHE. It also does not clarify when the non-statutory sex education classes are taught. Earlier in the policy, the fact that sex education is taught in year 6 is included as an example, but this must be made clearer so that parents are appropriately informed about when topics are taught.
- There should be a clearer section clarifying the materials that are used at the school.
- Consultation is spoken about as a historic exercise but there needs to be more information about how consultation processes take place at the school and how parents can input into those processes.
- There is no guidance for teachers about answering pupil questions.

https://www.lvps.co.uk/_files/ugd/efe909_09547ab5867240afa0fffb50fac1fd36.pdf

Bristol

Cabot Primary School (St Pauls)

Good practice:

- The policy underlines that parents are the prime educators of their children and their first teachers.
- The policy also has a strong statement covering 'Religion and belief', which recognises that although the school is not a faith school, they have "taken into account pupils' faith backgrounds when developing this policy and preparing what and how we will teach." This is in line with the statutory guidance, but it is refreshing to see it in a policy. They make it clear they will be transparent and clear with parents about what they're teaching and how they're teaching it.
- The policy states, "We will work closely with parents when planning and delivering these subjects." Also something that is contained within the statutory guidance but is rarely including in RHE policies.
- Parents will be consulted whenever the policy is reviewed.
- The school intends to consult parents before introducing any non-statutory sex education classes, something which it currently does not do.
- The school clarifies which materials it uses, it uses the Jigsaw Programme.

Areas for improvement:

- Although consultation is mentioned, how parents are consulted, how their views are sought, how views that parents express lead to changes to the way the school teaches RHE is absent from the policy.
- The statutory learning topics are not broken down by year group so parents can understand what is taught and in which year group.
- How does the school consider the religious background of pupils when deciding on the materials? How has the Jigsaw PSHE programme, which contains inappropriate elements, and which does not consider religion and belief as a protected characteristic, been adapted? Have parents been shown the Jigsaw materials and what changes did they ask to be made? Maybe more of these questions can be answered in greater detail once the policy is reviewed in March 2024?

<https://cabot.excalibur.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Cabot-Relationship-and-Sex-Education-RSE-and-Health-Education-Policy.pdf>

Bannerman Road Community Academy (Easton)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "At Venturers Trust Academies we promote respect for all and value every individual child. We also respect the right of our children, their families and our staff, to hold beliefs, religious or otherwise. In relation to ethnicity, religion and cultural diversity, we value the different backgrounds of our young people and, in acknowledging different views and beliefs, seek to promote tolerance and understanding."
- The school seeks to meet the needs of all of its students. It "will not promote one lifestyle over another". It "will not seek to gain consensus, but will accept and celebrate difference."
- The governing body 'monitor' the policy annually. Although the policy is reviewed every three years.
- The governing body 'gives serious consideration' to the views of parents and parents are offered the opportunity to provide feedback.
- The policy clarifies the resource that the trust uses across all of its five primary schools in Bristol. It uses the Jigsaw Programme.

Areas for improvement:

- The school uses a trust wide RSE policy, which does not even include the name of the school. How much input have parents at the school had in its development?
- In the Equality section, only two protected characteristics are included, 'sexual orientation' and 'gender reassignment'.
- The policy states, "We define Sex Education as e.g. understanding about human reproduction and teaching the basic physical facts of how a baby is conceived and born. We teach this as part of Science to ensure children know the true facts before going to secondary school." Teaching about how a baby is conceived is not part of primary science, if a school decides to teach it, it should be included in its non-statutory sex education programme, and parents need to be informed they have the right to withdraw if they so choose.
- Although contraception and abortion are not statutory requirements in primary schools, the trust policy states that these questions will be answered 'in general terms'. There is no real guidance for teachers in answering questions children ask or what is appropriate or is not appropriate to answer.
- Appendix 4 in the policy, which is meant to contain a curriculum map, is missing.
- The school should create a separate primary (RHE) and secondary (RSHE) policy rather than a combined one.

https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://4905753ff3cea231a868-376d75cd2890937de6f542499f88a819.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/venturers_trust/uploads/key_information/PSHE-inc-RSE-policy-May-2021-final-2.pdf?t%3D1696522975

South-East

Southampton/Portsmouth

Bevois Town Primary School (Southampton)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "We are committed to building a learning community in which learners, of all ages, are actively encouraged to share their beliefs and religious and cultural experiences so that we learn with, from and on behalf of one another to broaden our understanding of life in today's multi-cultural and multi-faith Britain. A good understanding of our pupils' faith backgrounds and positive relationships between the school and local faith communities help us to create a constructive context for the teaching of these subjects.
- The policy clarifies, "We live in a world where different religions and cultures coexist and at Bevois Town we recognise the importance of every child understanding how their own and different belief systems fit into this broader picture."
- The policy states the school develops strong and mutually supportive relationships by: "fostering in our children a genuine respect for the right of others to believe and hold differing points of view and be willing to challenge prejudice, now and in the future;"
- The policy clarifies, "We do not use sex education as a means of promoting any form of sexual orientation."
- The policy clarifies parents have the right to withdraw but as Bevois does not teach sex education beyond the statutory science requirements.
- The policy clarifies, "When planning and teaching for these subjects, Teachers will always take into account and be sensitive to the religious background of all pupils, so that the topics covered are appropriately handled. In a diverse and multicultural school such as ours, where a wealth of beliefs are held, it may at times be appropriate to explore a topic from a particular faith perspective. This will obviously depend on the topic, as well as the age and stage of the children.
- The policy provides sensible advice to teachers on answering questions children ask. Teachers are advised to respond positively to children's questions but teachers need to take into account age, stage and faith, when answering 'difficult questions'. In those instances, teachers are asked to delay their response and approach named subject leads or the head teacher for further guidance.
- The policy states that teachers will work closely with parents to share the curriculum and materials.
- The policy provides named individuals to whom parents can turn if they have concerns around RHE teaching at the school.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states that, "parents and any interested parties were invited to attend a meeting about the policy", but it doesn't clarify how parents were consulted. This statement exists within a lot of policies so it would be useful if more detail were provided.
- The policy states, "Although the policy states that it does not teach sex education beyond statutory sex education, it also suggests sex education is taught in the school, "sex education will ensure that all children are prepared for both the physical and emotional changes of puberty including menstruation. Children need to understand how both girls' and boys' bodies function and change as they grow into adults." Although the changes children undergo during puberty is required to be taught within statutory science, the wider requirements are covered in Health Education, which is not sex education. This needs tightening up, so parents are able to differentiate between where the statutory requirements sit within a primary school.
- The policy further states, "As part of RSE lessons in Year Five, all children will learn about (1) menstruation and there will be discussion of what periods are, explanation of other symptoms associated with periods, how they can be managed hygienically and sensitively. In addition to this, we discuss (2) the emotional and physical changes people encounter during puberty, including body odour, mood swings, hair growth, acne and growth spurts." Point number 1 is statutory under health education, and point 2 is statutory within science, neither is strictly 'sex education'. The policy states, "The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory/non-science components of RSE." If the school does not teach non-statutory sex education, the inclusion of this sentence is unnecessary unless it was part of a template policy which was not deleted.
- It would be far more effective if the PSHE Policy was separate from the RSE policy and the policy renamed RHE, as the school does not teach sex education classes.
- The school does include a PSHE and RSE curriculum map, although this is referred to in the policy, it is difficult to find (it's not included in the main website navigation menu). This should also be included in the main policy.
- Although the policy states the policy will be reviewed annually, practice suggests it has been reviewed every two years. Either the policy needs to be changed or practice at the school.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/bevois-town-primary-school/UploadedDocument/87773e5f-2b49-499f-9670-0dcf9dcbad60/rse-pshe-policy-dec-2022.pdf>

Ark Dickens Primary Academy (Portsmouth)

Good practice:

- The policy clarifies the programme the school uses (Jigsaw).
- The school sets out aspects which aspects parents can withdraw from

Areas for improvement:

- The school talks about meeting the needs of pupils and equality only within the context of 'LGBTQ+'.
- The policy was meant to be reviewed in June 2023 but it doesn't seem to have been.
- The policy outlines the Jigsaw programme but does not set out what is taught in each year group.
- The policy does not mention how parents are consulted. Parents are mentioned in a passive way. The onus seems to be upon parents to raise queries or concerns rather than there being active processes to consult parents at the school.

https://arkdickensprimary.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/PSHE%20-%20RSE_0.pdf

Brighton

Fairlight Primary and Nursery School (Elm Grove)

The policy is not on the website

<https://www.fairlight.brighton-hove.sch.uk/aboutus/important-school-information/official-documentation>

Hangleton Primary School (Hangleton)

Good practice:

- This policy was drawn up following a consultation process with staff, governors, pupils/students, parents and carers of the school. These groups were involved at different stages and in different ways in this policy development.
- The policy clarifies the programme it uses (Jigsaw Programme).
- The school clarifies what parents can withdraw from in terms of non-statutory sex education classes.
- The policy states, "Parents and carers are the first teachers of their children and our governing body takes seriously its statutory responsibility to have regard to views expressed by the parents and carers of registered pupils. We are committed to working closely with parents and carers when developing policy and the planning and delivery of PSHE education. We will listen carefully and make adaptations when in the interests of pupils and the improvement of our practice."
- The policy also says, "We offer an annual workshop for each Key Stage so parents and carers can find out more about RSHE education and the materials we use. We aim for this to be an open and transparent discussion that will help us to continue to reflect on and develop our curriculum."
- The policy states, "we aim to take into account the religious backgrounds of pupils and students in planning teaching. For example, we teach that there are different faith perspectives on relationships, ensure that marriage is discussed fully, provide single sex groups for some aspects of puberty education and avoid teaching sex education during Ramadan."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states, "We recognise that parents and carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from certain non-statutory aspects of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE and up until three school terms before the young person turns 16." This paragraph is not relevant to primary schools.
- The policy does not clarify how parents were consulted.
- The policy does not contain a development or review date.

https://www.hangleton.brighton-hove.sch.uk/brighton-hove/primary/hangleton/arenas/blog/web/hangletonpshepolicy2021_20221114095450149.pdf

Queens Park Primary School (Kempton)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "We will make every effort therefore to ensure that our PSHE programme is inclusive of all groups of pupils, is informed by their needs and reflects the diversity of our school and wider community."
- The policy clarifies that parents have the right to withdraw and highlights the sex education elements of the curriculum from which parents can withdraw.
- The policy states, "Parents and carers are the first teachers of their children and our governing body takes seriously its statutory responsibility to have regard to views expressed by the parents and carers of registered pupils. We are committed to working closely with parents and carers when developing policy and the planning and delivery of PSHE education."
- The policy states, "We offer an annual workshop so parents and carers can find out more about PSHE education and the materials we use. We aim for this to be an open and transparent discussion that will help us to continue to reflect on and develop our curriculum. We consult with a parents/carers focus group who will be representative of our school community and demographic to enable us to ensure our PSHE curriculum meets the needs of all our children."
- The policy states, "We offer an annual workshop so parents and carers can find out more about PSHE education and the materials we use. We aim for this to be an open and transparent discussion that will help us to continue to reflect on and develop our curriculum. We consult with a parents/carers focus group who will be representative of our school community and demographic to enable us to ensure our PSHE curriculum meets the needs of all our children."
- The policy states, "We will inform parents and carers of this right (to withdraw) in letters home. We have highlighted in the curriculum map which parts of the curriculum parents and carers can request to withdraw their child from
- The policy clarifies, "In our teaching we will also ensure we acknowledge different religious perspectives on issues such as sexual orientation, alcohol and sex before marriage."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states, "We will listen carefully and make adaptations when in the interests of pupils and the improvement of our practice." This undermines the willingness of the school to work with parents.
- The policy states, "We recognise that parents and carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from sex education delivered as part of statutory relationships and sex education up until three school terms before the young person turns 16." As this policy is for a primary school, this last section is not necessary as it only applies to a secondary school.
- The names of materials should be included in the policy.
- There needs to be a clearer statement about how parents are consulted, what changes were made in response to their feedback etc.

There is some guidance for teachers in answering difficult questions but it's not comprehensive enough and places the onus upon schools to make decisions.

<https://www.queenspark.brighton-hove.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PSHE-Policy-2023.pdf>

Oxford

Rose Hill Primary School (The Oval)

The policy is not available on the website.

<https://www.rosehillprimary.org/128/policies-and-procedures/category/12/school-policies>

East Oxford Primary School (East Oxford)

Good practice:

- Children should be able to express their own views and expect them to be respected by others.
- The policy states, "We recognise that our children will wish to make contributions in PSHE discussions which represent the diverse backgrounds which they come from. Children should be able to express their own views and expect them to be respected by others."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in May 2023, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.
- The policy doesn't explain how parents are consulted.
- The policy states, "Parents are encouraged to establish exactly what is covered in the RSE lessons relevant to their child's year group and discuss any concerns about lesson content with staff at the earliest opportunity." This information should be contained within the policy. The policy should set out what is taught in each year group (curriculum map) and not place the onus on parents to find out what's being taught. The policy should provide the map and then parents can be encouraged to view the materials.
- The policy makes clear parents can withdraw from non-statutory sex education lessons but not when these lessons take place.

https://www.east-oxford.oxon.sch.uk/docs/policies/learning/PSHE_policy__1_.pdf

Larkrise Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy sets out the no-statutory sex education content taught in year 6.
- The policy makes clear that parents can withdraw their children from these classes.
- The policy clarifies the name of the programme (Christopher Winter Project).
- The policy states, "Prior to this policy being ratified, the policy was shared with parents and carers and their views have been taken into consideration during policy development and in planning and delivering RSE."
- The policy states, "As set out in government guidance, the policy has been developed through a process of consultation involving school staff, parents and carers in Summer 2020/2021."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states, "Specific meetings will be held for Year 6 parents to view any materials being used for Sex Education taught outside of science in Year 6, by request." The policy should also include an open invitation for parents to view all the materials.
- The policy should also clarify how parents have been consulted beyond the generic policy statement.
- Equality is spoken about solely in terms of 'LGBT'.
- The review date is Spring 2024/25. This is a very lengthy target date for a policy review date. It needs to be more precise.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/larkrise-ps/UploadedDocument/82c58b42-df54-4225-bd28-c92f02ef351d/relationships-and-sex-education-policy.pdf>

Milton Keynes

Caroline Haslett Primary School (Shenley Lodge)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, taking into account the age, needs and feelings of pupils."
- The policy contains an RSE curriculum map, which outlines what is taught in each year group.
- The policy contains a clear review date.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy seems to be a template document which hasn't been updated to reflect the current changes. In one instance it speaks about statutory RHE as future development rather than as one that has actually taken place. The policy still has 'The Key Support Services' as the author in the footnote.
- The policy does not set out what materials are used.
- The policy does not clarify in which year groups non-statutory sex education is taught.
- The policy provides a general policy development statement that is contained within lots of policies but no actual explanation of how policy was undertaken at the school.

<https://www.haslett.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=228&type=pdf>

Downs Barn School (Downs Barn)

Good practice:

- The policy contains a clear review date
- The policy clarifies parents have the right to withdraw from non-statutory sex education classes
- The policy states the non-statutory sex education lessons takes place in year 6 and parents are informed before the lessons take place.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy does not set out what materials are used.
- The policy does not clarify how parents are consulted

<https://www.boulevardprimarypartnership.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=584&type=pdf>

London

East London

Essex Primary School (Newham)

Good practice:

- Annual meetings for parents to feedback on RSHE Curriculum
- Commitment to work with parents
- After consultation with parents the school has decided not to teach non-statutory sex education classes.

Areas of improvement:

- No mention of materials used other than a general statement 'The school will draw from a number of educational resources.'
- Sexual body parts taught from Year 1 under 'safeguarding'.
- In year 6 children are taught a module called 'Good to be me', which teaches children about 'learning to accept one's self for who they are. We are all different, and that is ok. (link to LGBT)'. Why is 'learning to be one's self' equated specifically to 'LGBT'? Is that the only aspect which defines being 'one's self'?
- Similarly, children are taught a module called 'Getting on and falling out', about 'working with others, understanding the needs of others, saying no to bullying, LGBT: inappropriate use of Homophobic language'. Why is a specific type of bullying mentioned above all other types? Why isn't disability specifically mentioned? Or race?
- Every module delivered in year 6, specifically links of 'LGBT' over and above anything else.
- In year 6, children are taught **'That human rights overrule any beliefs (LGBT), ideas or practices that harm others to be critical of what they see and read in the media to critically consider information they choose to forward to others.'** In a school with a significant, visible majority that are from faith backgrounds, is the school arguing that faith perspectives (a protected characteristic) does not matter, as a perspective originating from one protected characteristic (Sexuality) is more important than another (Faith and Belief)? How is this perspective in line with a school's responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)?

<https://essex.newham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Essex-Primary-School-RSHE-policy-FINAL.pdf>

Ben Jonson Primary School (Tower Hamlets)

Good practice:

- The policy is reviewed every year
- The school has moved aspects of the Jigsaw curriculum that cover topics, which are 'sex education' not 'Relationships Education, into non-statutory sex education in year 6.
- There are clear rationales behind why decisions have been taken, whether parents agree or not, they can assess the reasoning.
- Areas for parental opt-out are clear.
- The school has decided not to use the word 'vulva', as part of its teaching of body parts as a result of discussions with parents.
- The school recognises the fact that most pupils are Muslim. 'Importance of placing this learning in a faith-based context at Ben Jonson so girls understand why they don't fast on their periods.'

Areas for improvement:

- The school justifies teaching some controversial aspects based on local authority recommendation, including the names of sexual body parts by the end of year 2. This based upon a theory that if children know the names of the sexual body parts they are able to prevent abuse, as well report medical conditions.
- Children will be shown images of the sexual body parts in year 3. The rationale behind this is unclear and arguably inappropriate.
- The policy seems to be in a draft format, with unresolved queries, despite being approved in March 2023.

<https://www.benjonson.towerhamlets.sch.uk/policies/draft-rse-ben-jonson-primary-school-for-2023>

Seven Kings School (primary and secondary) (Redbridge)

Good practice:

- The school has chosen not to adopt the Redbridge syllabus, recommended by the local authority.
- The names of sexual parts will not be taught in KS1, unlike in schools that are following the Redbridge syllabus. They have decided to use the term 'private parts'. Children learn about sexual body parts in year 5, when puberty is covered. Girls and boys will be taught the names relevant to them in separate classes.
- The school teaches menstruation to girls in year 4 but this is an opt-out lesson.
- It has decided not to teach about conception in year 6. This is as a result of the consultation process it undertook with parents.
- The school informs parents two weeks before non-statutory sex education (in KS3), so parents have a right to decide whether they want to withdraw.

- The school takes a sensible approach to teaching about 'LGBTQ+'. It does not teach this in primary school, as there's no statutory requirement to do so. If there are families from an 'LGBTQ+' background, the school will reflect that in the classroom.
- The names of materials the school uses have been included in the policy.
- The school has set out in considerable detail, with much obvious thought, guidance to teachers that ensure their 'personal beliefs and attitudes do not bias the teaching of relationship and sex education.' This ensures teaching is factual.
- The school actively encourages children to share their faith perspectives in lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- The parental consultation statement does not clarify how parents can feedback. The section covering parents and consultation is the shortest section. This can convey to parents that their input is not valued as much as others. This must be balanced against the fact that parental feedback has shaped many of the school's decisions.
- The consultation section could have some narrative about how consultation took place.

<https://sevenkings.school/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/RSHE-Policy.pdf>

South London

Croydon

Broadmead Primary School

Good practice:

- The school is very clear about the programme it uses.
- The policy states that teachers must 'not express personal views or beliefs when delivering the programme'.
- The school sets out what is statutory and what is non-statutory, including sex education lessons which parents are able to withdraw from.

Areas for improvement:

- It uses a programme designed by Educate and Celebrate. EAC which is marketed as an organisation that helps schools become inclusive for all, yet only focuses on 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity'.
- Broadmead clarifies the reasons why they have adopted this programme. "As part of TPA's efforts to promote understanding about different family units and work to build a future of inclusion and social justice, our schools have adopted the 'Educate & Celebrate' programme. This is a national initiative designed to prepare children and young people for life and to give them a good understanding of how Equality and Diversity is protected by the Equality Act ((2010))."
- Elly Barnes, the founder and chief executive of 'Educate and Celebrate' argues that their goal is to 'smash heteronormativity'. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iELRc2kCo_c
- Is it appropriate that a primary school is teaching a narrow definition of 'equality' driven by contested perspectives on 'gender ideology' and 'sexuality'?
- The specific legal right for parents to be consulted before the policy is finalised and the right of parents to be engaged with regarding the materials and teaching are not included. Instead, there's a general right for teachers, pupils and parents to provide feedback.
- The policy states, 'Across the school we ensure that pupils become aware of the requirements of the Equality Act ((2010)) and gain an age appropriate understanding of LGBTQ+.' The policy makes reference to 'sexuality' and 'trans' in exclusion to all the other protected characteristics. It's as though equality equates to 'LGBTQ+'.
- The policy states, 'The school ensures that all teaching and materials are appropriate for the ages of the pupils, their developmental stages and any additional needs they may have.' There's no mention of the 'religious background' of pupils as a consideration despite the fact that the statutory guidance sets this out as a consideration.

https://thepioneeracademy.co.uk/croydon/primary/broadmead/arenas/websitecontent/web/RSHE%20Policy-92204_20230901171835849.pdf

Greenwich

Cherry Orchard Primary School

Good practice:

- The school makes clear what materials it uses to teach RHE.
- The school clarifies that parents can withdraw their children from non-statutory sex education classes in year 4, 5 and 6).

Areas for improvement:

- The policy is reviewed annually and was last reviewed in September 2023. It does not clarify how parents can get involved in this review process, something which is a legal requirement. There is also mention of how parents can feedback and input into the programme.
- The closest the policy gets to speaking about consultation is recording comments made by parents. It's difficult to conclude whether parental comments lead to any adaptation. This frames parents in a passive role and places the onus on raising feedback onto parents. There are no established systems for the collation of feedback that the school leads on.
- The policy seems to be very similar to other schools which use the Jigsaw PSHE programme. It uses similar language and structure, including reference to the Academies Act 2010, which only applies to academies, whilst Cherry Orchard Primary School is a community school.
- Although this concern does not solely apply to this south London primary school. How much does a prescriptive programme like Jigsaw, constrain a school's ability to meaningfully consult/engage parents around its RHE offer? How much is a school willing to adapt the materials when the programme comes ready to implement? Is this even possible when a clear commitment to consult is absent from its policy?

https://www.cherryorchardschool.org.uk/docs/policies/RSHE_Policy_2023_-_2024.pdf

West London

Ealing

Montpelier Primary School

Good practice:

- Parents were consulted via a Relationships Education workshop.
- The policy states that parents will be informed about the RHE programme annually as part of information provided on what their children will be learning.
- The policy is reviewed every two years and was last reviewed in June 2022.
- The school clarifies parents can remove from sex education lessons.
- The policy states that the relationships education is taught without bias and a variety of views and beliefs will be presented so that pupils can make their own decision.

Areas for improvement:

- Parents will be given the opportunity to look through the policy and offer comments
- The policy was reviewed in June 2022, when Covid was no longer a consideration. What input did parents have in the development of the policy and in the planning and delivery of the RSE programme.
- The school seems to follow the Ealing PSHE scheme of work in which the statutory topics are set out by year groups. How far does the adoption of a local authority-backed scheme of work tie in schools to a one-size-fits all model that looks at a borough (or a town or city) as a homogenous entity, rather than the demographic community the school serves?
- How does tying all schools in particular area to a scheme of work take away the flexibility the government has afforded schools? If a group of parents in one school within a borough, town or city ask for adaptation to be made to the delivery of RSE, whether that relates to the materials the school uses or the year group a local authority suggests a topic should be taught; will a school accommodate a change or will it argue that this has already been set by the local authority?
- There is a lack of sufficient detail to assess the manner by which 'consultation' was undertaken, its effectiveness and how far parents were meaningfully consulted.

<https://www.montpelierschool.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Relationships-Education-Policy-2022.pdf>

Brent

Anson Primary School

Good practice:

- The school states that RHE must meet the needs of all pupils
- The schools sets out the materials it uses.
- It clarifies which non-statutory elements parents can withdraw from

Areas for improvement:

- The 'partnership with parents' section sees parents as a passive group, rather than as collaborative stakeholders who are the prime educators of their children.
- It lacks detail on how parents are consulted.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/ansonprimarylondon/UploadedDocument/68f8b772-ff45-4131-9a79-c024884a2f2e/5.2-relationships-education-policy-2022-23.pdf>

North London

Waltham Forest

Thomas Gamuel Primary School

Good practice:

- This policy has much more detail than lots of the other RSE policies.
- The policy states that in teaching RHE the school "ensure(s) a good understanding of pupils' faith backgrounds and positive relationships between the school and local faith communities." This is in recognition of "religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics."
- When it comes to answering pupil questions, many schools provide less direction and leave decisions up to parents. It is refreshing to see direction to teachers:

"Teachers will reply to, and answer, children's questions sensitively and openly. They will ensure that balanced information is provided which will take into account the different faiths' views and avoid any negative impressions. All questions will be handled sensitively and set within a general context...Consideration should be given to religious or cultural factors, and to parents' wishes before questions are answered."

- The school sets out that "the primary role in children's RHE lies with parents and carers. We wish to build a positive and supporting relationship with the parents of children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation."
- The policy makes an explicit statement regarding consulting parents on the contents of this policy.
- The school welcomes parents to view the materials that they intend to teach.
- 'Takes seriously' any issues parents raise about RSE.
- The school assures parents that the personal beliefs of teachers will not influence the teaching of RHE.
- Materials reflect the diversity of their community.
- The school does not use RHE lessons to promote any 'sexual orientation' category.

Areas for improvement:

- The only area for improvement is a clearer consultation process.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h1ez9Lrds_Sps5hGsUDa6tOojmie9P5H/view

Islington

Ambler Primary School

Good practice:

Areas for improvement:

- The Sex and Relationships Education policy on the website is dated November 2020. It was meant to have been reviewed in November 2021, but doesn't seem to have been.
- The policy does not reflect the changes from SRE to RHE in a primary school.
- There is no content about consultation or the right to withdraw. The contents includes a line 'needs to include the right to withdraw' on Page 8.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/ambler-primary-school-and-childrens-center/UploadedDocument/e7881d3f-a660-45a9-9423-98cf9d70a244/sre-policy-november-2020.pdf>

Argyle Primary School (Camden)

Good practice:

- The policy was written by a working group, which included parents. The working group ran a consultation with a wide group of stakeholders, including parents.
- Although the school reflects the diverse community in which it is situated when it teaches about different types of families. The school allows parents of children in KS1 to choose whether their children learn about families with two Mums and two Dads. The parents who don't will be taught separately. By KS2, children will be taught different family structures.
- If children ask whether children can be raised by two Mums or two Dads, teachers will respond factually by saying, some children are.
- Teachers are not permitted to discuss their personal relationships with pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- The entire section, 'engaging and involving carers' is very passive and reads as a one-way information exchange led by the school.
- Parents are 'informed about what will be taught'. Parents are 'invited to a workshop to find out about the programme'. The school provides 'information about (the) content of the RHE programme'. The framing of the paragraph suggests the school provides information rather than consults with parents to hear their views.
- The names of resources are not included in the policy.

https://www.argyle.camden.sch.uk/images/13.4_Argyle_Relationships_and_Health_Education_policy_23_-_24.pdf

East of England

Cambridge

Morley Memorial Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy says, "We seek to enable our children to develop respectful, caring relationships based on mutuality, reciprocity and trust."
- The policy states, "Where there are different cultural or religious views about families, relationships or behaviours, we will share these to ensure children see their family views represented."
- The policy clarifies, Parents/carers have been consulted directly through Parental correspondence and follow up discussions about the policy. Pupils have also been represented by a focus group. Further consultation with parents/carers and pupils will be carried out when the policy is reviewed, which happens at least every 3 years.
- The policy emphasises partnership with parents by "Inviting parents to discuss their views and concerns about Relationships Education."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states they will select materials which meet their school criteria, this includes 'do not show unfair bias e.g. towards a commercial product, religious view point', it does not state 'unfair bias towards a 'sexual orientation' or 'gender expression', instead it singles out 'religious view point', even though faith and belief is a protected characteristic. An additional criteria for materials is that it, "avoid(s) racial, gender, sexual, cultural and religious stereotyping and heteronormativity". The singling out of 'heteronormativity' is worrying. Had they said 'we will not promote any single 'sexual orientation'', that would be fair. The names of materials should exist within the policy so parents can feel assured the school is being open and transparent.
- The policy doesn't clarify how parents have been consulted. Pupils have been represented through a focus group, how have parents been consulted? Seeing as though consulting parents is a statutory duty, there needs to be much more information on how this has been discharged.

<https://www.morley.cambs.sch.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Relationships-Education-Policy-including-Sex-Education.pdf>

The Galfrid School (Barnwell)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "We create a wider awareness of religious and moral values within a Christian framework and respect for other races, religions and ways of life."
- The policy says, "When answering questions, we shall ensure that sharing personal information by adults, students or their families is discouraged."
- The policy makes clear, "We will not promote one particular lifestyle over another."
- The policy states, "It is the responsibility of the governors to ensure, through consultation, that the RSE Policy reflects the wishes of the parents and the views of our community. It is the responsibility of governors to ensure that the Policy is made available to parents."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in February 2022, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.
- The policy states, "We will not teach directly about STI's, however elements of our RSE and Science Curricula will prepare the ground for this explicit teaching later e.g. by discussing some issues around HIV/AIDS." Teaching about STIs is not statutory until Key Stage 4.
- Although the policy sets out statutory and non-statutory elements, it doesn't clarify what elements parents can withdraw from other than by reproducing a generic statement about withdrawal. This would be much clearer if the non-statutory elements which parents can withdraw from were highlighted.
- The statement on 'working with parents' is very passively framed. Parents will be provided information and offered the right to withdraw. These statements should be re-framed to be collaborative. How will the school seek to understand parent's views, solicit their feedback and encourage parents to raise any concerns.

<https://www.thegalfridschool.org.uk/portals/0/library/policies/RSE%20Policy.pdf?ver=2023-05-18-110140-387>

Peterborough

Braybrook Primary School (Braybrook)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "Ensuring they do not express personal views or beliefs when delivering the programme".
- The school clarifies the materials it uses (Jigsaw).
- The policy states, "When organising the curriculum, the religious backgrounds of all pupils will be considered, so that the topics that are covered are taught appropriately."
- The policy emphasises working with parents, "The school understands the important role parents play in enhancing their children's understanding of relationships, sex and health. Similarly, we also understand how important parents' views are in shaping the curriculum. The school works closely with parents by establishing open communication – all parents are consulted in the development and delivery of the curriculum, as outlined in section 3 of this policy."
- The policy states, "The school aims to build positive relationships with parents if they have any concerns by inviting them into school to discuss what will be taught, address any concerns and help parents in managing conversations with their children on the issues covered by the curriculum. Parents are consulted in the review of the curriculum and this policy, and are encouraged to provide their views at any time."
- The policy clarifies that when the school works with external agencies planned lessons must fit in with the school's policies and the all lesson plans must be submitted beforehand.
- The policy states, "The headteacher will automatically grant a parent's request to withdraw their child from sex education, other than the content that must be taught as part of the science curriculum."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in September 2022, it doesn't look like it was.
- It would be useful if the policy included additional information on how the consultation took place, what feedback was given by parents and what changes were made.
- Although the school clarifies parents can withdraw from non-statutory sex education classes, the policy doesn't make clear if it is taught or not and if so in which year groups.

<https://www.braybrookprimary.co.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=3309&type=pdf>

Gunthorpe Primary School (Werrington South)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "Where there are different cultural or religious views about families, relationships or behaviours, we will share these to ensure children see their family views represented." And "We will, as appropriate, ensure that a variety of views and beliefs are reflected back to pupils."
- The policy states, "Therefore, we seek to work in partnership with parents/carers when planning and delivering Relationships Education."
- The policy clarifies which materials the school uses (Cambridgeshire Primary Personal Development Programme).

Areas for improvement:

- Although the policy states they work in partnership with parents, the framing of the statements read as passive as parents will be informed rather than asked for their views.
- The policy states they will select materials which meet their school criteria, this includes 'do not show unfair bias e.g. towards a commercial product, religious view point', it does not state 'unfair bias towards a 'sexual orientation' or 'gender expression', instead it singles out 'religious view point', even though faith and belief is a protected characteristic. An additional criteria for materials is that it, "avoid(s) racial, gender, sexual, cultural and religious stereotyping and heteronormativity". The singling out of 'heteronormativity' is worrying. Had they said 'we will not promote any single 'sexual orientation", that would be fair. The names of materials should exist within the policy so parents can feel assured the school is being open and transparent.
- The policy states, "Parents/carers have the right to request that their child be excused from some or all of Sex Education delivered as part of statutory Relationships Education." This is incorrect. The policy should just say children cannot be withdrawn from Relationships Education classes but they can be withdrawn from the sex education classes, which remain non-statutory. Then the school should highlight what aspects of its teaching is non-statutory, thereby giving parents the ability to make an informed choice on behalf of their child.
- There are no clear statements in the policy that indicate the school fulfils its statutory duty to consult parents.

<https://www.gunthorpeprimary.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=1489&type=pdf>

Luton

Bushmead Primary School

Good practice:

- The school clarifies that the policy is reviewed every year
- The policy clarifies that the school uses the Christopher Winter Project scheme of learning.
- The policy informs parents that they have the right to withdraw from the sex education classes they teach in year 6.
- The policy states, "We recognise that parents and carers are the primary providers of RSHE for their children."
- The policy makes clear that the school will "Take seriously any issues or concerns that parents raise."

Areas for improvement:

- The school teaches the names of sexual body parts in year 2.
- The equality statement is titled 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning + (LGBTQ +)' only speaks about 'LGBTQ+' people. There is no mention of faith and belief as a protected characteristic.
- The policy's statement on the role of parents is not as clear on consultation as it should be. It doesn't clarify what role, if any, parents have played in the drafting or reviewing of the policy. Something which is a legal requirement. There is no
- The school does not clarify how parents have been consulted since RHE was made statutory in 2020 and the policy has been reviewed annually since then.
- The policy doesn't provide sufficient guidance for teachers to navigate answering questions.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/spring-lane-primary-school/UploadedDocument/d57c9ec4-537d-4eb6-9e78-2286f114d5c0/pshe-and-rshe-policy.pdf>

Beech Hill Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy clarifies it was developed in consultation with governors, staff, pupils and parents/carers
- The school clarifies that it uses the Christopher Winter Project scheme of work.
- The policy clarifies that non-statutory sex education is not taught at the school.
- The school has decided to teach RHE lessons in single-sex classes in years 5 & 6 as a result of consultation with pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy is marked draft
- The policy states it is reviewed annually, yet there's no indication of when the policy was developed and reviewed. It doesn't seem to have been reviewed since at least 2020/21.
- The policy states that 'two scheduled sessions in March 2020 and November 2020 were postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic'. There is no clarification of when consultation took place and why an online session was not deemed sufficient, given the constraints of the pandemic. Out of all the strands of different stakeholders, including pupils, staff and governing body, parental consultation is the only one that was postponed.
- The policy states a working group was set up but fails to clarify the make-up of the group.
- The policy doesn't clarify when the policy will be reviewed or how parents will be involved in the review process.

https://www.beechhillprimary.com/docs/Key_Info/RSE/relationships-and-sex-education-model-policy-without-sex-education.pdf

East Midlands

Northampton

Spring Lane Primary School (Queens Park)

Good practice:

- The policy restates, "RSHE is not about the promotion of sexual activity".
- The policy clarifies that parents have the right to withdraw from non-statutory sex education classes.
- The policy contains a breakdown of what is taught at the school.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in September 2023, it doesn't seem to have been.
- The policy contains outdated statements like, "RSE will become statutory in all schools from September 2019." And irrelevant statements for a primary school RHE policy, "The law requires that Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is to be taught in all secondary schools in England, and that Relationships Education is to be taught in all primary schools in England." It is indicative of a cut and paste approach to RHE.
- The policy states, "Parent/stakeholder consultation – parents and any interested parties are able to access the policy on the school website and can feedback as they feel appropriate." Does this fulfil the statutory duty to consult parents or is it a passive approach to a school's primary stakeholder?
- The policy states, "PSHE subject leaders will signpost staff to quality assured resource to support all staff in their teaching of RSHE." Although the names of some books the school uses are included in the policy, the name of the programme is not. Looking through the website, the 'All About Me' Programme is mentioned, this should be contained in the policy so parents are made aware of what is being taught.
- There are no details setting out how parents are consulted.
- Although the policy states parents can withdraw, there is no clarity on when the non-statutory sessions take place.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/spring-lane-primary-school/UploadedDocument/d57c9ec4-537d-4eb6-9e78-2286f114d5c0/pshe-and-rshe-policy.pdf>

Kingsley Primary School (Kingsley Park)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents."
- The policy states, "RSHE is not about the promotion of sexual activity."
- The policy states, "Pupils also receive stand-alone sex education sessions delivered by a trained health professional (Year 5)."
- The policy states that parents have "the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory components of RSHE."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in September 2023, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.
- The policy statement on parents and consultation is very passively structured. It states, "parents and any interested parties are able to access the policy on the school website and can feedback as they feel appropriate." This seems to put the onus on parents to approach the school rather than the school to actively involve parents in the policy development. In terms of roles and responsibilities, no staff member or governor has responsibility to oversee consultation with parents occurs. Something which is a statutory requirement.
- The policy omits that parents can withdraw from the stand-alone lessons delivered in year 5.

<https://www.kingsleyprimary.net/attachments/download.asp?file=241&type=pdf>

Leicester

Avenue Primary School (Clarendon Park)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "At Avenue Primary School, we view the partnership between home and school as vital to children learning..."
- The policy clarifies, "we will remind parents when the specific unit of work will be taught and offer an opportunity for parents to discuss the content prior to it being taught."
- The policy states, "Governors give due consideration to any comments from parents about the RSHE programme and require the Head Teacher to keep a written record of parents' comments."
- There is some guidance on how teachers should respond to questions children ask, that are inappropriate to their age.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy refers to only two protected characteristics of the Equality Act ('sexual orientation' and 'gender reassignment')
- The school does not clarify which materials it uses.
- The section on parents is very passive. The school informs parents receives their views and ideas.
- The school does not clarify how parents are consulted and engaged. It only states if changes needed to be made a working party, including parents will be created. There is no detail about how parents were involved in the drafting of the policy.
- Although the school clarifies that parents can withdraw from the non-statutory sex education lessons, the policy does not clarify that non-statutory lessons are held and when. How can parents make an informed decision about what to withdraw from if it's not outlined in the policy?

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/avenue-primary-school-le2/UploadedDocument/8982bc65-4ba7-4f1a-96d8-67617facd024/aps-rse-policy-2021-2024.pdf>

Kestrel Mead Primary Academy (Hamilton)

Good practice:

- The policy states the curriculum was developed in consultation with parents
- The policy clarifies what aspects of the curriculum parents can withdraw from, "At Kestrel Mead, the parts of RSE that parents can withdraw from are taught in year 4- 1 lesson and year 6- 2 lessons." The specific Jigsaw modules are highlighted in the curriculum map so parents understand what they can withdraw from.
- Although the policy does not directly state it uses the Jigsaw programme, this is stated in the curriculum map.
- The school sets out all the books it uses across all year groups.
- The policy has a clear review date.

Areas for improvement:

- The statement about policy development, which is found in many policies, sets out theoretically how parents were involved in the development of the policy, rather than how parents were practically consulted. As the policy has been updated 3 times since it was first developed, there should be some information on how the school undertook consultation on the contents of the policy and the RHE programme.
- The policy states the curriculum was developed in consultation with parents but not how that consultation was undertaken.
- The policy states that if pupils ask questions outside of the scope of the policy, "teachers will respond in an appropriate manner". This does not provide enough guidance to teachers and places the onus on them to understand what is 'appropriate'.
- The policy seems to be based on a LA template, which hasn't been amended or proofread. The policy states, "Primary sex education is not compulsory in primary schools, it is up to your school to determine whether you need to cover any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of your pupils. If your school decides to cover this, please include the following statement which you can add or adapt according to your pupils' needs.

Primary sex education will focus on:

- Preparing boys and girls for the changes that adolescence brings including relationships with others.
- How a baby is conceived and born
- The policy restricts itself to two protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act ('sexuality' and 'gender' reassignment).

<https://www.kestrel-tmet.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Relationship-and-Sex-Education-Policy.pdf>

Nottingham

Bluecoat Bentinck Primary Academy (Hyson Green)

Good practice:

- The school recognises that parents are the first educators of their children
- The RHE policy was finalised after consultation with parents through a survey.
- The school recognises that parents are key partners.
- The policy recognises "There are many different faith and cultural perspectives on aspects of RSHE. The Trust will deliver RSHE in a factual, non-judgmental way ensuring that teachers do not promote one cultural viewpoint but rather provide a balanced approach that acknowledges the wealth of views and opinions of our community."
- The school clarifies that parents can withdraw from non-statutory sex education classes.
- The policy states, "The personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of RSHE. A balanced and non-judgmental approach will be taken."
- The policy states, "All external speakers deliver in line with our RSHE policy and safeguarding procedures."
- The policy states that "Parents will be routinely informed about RSHE through the information in the school newsletter, school website, school Facebook page and letters sent out to explain when sex education will take place for a child's year group and what will be covered. We will regularly consult with parents on an annual basis about any needs they may have in relation to our RSHE programme."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states the school will use a range of materials but does not clarify the programme the school uses.
- The policy seems to be adopted across the trust
- The school states, "The Trust will use a range of materials and materials that reflect the diversity of our school population and encourage acceptance and tolerance. The Trust want every pupil and family to feel included, celebrated, respected and valued." How does the school fulfil its responsibilities across a range of protected characteristics, when it asks for 'acceptance' and 'celebration'. There needs to be a clearer distinction between treating everyone with courtesy and respect and accepting and celebrating the way others live. The former is a reasonable expectation, whilst the latter is unreasonable. This statement needs clarification, otherwise it seems to suggest diversity entails acceptance or celebration, even of attitudes one morally disagrees with. It would be unreasonable, in a diverse school community, to expect people from some faith groups to accept same-sex sexual relationships and it would be unreasonable to force non-religious people to accept religious perspectives.
- The policy states, "A range of different families and relationships will be explored within RSHE, including same-sex relationships." What need is there for a school to emphasise one family type over many others suggests some schools have equated diversity and inclusion to one protected characteristic over others.

- The school allows teachers to select materials that support the learning outcomes for that year group. It does use the SCARF resource to supplement teaching. Yet materials should be defined at policy level, not up to the individual discretion of teachers, and the policy does not provide a criterion for what is age-appropriate or how parents can assess the age-appropriacy of materials. Also, how does the school consider the religious background of pupils when making decisions about the appropriacy of materials? How can the school be transparent about the materials it uses when individual teachers, and not the school, choose the materials?
- The policy was approved in October 2020 and was meant to be reviewed in July 2023. It doesn't seem to have been reviewed.

https://www.bluecoatbentinck.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2023/08/ALT-RHSE-Policy-Primary-rev-July-2023_1450942.pdf

Forest Fields Primary and Nursery Schools (Forest Fields)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "The RSE policy has been developed following consultation with the whole school community. Consultation took place in the following ways: parent meetings and 1:1 parent meetings."
- The policy clarifies, "There are many different faith and cultural perspectives on aspects of RSHE. As a school we will deliver RSHE in a factual, non-judgmental way ensuring that teachers do not promote one faith or cultural viewpoint but rather provide a balanced approach that acknowledges the wealth of views and opinions of our community and teaches tolerance."
- The school clarifies that parents can withdraw their children from non-statutory sex education classes.
- The policy states, The personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of RSHE. A balanced and non-judgmental approach will be taken. Teachers, and all those contributing to RSHE will work to the agreed values within this policy.
- The policy states, "We will regularly consult with parents on an annual basis about any needs they may have in relation to our RSHE programme."
- The school uses the SCARF materials.

Areas for improvement:

- The school's website states the policy was reviewed in September 2023 but the policy on the website is dated September 2022.
- The policy includes a similar paragraph to the one contained within Bluecoat Bentinck Primary Academy's RHE policy. This allows individual teachers to decide materials for their year group. There needs to be greater transparency by schools in their RHE policies, rather than teachers picking their own materials.

- Both RHE policies from Nottingham schools seem very similar. It is assumed there is a local authority produced model RHE policy for schools.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/forestfields/UploadedDocument/53573536-3429-4f03-9c40-b48d17c70b87/rse-policy-2022.pdf>

Derby

Beckett Primary School (Litchurch)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "This policy has been developed by working in Partnership with schools in Derby City (See appendix 1 for list). A core focus of this partnership was seeking and gaining the views of local religious and community groups, ensuring representation of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010."
- The policy sets out how important parents are and how the school and "how important parents' views are in shaping the curriculum." The school states it works closely with parents in shaping the curriculum. The school also states that it encourages "open communication" with parents, so they understand what the school is planning to teach and they can feedback appropriately.
- The policy states that the school will remind parents what is being taught at the annual parent meeting, termly through year group letters, and parents will be invited to discuss any concerns with their class teacher.
- When the policy is reviewed parents will also be consulted but are encouraged to feedback their views at any time.
- There is useful guidance to teachers to aid them to answer questions that may not be age-appropriate.
- The policy states which non-statutory sex education lessons, in year 5 and 6, parents can withdraw from.
- The school clarifies the materials the school uses, Kapow.
- The schools in Derby that are part of this RHE partnership consulted members from a wide range of faiths.

Areas for improvement:

- The name of the materials is used incidentally in a paragraph about withdrawal. It would be far better for the school to include this in a separate section on materials.

https://www.becket.derby.sch.uk/docs/curriculum/kapow_rse/PSHE_and_RSE_Policy_2023.pdf

Allenton Community Primary School (Allenton)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "This policy has been developed by working in Partnership with schools in Derby City and Transform Trust. A core focus of this partnership was seeking and gaining the views of local religious and community groups, ensuring representation of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010."
- The policy sets out how important parents are and how the school and "how important parents' views are in shaping the curriculum." The school states it works closely with parents in shaping the curriculum. The school also states that it encourages "open communication" with parents, so they understand what the school is planning to teach and they can feedback appropriately.
- The policy provides guidance to teachers in answering questions in an age appropriate manner, which includes setting clear ground rules and providing opportunities to children to ask questions including privately. Teachers can defer a question to a later time or refer the question to the pupil's parents.
- The policy states, "At our school, we do teach pupils sex education beyond what is required of the science curriculum. The contents of the sex education curriculum will be consulted on with parents yearly for children in year groups 4,5 and 6 and parents, after consultation, will have the opportunity to opt out from these lessons."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in July 2023, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.
- The policy states the following vocabulary is taught to Year 1 pupils. "Penis, Vagina Pregnant, Womb, Testicles, Breasts, Genitals, Foetus, Anus, Appropriate touch." There is no statutory requirement to teach these to five-year old children.
- The policy states the school uses the following vocabulary to Year 6 pupils, "Egg/Ovum Ovaries Urethra Ovum Masturbation* Sexual intercourse* Conception* Semen* Erect* Erection* Labia* Cervix* Clitoris* Foreskin* Wet dream/nocturnal emission* Ejaculation*". The words that are asterisked are taught in sex education classes, which parents can withdraw from but are they appropriate words to be taught to 10 year-olds?

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/allenton-community-primary-school/UploadedDocument/037c6f82-dbd8-481b-b6ed-664a7b4c490d/rhe-policy.pdf>

West Midlands

Birmingham

Acocks Green Primary School (Acocks Green)

Good practice:

- The RHE curriculum was created in consultation with parents via a working party.

Areas for improvement:

- The school does not have an RHE policy. It has an PSHE overview, but this falls short of a written RHE policy, which is a legal requirement. There's no way of reviewing the organisation of RSE without it. It's also interesting the last Ofsted inspection was in 2011, before they became an academy. At the last inspection 12 years' ago the school was rated outstanding and its PSHE provision also singled out as such.

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/139443>

Note: Ofsted claims that schools that have been rated as outstanding should expect to be inspected within 5 years. The exception to this are maintained schools that have converted into academies that were previously deemed outstanding are exempt from inspection. What adds to the confusion is a previous rating of outstanding does not transfer to the academy, which is a new legal entity.

<https://acocks.schooljotter2.com/curriculum-1/pshe-and-rse-at-acocks-green>

Marlborough Primary School (Small Heath)

Good practice:

- A trust-wide working group was consulted before the policy was finalised.
- There is an annual meeting for parents to core the materials.

Areas for improvement:

- It would have been far more transparent for parents and in keeping with their legal duty, to have written a stand-alone RSE policy. There's a statutory responsibility to publish an RHE policy. The majority of primary schools do so, despite the fact that RHE is taught within PSHE Education classes.
- No clear statement about consultation/engagement since the drafting of the policy in March 2021.

- There's no indication of what materials the school teaches, what it teaches in different year groups etc.
- The policy has been reviewed twice since March 2021 and no changes have been made.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/leigh-trust/UploadedDocument/b348eeb3-93c6-4435-bb4d-70020d2c96c3/pshe-trust-policy-v3.pdf>

St John's CofE Primary School (Sparkhill)

Good practice:

- The school uses factual strategies to respond to children's questions

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was extremely difficult to find.
- The policy was originally compiled in March 2020 and reviewed by the curriculum committee in May 2021 and the full Governing Body in June 2021. The policy was meant to be reviewed again in June 2022. It stills shows a 'draft' watermark and was not reviewed in June 2022. A new policy is not on the website.
- The policy does not explain the materials the school uses.
- No mention of how parents are consulted and engaged.

<https://www.st-johns-pri.bham.sch.uk/pshe-education-personal-social-health-economic-re/> (Section on website)

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/st-johns-cofe-primary/UploadedDocument/c4120117d17e4b0d951a03a3a288716b/pshe-education-policy-2021.pdf>
(policy)

Bordesley Green Primary School (Bordesley Green)

Good practice:

- The school states that the policy was developed in consultation with stakeholders, including parents.
- The school does not teach non-statutory science, this is as a result of parental consultation.
- The puberty programme in Years 5 and 6 are taught in single-sex classes.
- Any external providers must follow the school's policies and procedures.
- There is an annual meeting for parents to view the materials and discuss the teaching.
- Parents are consulted when the policy is reviewed.
- Parents are afforded the opportunity to discuss any concerns with the head.

Areas for improvement:

- No mention of when the policy will be reviewed.
- The policy states it was written in 2022 (no month mentioned). There is no indication of a review date in the policy.
- The PSHE Education policy and the RHE policy should be separate policies as a lot of the detail on statutory RHE (what little there is) is difficult to locate amidst the information about non-statutory PSHE Education.

<https://www.bordsgrn.bham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/policy-pshe.pdf>

Shaw Hill Primary School (Alum Rock)

Good practice:

- The policy clarifies the aims and objectives of RHE at SHPS "must be age appropriate and developmentally appropriate. It must be taught sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of pupils and parents".
- It is one of the only policies which includes the statement from the statutory guidance, "The school ensures that our teaching and materials are appropriate, having regard to the age and religious backgrounds of our pupils."
- The right to withdraw from non-statutory content is included in the policy.
- The policy states materials have been 'selected through parent and staff partnership' but the names of the materials are not mentioned.
- "All agencies will be required to work within the school's moral framework outlined earlier."
- Questions asked by children will be answered factually. Not all children need to answer questions immediately and advice can be sought when teachers are unsure how to answer questions.
- The school clarifies that it loosely follows the Jigsaw scheme of work. The programme is adapted to suit the needs of the school community taking into account the religious background of pupils.
- Consultation is undertaken with teachers, governors and parents before delivery.

Areas for improvement:

- The date the policy was written is absent from the policy.
- The policy was meant to be reviewed on 04/03/22, it wasn't reviewed.
- Although the policy states there's an annual review, there's a lack of clarity about how this is undertaken and whether parents are part of this review.

https://www.shawhillprimaryschool.org.uk/docs/202021/RSE/Policy_-_Growing_Up_and_Relationships.pdf

Ark Tindal Primary Academy (Balsall Heath)

Good practice:

- The policy is "reviewed annually in coordination with staff and the wider community."
- The school clarifies the materials it uses. It uses SCARF (Coram Life Education)
- The PSHE Education Lead is responsible for "activities with parents and the wider community such as coffee mornings and parent consultations."
- Parents are invited to attend an annual consultation when the policy is reviewed.
- External providers must follow the school's policies ensuring content is delivered sensitively taking its pupils into account.
- All aspects of the RSE programme are linked to character virtues.

Areas for improvement:

- It would be useful if there was a clearer statement about how parents are consulted.
- The overt references to religion are to Hinduism when Muslims are the largest, single religious grouping in Balsall Heath.

<https://arktindalprimary.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/RSE%20Policy%202023-24.pdf>

Adderley Primary School (Saltley)

Good practice:

- The school delivers puberty lessons in single-sex classes.
- Parents and the wider community can comment on the materials.
- "As a school, we are committed to working in partnership with the community, through initiatives such as Parent Voice, and are sensitive to the religious, cultural and social needs of the community we serve. As part of our commitment, we will keep parents informed on the RHE Policy and we will involve parents in consultation to reflect their wishes."
- "The school informs parents when aspects of the RHE programme are taught and provides opportunities for parents to view the videos and materials being used."
- Any external visitors must abide by the school's RHE policy.

Areas for improvement:

- Providing more details of materials used in the policy.
- The consultation statement comes across as passive and not collaborative. How are parents' views sought and responded to beyond showing parents the materials? How were parents consulted in the drafting of this policy?

- The policy states that the school will ensure it is respectful of a child's 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity'. If a girl at the school believes she is a boy, how would the school respond? What is the acceptable line between respect and affirmation? Would the school use the child's 'preferred pronouns'? How would it involve parents?

<https://adderleyprimary.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/RHE-Policy-2022-2024.pdf>

Aston Tower Community Primary School (Aston)

Good practice:

- As part of the aims, the school seeks "To ensure parents understand what the school will teach pupils (the school's intent) in Relationships and Health Education."
- After senior staff reviewed the statutory framework, and existing provision at the school, this policy and curriculum plans were devised and shared with parents formally at our consultation in March 2021. The views of parents were taken into account in this process.
- Right to withdraw at the school is clarified in the policy. As the school does not teach non-statutory sex education, there is no right to withdraw.
- **Areas for improvement:**
 - The policy does not state what materials it uses.
 - The policy needs to contain more information about how parents are consulted.
 - The policy was adopted in June 2021 but does not have a review date.
 - The policy is one and a half pages long and lacking in detail.

https://files.schudio.com/aston-tower-primary-school/files/documents/Relationships_and_Health_Education.pdf

Wolverhampton

West Park Primary School (Whitmore Reans)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "This policy was originally drawn up in consultation with teaching staff, parents, and governors of West Park Primary School in 2020, in line with statutory requirements from the Department of Education."
- The policy states "The personal beliefs and attitudes of staff delivering RSE will not influence the teaching of sex and relationships education in our school."
- The policy provides guidance for teachers on answering questions.
- Any external visitors should abide by the school's policies.
- The policy emphasises the important role parents play in the life of their children, "The role of parents in the development of their children's understanding about relationships is vital. Parents are the first teachers of their children. They have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships. At West Park, we are committed to working closely with parents to ensure that we create the best possible curriculum for our children, whilst also supporting parents in the conversations they might have with their children around such topics."
- The policy clarifies that parents can withdraw from non-statutory sex education. Appendix 2 provides details of the sessions parents can withdraw from.
- The school teaches the names of sexual body parts in year 6, presumably as a result of consultation with parents.
- The session on periods is a single-sex class.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy does not clarify which materials the school uses.
- The policy does not clarify how consultation took place.

https://e5b70ed3-13c8-458d-b864-5aef80aa380c.usrfiles.com/ugd/190abd_d1a0db61ded647d8814d681dff15b607.pdf

Bantock Primary School (Pennfields)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "we will provide some non-statutory content covering human reproduction within the 'Changing Me' topic of work. Parents do have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from lessons that specifically refer to human reproduction."

- The policy clarifies the materials - they use the Jigsaw PSHE scheme of work.
- The policy states, "Staff are careful to ensure that their personal beliefs and attitudes do not influence teaching..."
- The policy establishes key principles such as, "No one (staff or pupil) should be expected to ask or answer a personal question." And "no one will be forced to take part in a discussion."
- The policy states that teaching should be factual.
- The policy provides guidance to teachers around answering difficult or explicit questions.
- The policy states, "It is the responsibility of the governors to ensure, through consultation, that the PDR Policy reflects the wishes of the parents and the culture of the community they serve."
- The policy clarifies that parents have the right to withdraw from non-statutory sex education lessons and specifies which lessons they are.
- At the end of the policy there's a copy of the consultation questionnaire sent out to parents.
- At the end of the policy there's a list of staff and a checklist indicating they've read and understood the policy.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy does not contain a review date. As the policy is reviewed every two years, it should have been reviewed in June 2022. At the end of the policy, it states it will be reviewed in the 2020/21 academic year and then biannually. It hasn't been reviewed since 2020.
- The policy states, "From 1st September 2020 parents will no longer have the right to withdraw their children from Relationships & Health Education in primary schools. This includes topics that cover same sex marriage, puberty and 'LGBT' for example." As RHE did not exist prior to its statutory implementation in September 2020, this statement is inaccurate. Also, the teaching of 'LGBTQ+' is not statutory in primary schools which the statement seems to suggest is statutory.

https://www.bantockprimaryschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/personal_development_and_relationships_policy.pdf

Coventry

Edgewick Community Primary School (Edgewick)

Good practice:

- The policy states the school has developed its own curriculum.
- The policy clarifies that the school works closely with parents in the developing the policy.
- The policy states parents have the right to withdraw from non-statutory sex education classes.
- There is a clear review date, the policy is reviewed annually.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy includes the following outdated statement, "The Department for Education is introducing compulsory Relationships Education for primary pupils and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) for secondary pupils from September 2020. Also, from September 2020 it will be compulsory for all schools to teach Health Education."
- Although the policy development section sets out that the policy was arrived at through a consultation process with staff, pupils and parents, there is not enough information presented to clarify how that worked in reality? How were parents chosen? What feedback was offered, and what changes were made?
- There should be greater explanation of how parents were involved in the development of the policy and programme.
- The section on parents is more passive than collaborative.
- It would be more effective if the curriculum map separated the different aspects of RHE from wider PSHE Education topics.

<https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://0e58658be539ee7325a0-220f04f871df648cf4a4d93a111e3366.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/edgewick/uploads/document/Edgewick-Community-Primary-School-PSHE-RSE-policy-2022.pdf?t%3D1651742846>

Walsall

Butts Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy states, "parents and any interested parties were invited to contact the Head of School with any questions or queries, and also invited to attend a meeting about the policy."
- The school has a clear date for the policy review.

Areas for improvement:

- Three years into statutory RHE, there should be much more detail about how the school consulted parents and what changes, if any, were made off the back of the consultation.
- The policy does not clarify what specific classes and in which particular year groups parents can withdraw from. This could be easily added to the curriculum map.
- The curriculum map bunches together RHE with other PSHE Education elements. It would make more sense if this was separated.
- The policy doesn't clarify which materials are used by the school.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/butts-ps/UploadedDocument/3fa26caf-df61-4feg-bdb6-72f8eaef823b/rse-policy-23.pdf>

Hilary Primary School

Good practice:

- There is a clear review date.
- The policy clarifies which programme the school is using – The Jigsaw Programme.
- The policy states, "At Hillary Primary School, we have chosen to teach KS2 children in single sex groups by the same sex adult."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states the vocabulary children will be taught at the school. Although it's very refreshing that a school shows transparency in what it teaches, can its choices be considered age-appropriate? In EYFS (nursery) and KS1, it teaches children the following words, "Penis, Testicles, Vagina, Vulva and Anus", in lower KS2, it adds the following vocabulary, "Sperm, Ovaries, Menstruation, Ovulation and Womb", in upper KS2 the additional vocabulary words are, "Clitoris, Semen, Erection, Masturbation and Ejaculation". The policy states, "we will introduce vocabulary to children at an age-appropriate time."
- The policy states, "At Hillary Primary School, puberty is taught as a statutory requirement of Health Education and covered by our Jigsaw PSHE Programme in the 'Changing Me' Puzzle (unit), and we conclude from the DFE Guidance that sex education refers to Human Reproduction. In order to teach this in a scientific context, and knowing that National Curriculum Science requires children to know how

mammals reproduce, we have opted to teach this within our Science curriculum, not within PSHE or Relationships and Sex Education as we believe this is most appropriate for our children." This seems to suggest that the school believes human reproduction is a statutory requirement in primary school, when Science Programme of Study clearly states otherwise. In primary schools, children do not need to be taught how 'mammals' reproduce, but to "Describe the life process of reproduction in some plants and animals".

- This is a clear misreading of the Science Curriculum that exposes children to developmentally inappropriate content with no right for parents to withdraw.
- The policy states, "At Hillary Primary School we promote respect for all and value every individual child. We also respect the right of our children, their families and our staff, to hold beliefs, religious or otherwise, and understand that sometimes these may be in tension with our approach to some aspects of Relationships, Health and Sex Education." How does the school navigate this 'tension'? If a child or parent holds the view that same-sex relationships are not morally acceptable, does the school accept this different point of view?
- There is no mention of consultation, something which is a statutory duty.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/hillary-primary-school/UploadedDocument/d5ae52d2-f5d5-4eb0-8807-aa174bb50834/sre-and-pshe-policy-nov-2022.pdf>

Stoke on-Trent

Forest Park Primary School (Hanley)

Good practice:

- The policy was developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents.
- The policy states, "At Forest Park, whilst we uphold the British values of respect, tolerance and freedom of choice, we are sensitive to a range of religious and cultural views and, as such, we will follow up any conversations about LGBT by acknowledging that according to some religious beliefs (such as Islam and Christianity) these relationships are not acceptable."
- The policy states, "At Forest Park, whilst we uphold the British values of respect, tolerance and freedom of choice, we are sensitive to a range of religious and cultural views and, as such, we will follow up any conversations about LGBT by acknowledging that according to some religious beliefs (such as Islam and Christianity) these relationships are not acceptable highlights a lead to whom parents can discuss concerns with."

Areas for improvement:

- The review date is Autumn Term 2023. This covers three months. It would be better if the review date was set to a specific date, like most policies.
- Although the policy development section sets out that the policy was arrived at through a consultation process with staff, pupils and parents, there is not enough information presented to clarify how that worked in reality? How were parents chosen? What feedback was offered, and what changes were made?
- The withdrawal statement contained within the policy states, "Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from relationships education. Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the Head Teacher." The policy does not make clear what parents can withdraw from.
- The curriculum map seems to bring together everything that is taught within PSHE Education but does not distinguish between statutory Relationships and Health Education, Science and non-statutory sex education.

<https://forestpark.org.uk/uploads/docs/RSE-Final-policy.pdf>

Gladstone Primary Academy (Longton)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "The relationships and health curriculum takes into account the views of teachers, pupils and parents. The school has organised a curriculum that is appropriate for the age and developmental stages of pupils within each year group. When organising the curriculum, the religious backgrounds of all pupils will be considered, so that the topics that are covered are taught appropriately."
- The policy clarifies, "We are dedicated to ensuring our curriculum meets the needs of the whole-school community; therefore, the curriculum is informed by issues in the school and wider community to ensure it is tailored to pupils' needs."
- The policy emphasises working in partnership with parents and the important role of parents.
- Parents are consulted before the policy is reviewed and the curriculum in general.
- The policy clarifies that parents can withdraw from non-statutory sex education classes.
- The policy clarifies how the school ensures external visitors deliver appropriate sessions.

Areas for improvement:

- The review date is Autumn Term 2023. This covers three months. It would be better if the review date was set to a specific date, like most policies.
- The policy does not clarify the materials that the school uses.
- The 'whole school long-term overview' seems to bring together everything that is taught within PSHE Education but does not distinguish between statutory Relationships and Health Education, Science and non-statutory sex education.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/gladstone-primary-academy/UploadedDocument/bd196303-695f-4c0b-bb22-345750bdc6b7/gpa-rse-and-health-policy.pdf>

North-West England

Manchester

Alma Park Primary School (Levenshulme)

Good practice:

- There was a consultation survey in 2021.
- Families requested that to be informed before teaching of RHE. The school responded positively to this.
- The school considered teaching puberty earlier, but parents were opposed to this.

Areas for improvement:

- The school does not have a specific RHE policy, a legal requirement. What it calls RSE is included within its PSHE provision, but there isn't a consolidated PSHE Education policy. It is unclear how the school consults parents about a policy that does not exist.
- As there is no policy, it is unclear when RHE at the school will be reviewed.
- Details on how RSE is organised is contained on the website but not within a separate policy.

https://www.almapark.manchester.sch.uk/page/pshe-inc-rse/129200?preview=1&preview_secret=MTI5MjAwLmlsaGZhWlAzRWVzcFRpM3JLMXNSRWgOTGNhMzg3Q042

Longsight Community Primary School (Longsight)

Good practice:

- The policy clarifies which aspects of the school's curriculum parents can withdraw from.
- The policy was developed by a working group that included a parent governor and which consulted parents.
- The policy states: "We believe that each family and community has the right to hold its own religion and cultural values..."
- The policy reiterated the school's belief in the "right of families to hold their own values."

Areas for improvement:

- The exact same policy is adopted across both schools in the academy trust rather
- The policy states, "All primary schools have a legal duty to deliver Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) from September 2020." This is an inaccurate description of the law. Relationships, not Sex Education is statutory.
- The policy claims, "the law requires us to respect other people's choices if they are acting within the law". The law sets out what is legal, it permits people to make choices within the law. There is no legal obligation to respect other people's choices.
- The policy was developed in May 2020 and was meant to be reviewed a year after implementation and then every two years. The 'procedures for monitoring and evaluation section suggests that reviews, at least in the short-term would be held annually. The official review date on the policy is in May 2023, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed and any of those outlined dates.
- The policy states "Knowing how animals and humans reproduce" is a statutory requirement under National Curriculum Science at primary level. This is not the case. Plant and animal reproduction, not human reproduction, is statutory.
- Although the policy states parents were consulted, there is a lack of detail around how parents influenced changes to the policy.
- The policy does not clarify the resources the school uses to teach RHE.

<https://www.longsightcp.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/BLSMAT007-RSE-Policy-converted.pdf>

Bolton

Eatock Primary School (Westhoughton)

Good practice:

- The policy clarifies the materials the school uses (Jigsaw Programme).

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was reviewed in February 2022 and is meant to be reviewed annually (February 2023), it wasn't reviewed.
- The policy does not distinguish between statutory RHE and non-statutory science classes.
- The policy does not mention parental consultation at all. There's no sense the school fulfilled his legal duty to consult parents before the policy was finalised.
- Although the policy does state that parents have the right to withdraw, it doesn't clarify what aspect of the school's teaching parents have the right to withdraw from.

<https://www.eatock.bolton.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Relationships-and-Sex-Education-Policy.pdf>

Cherry Tree Primary School (Farnworth)

Good practice:

- The policy starts by clarifying, "This policy was written by The PSHE Co-ordinator and developed in consultation with parents, teachers and other school staff, governors and the pupils at Cherry Tree Primary School."
- The policy clarifies the materials the school uses (SCARF).
- The policy states, "Our school acknowledges different ethnic, religious and cultural attitudes,"
- The policy states, "We will provide opportunities for parents to view examples through class/year group meetings either face to face or virtually. Ongoing communication with parents about what is planned to be taught and when, will be provided through letters home. We advise parents to view the materials in order to support them in carrying out their responsibilities relating to providing RSE at home. It is valuable for a child's development to learn about its own families (sic) values in regards to relationships and sex alongside the information they receive at school."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in July 2023, it doesn't seem to have been.
- Although the policy states it is statutory for the school to show parents examples of materials, in actual fact schools must show parents all materials.

- As it's been a few years since RHE was made statutory, the school should be able to provide more information on how it consulted parents.

<https://www.cherry-tree.bolton.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/PSHE-Policy-Draft-March-21.pdf>

Wigan

Marcus Bridge Primary School (Kelvin Grove)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "Before each year group embarks upon its explicit Relationships Education programme, parents are informed by letter of their right to withdraw their child from the specific Y6 Conception & pregnancy Relationships Education lessons. Relationships Education lessons. They will be given an overview of the topics the child will be covering. Parents are also reminded that they can have a copy of the school's Relationships Education Policy on request, from the school office. Parents are also told that they can request to view all teaching materials that will be used in the delivery of their child's Relationships Education."
- The policy clarifies, "All staff are aware that everyone has views on Relationships Education related issues. However, while it is respected that everyone has the right to their own viewpoint, all Relationships Education issues are taught without bias. Topics are presented in a way that considers all viewpoints so that pupils are able to form their own, informed opinions but are also encouraged to respect the fact that others may have quite different viewpoints. Viewpoints that have a negative impact upon another person or group of people such as prejudice are always challenged."
- The policy states, "If a member of staff is extremely uncomfortable teaching Relationships Education then provision will be made for another teacher that is known to the children to deliver the Relationships Education lesson. This would usually be accommodated by the teacher from the parallel class taking the Relationships Education. The school feels that this course of action is justified as the member of staff that is uncomfortable with Relationships Education is unlikely to do an effective job or to give positive messages about sexuality and/or body functions."
- The policy states, "Whenever an external visitor is going to deliver a lesson or activity that is related to Relationships Education, we encourage a planning session with the speaker and a member of the teaching staff & PSHE Lead that the input will be worthwhile and also to check the suitability of the content. All visitors are made aware of the Relationships Education policy, Safeguarding policy and all lessons are evaluated by staff."
- The policy states, "Most of Relationships Education is delivered in mixed gender groups. However, during lessons on puberty, both boys and girls cover the same material but are then given opportunities to discuss what has been covered in single gender groups where they might feel more comfortable doing so."

Areas for improvement:

- Details of the materials used should be contained within the policy, they are not included.
- There is no information about how parents are consulted.
- The policy doesn't contain what is taught in each year group and what elements parents can withdraw from.

https://www.marusbridge.co.uk/serve_file/10673590

Worsley Mesnes Community Primary School (Worsley Mesnes)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "we provide the opportunity for parents/carers to come into school in advance of the lessons to discuss and ask questions about the content of the lesson."
- The policy states, "Parents/Carers have the right to withdraw their child from the sex education lesson and may request this before the lesson."
- The policy clarifies, "We recognise that RSE is best delivered with support and cooperation from our parents/carers. Prior to the RSE lessons, our school will inform parents/carers, via our newsletter/text that the lessons are about to begin."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states that the policy was meant to be reviewed in Summer Term 2023. It wasn't reviewed.
- The policy does not clarify whether or how parents are consulted.
- The policy does not name the materials used.
- Although the policy clarifies parents can withdraw from non-statutory sex education classes, it doesn't explain what classes and in which year groups this applies to.

<https://www.worsleymesnes.wigan.sch.uk/downloadfile/18071550>

Rochdale

Broadfield Community Primary Schools

Good practice:

- The policy states, "This policy has been written in consultation with pupils, staff, parents and governors and will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis."
- The policy clarifies the name of the materials (3D PSHE).
- The policy states, "The appropriateness of all materials used in school will be evaluated by the PSHE coordinator/Class teachers before they are used especially leaflets/worksheets and videos. Parents will be given the opportunity to see these materials before they are used in school and discuss any concerns."
- The policy states, "We provide the pupils with 'question boxes' in our classes to enable the pupils to ask any questions they may feel embarrassed or intimidated to ask in a whole class situation. These questions are read and answered as a whole class but the pupil asking it remains anonymous. In most cases the questions will be answered honestly and openly. We will ensure that only questions relating to the topic being discussed are answered and that any questions that are inappropriate are discarded."
- The policy states, "staff have discussed a range of possible questions and have agreed that some questions may need to be answered on an individual basis and some may require a measured response appropriate to the maturity and level of understanding of the child. In some instances certain questions will require parental involvement."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy doesn't provide details of how parents are actively involved in shaping the curriculum.

<https://www.broadfield.rochdale.sch.uk/downloadfile/17065895>

Brimrod Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy states, "This policy has been written with an emphasis on Parent Consultation. School Leaders have met with local faith leaders, Local Authority Advisors and Parents to design this aspect of the curriculum." As a result of the parental consultation the school decided, not to teach sex education, use Stonewall materials, will teach the scientific names of the body parts in year 5 (not Year 1 or 2) and to teach in a way that is age and stage appropriate.
- The policy states, "we do not teach LGBT+".
- The policy states, "As agreed by the Parent Working Group during this policy's consultation cycle, through the PSHCE curriculum, Puberty will be taught to children in Year 5 when it is deemed appropriate by the

class teachers. This will involve prior notification to Year 5 Parents and the option for these parents to view the teaching materials beforehand."

- The policy states, "As agreed by the Parent Working Group during this policy's consultation cycle, the scientific names for the external genitalia will not be taught until Year 5 and this will be taught in readiness for the puberty session. The puberty session will be taught by a class teacher and supported by the school nurse as necessary. Parents will be invited into school before the session to see what the children will be taught and how."
- The policy states, "As agreed by the Parent Working Group during this policy's consultation cycle, the NSPCC Pants materials will be used with all our children in order to keep them safe. Safeguarding is a priority here at Brimrod and in response to scientific names for the body parts not being taught until Year 5 children must be aware of what is safe and what to do."
- The policy is reviewed annually and has a clear review date.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy should include the names of any materials used.

<https://www.brimrodprimary.rochdale.sch.uk/downloadfile/19902636?open=true>

Blackburn

Brookhouse Primary School

Good practice:

- At Brookhouse Primary School, a rigorous consultation process was undertaken with all stakeholders. The outcome of this is that the topic of 'Changing adolescent body' will be taught in Year 6.
- The policy has a clear review date.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy doesn't clarify the names of the materials.
- Although the policy clarifies that parents can withdraw from non-statutory sex education, it doesn't clarify which year group these sessions take place.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/brookhouse-primary-school/UploadedDocument/61934db1-25a8-4578-9004-25e4354b1a72/sex-and-relationships-policy.pdf>

St James' CE Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy states, "The policy was produced by St James' through consultation with the Governors, staff, parents, pupils, Blackburn Diocese and Local Schools."
- The policy states, "St James' has decided not to teach Sex Education beyond the science curriculum."
- The policy states, "St James' is committed to working with parents and carers. Parents are encouraged to discuss PSHE topics at home. If a child raises a question beyond the planned curriculum, parents will be contacted."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in July 2023, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.
- The policy states, "The Science curriculum covers human reproduction". This is incorrect and misleading.
- The policy does not name the materials used.
- The policy lacks clarity on when the statutory topics are covered except in general terms. It reproduces the statutory RHE topics which should be covered by the end of primary school without clarifying when and how they are covered.

https://www.stjamesceprimaryblackburn.co.uk/serve_file/2182140

Blackpool

Devonshire Primary Academy

Good practice:

- The policy states, the school "Provide(s) balanced information including a variety of views to help pupils clarify their own opinions (whilst being clear that behaviours such as discrimination and bullying are never acceptable in any form)."
- The policy says, "Teaching will generally follow SCARF units with adjustments made after consultation with children, parents, staff and governors."
- The policy clarifies that the only non-statutory component, 'Making Babies', takes place in year 6 and that parents can withdraw from this.
- The policy says, "This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils, parents and governors."
- The policy is reviewed annually.
- The policy contains a breakdown of what is taught in different year groups. Some topics have been moved to later year groups and the non-statutory elements have been highlighted.

Areas for improvement:

- It would be useful if the policy provided more details on how parents are consulted, especially when the policy is reviewed annually.

<https://www.devonshire.blackpool.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/RSE-Policy-1.pdf>

Layton Primary School

Good practice:

- We will work closely with parents to ensure that they are fully aware of the content that is being delivered during PSHE lessons. We will notify parents when Relationship and Sex education will be taught above the statutory requirements of the Science Programme of study: key stage 1 and 2.
- The policy clarifies that parents can withdraw from non-statutory sex education lessons.
- In the first instance, any concerns parents have over the content of the curriculum should be discussed with the class teacher however, the PSHE Subject Leader will support discussion when needed.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy doesn't name the materials.
- The policy statement on consultation places the onus on parents to 'raise concerns' rather than providing opportunities for parents to provide feedback.
- The policy doesn't clarify what is taught year by year. A curriculum map is missing.

<https://layton.blackpool.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PSHE-Policy-January-2023.pdf>

Liverpool

Kingsley Community Primary School (Toxteth)

Good practice:

- The policy states, 'We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff'.
- The policy clarifies what parents can withdraw from. As the school does not teach non-statutory sex education, there is no option for parents to withdraw.
- The policy includes some sensible guidance to teachers in answering questions including that teachers can seek guidance in answering questions and it's not always necessary to answer questions straight away.
- The policy states the school is 'committed to working with parents'.
- The policy has a clear review date.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was developed with a wide selection of stakeholders. The policy states pupils were at the heart of the consultation. This is good practice. But the law places parents at the heart of a school's consultation process. The school clarifies that parent representatives were involved, rather than the draft being presented to all parents.
- The policy frames parents in a passive way.
- It would be far more effective if the RHE policy was standalone, rather than integrated within a PSHE policy.
- The policy states that RSE is adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, but those needs aren't set out.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/kingsley-community-primary-school/UploadedDocument/0f4ed97c-c44b-4b30-a928-eea2a964fa7a/pshe-policy-2021-2022.pdf>

Phoenix Primary School (Fairfield)

Good practice:

- The school clarifies the materials it uses, the Jigsaw programme.
- The policy states that parents must be consulted before the policy is changed. The policy clarifies that parents were invited to a meeting.
- The policy clarifies parents can withdraw from the non-statutory sex education lessons in years 5 and 6.
- The policy states RSE is not about the 'promotion of sexual relationships'.
- The policy has an issue date and a review date.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states that, "parents and any interested parties were invited to attend a meeting about the policy", but it doesn't clarify how parents were consulted. This statement exists within a lot of policies so it would be useful if more detail were provided.
- The policy states, "RSE includes learning about sex and relationships." This can suggest to parents that learning about sex is a statutory requirement in primary schools when Relationships, not Sex Education is.
- The policy also states that RHE includes learning about "family relationships including same sex couples", although primary schools can teach about same-sex couples, there is no statutory responsibility to do so in a primary school.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/phoenixprimary/UploadedDocument/974b9569-5fdf-4aaa-97cd-d2fbad705dad/rsepolicy2023.pdf>

Northeast England

Hull

Clifton Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy makes clear the name of the programme used (Jigsaw Programme).
- The policy clarifies in which year groups non-statutory sex education is taught and how parents can withdraw their children.
- The policy states, "The school will inform parents of this right by specific letter, which will explain when the lessons will be taught and outlines the parental right of withdrawal."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was developed in 2020 and is meant to be reviewed annually. It hasn't been reviewed since 2020.
- There's no information about how parents are consulted.

<https://cliftonprimaryschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/RSHE-Policy.pdf>

Appleton Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy makes clear the name of the programme used (Jigsaw Programme).

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in September 2023, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.
- The policy states, "At Appleton primary School, puberty is taught as a statutory requirement of Health Education and covered by our Jigsaw PSHE Programme in the 'Changing Me' Puzzle (unit), and we conclude from the DFE Guidance that sex education refers to Human Reproduction. In order to teach this in a scientific context, and knowing that National Curriculum Science requires children to know how mammals reproduce, we have opted to teach this within our Science curriculum, not within PSHE or Relationships and Sex Education as we believe this is most appropriate for our children." It seems that the school believes that human reproduction is a statutory requirement within primary level Science, something which is clearly not the case. There is no requirement to teach human reproduction within primary science. The requirement is to teach 'the life process of reproduction in some plants and animals.'

- The policy does not explain how parents were consulted, other than to say "consultation with parents, senior leaders and staff has formed part of the annual RSE policy renewal." As the annual review hasn't been happening, it would be useful for the sake of transparency to include details beyond a statement in the policy.
- Although the policy refers to the right to withdraw, there is a lack of sufficient detail in the policy as to what parents can withdraw from unless they approach the school. This information should be contained within the policy.

<https://appletonprimary.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Appleton-PSHE-Policy.pdf>

Newcastle

Wingrove Primary School (Fenham)

Good practice:

- The school states that parents can withdraw from sex education classes delivered outside of National Curriculum Science lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was updated was updated in May 2021 after being written in 2005. It was meant to be reviewed in November 2022, it wasn't.
- The policy does not reflect the current status of RHE being statutory.
- There is no mention of what is taught, when it is taught and the materials used.
- The policy does not clarify whether or how parents are consulted.
- The policy states, "The only Sex Education that we teach in school is covered by the science curriculum and includes content on human development, including reproduction, from which there is no right to withdraw." Either the paragraph needs to be clarified or the school is teaching human reproduction as a statutory topic. There is no requirement to teach human reproduction within primary science. The requirement is to teach 'the life process of reproduction in some plants and animals.'

http://www.wingrove.newcastle.sch.uk/storage/secure_download/WGFYUzdKUDNGUUcrYWYxbow2RG5aZz0g

Ravenswood Primary School (South Heaton)

Good practice:

- The policy states, 'Schools must consult with parents when making changes to their RSE policy...'
- The school's curriculum is set out in the policy
- The policy clarifies the materials it uses (Kapow)
- The curriculum the school uses
- The policy clarifies what parents can withdraw from and a process for withdrawal
- Although the policy states it will be reviewed every two years, it is in practice it is reviewed annually.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy doesn't clarify how parents were involved in the development of the curriculum or how they can be.

https://ravenswoodprimary.co.uk/docs/Policies/2025-06_RSE_policy_DRAFT.pdf

Sunderland

Richard Avenue Primary School (Barnes)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff taking into account the needs and feelings of pupils."
- The policy makes clear that there is no right to withdraw as no non-statutory sex education is taught at the school.

Areas for improvement:

- The review date is Autumn Term 2023. This covers three months. It would be better if the review date was set to a specific date, like most policies.
- The policy has been reviewed every year, there should be more details than included around consultation with parents around the development of the policy, which is statutory.
- It would be far better for parents to understand the school RHE programme if the PSHE Curriculum Long term plan separated between RHE topics and wider PSHE Education ones.
- There is not enough guidance for teachers in answering questions outside of the scope of the policy.

<https://richardavenue.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022-RSHE-policy.pdf>

Hudson Rd Primary School (Hendon)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "This policy has been produced with regard to current guidelines and good practice. However, it should be acknowledged that sensitivity and due regard is given to all of our families' cultural and/or secular differences and diversities. Adaptations of the materials will be open to discussion to meet the needs and requirements of the individuals involved."
- The policy states the content was decided in consultation with parents.
- The policy clarifies, "Teachers may use their discretion in responding to questions and may say that the appropriate person to answer the question is the parent."
- The policy says, "No one will be forced to take part in discussion;"
- The policy emphasises, "When a child does voice their opinion or concern, their views are taken seriously;"
- The policy states, "Our RSHE programme responds to the needs of individual pupils and takes pupils, cultures, faiths and family backgrounds into consideration."

Areas for improvement:

- It would be useful if the school included more details about how consultation took place, including any changes that occurred as a result of parental views.
- The policy was meant to be reviewed in November 2022, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.
- The policy should contain more guidance to teachers in answering pupil questions that may not be appropriate to their age.

http://www.hudsonroad.org.uk/documents/current_policies_21_22/rshe%20policy%20-%202021.pdf

Yorkshire and the Humber

Bradford

Bowling Park Primary School (Broomfields)

Good practice:

- The policy states that the school has adapted the Bradford Council model policy so that it is respectful of faith and is age appropriate.
- The policy was arrived at through broad consultation, which included parents.
- The school does not teach non-statutory sex education but will inform parents if it decides to.
- The school has decided, following consultation with parents, not to teach about same-sex relationships.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was approved on 14th July 2021, it was meant to be approved in July 2022, but it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.
- Although the policy sets out some guidance for teachers in answering questions that go beyond the statutory curriculum, it is not enough to support in answering a question, or not or when to ask for further guidance. It leaves too much discretion with teachers, where the policy should define this.
- The policy does not clarify which materials it uses. The RSHE long-term plan clarifies that Scarf is used. Is that was in the policy it would ensure that parents could access information on the organisation of RHE in one place.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ykYebVfZ8phEX2T2L01aDThL422RLCb>

Green Lane Primary School (Manningham)

Good practice:

- The policy states, "Relationships education will be inclusive for all pupils, sensitive to all family and faith backgrounds and pupils' own identities."
- The policy clarifies that, "Parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex education lessons taught as part of the relationships education or PSHE curriculum."
- The policy is reviewed annually.

Areas for improvement:

- The trust-wide policy does not make clear which materials GLPS uses.
- The trust looks like it has adopted Bradford Council's model policy, which also includes details of how parents in Bradford inputted into the policy. But how did the school consult with parents at the school. The statutory responsibility to consult parents rests with individual schools not local authorities.

- The policy does not clarify which materials are used.
- The policy statement around answering pupil questions places too much discretion in the hands of teachers without providing sufficient, objective guidance to prevent veering into inappropriate teaching.

<https://www.priestley.academy/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PAT-Relationships-Education-Policy-v1.3.pdf>

Marshfield Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy states that the policy will be reviewed in October 2023 with all stakeholders via the parent forum.
- The policy clarifies that "Relationships education will be inclusive for all pupils, sensitive to all family and faith backgrounds and pupils' own identities."

Areas for improvement:

- This school uses Bradford Council's model policy. It's unclear how parents at the school have been consulted on the policy so that parents can be consulted at a school, not authority level, and in order that the school fulfils its statutory duties.
- The school does not clarify which materials it uses.
- The policy does not clarify how parents were consulted when the policy was reviewed.
- The policy states the school does not teach sex education beyond the statutory requirements. Yet it also has a statement setting out how parents can withdraw from sex education classes.

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/marshfield-primary-school/UploadedDocument/3f8d1449-def6-4b51-b62f-99cddb86195f1/relationships-education-policy-2022.docx>

Leeds

Harehills Primary School (Harehills)

Good practice:

- The aim of RSE at the school is not to encourage sexual activity, 'sexual orientation' or 'gender identity'.
- There is some good guidance for teachers in answering pupil questions
- The policy states that the personal beliefs of teachers should not prevent them from teaching in a balanced way.
- The school sets out clearly which aspects of RSE parents can withdraw from
- School visitors need to adhere to the RSE policy and a teacher will be present at all times.
- The policy has a section on ethnicity, religious and cultural diversity where it sets out the fact that there is a diversity in views and beliefs at the school.
- The school clarifies the materials it uses. Betty for Schools, BBC Bitesize and Kapow.
- One of the ground rules set out in the policy is, 'it is okay say pass/not join in'.
- The school undertakes parental surveys as part of its monitoring process.
- The school has a clear policy review date.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy states that parents cannot withdraw their child from statutory sex education content included in National Curriculum for Science which includes content on human development, including reproduction. Although there are elements of statutory science teaching which parents cannot withdraw from, it gives the impression that teaching human reproduction is statutory in a primary school.
- The policy is very long but is lacking in detail about how parents are consulted.
- The school's RSE policy is shaped by a number of official documents but also includes 'SRE for the 21st Century (2014)', a document that has no official standing but is quoted as though it does.

<https://cms.harehills.stayumble.com/assets/uploads/clients/harehills/docs/RSE%20Primary%20Policy%20November%202021%20-%20website.pdf>

Beeston Primary School (Beeston)

Good practice:

- The school has a clear policy review date
- The policy clarifies that the objective of RSE is not about promoting sexual behaviour, sexualisation or promoting a sexual orientation.
- The policy clarifies the materials used by the school.

Areas for improvement:

- Although the policy does clarify that parents are allowed to withdraw from non-statutory sex education, the policy doesn't clarify what aspects of its teaching constitutes non-statutory sex education and when these sessions take place.
- There is no mention of whether and how the school consults/engages with parents.

<https://www.beestonprimaryschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NEW-Primary-Relationships-and-Sex-Education-Policy.pdf>

Huddersfield

Mount Pleasant Primary School (Lockwood)

Good practice:

- The policy names the programme the school uses (SCARF).
- The policy states, "Parents/carers will be: Consulted about the content, organisation, and delivery of the sex education programme. Given the opportunity to share their views on the lesson(s). Informed in advance of the content of sex education lessons and be able to view the main resources used."
- The policy states, "a teacher will refer to different viewpoints and beliefs on a range of RSHE issues."
- The policy states, "Teaching RSHE effectively means considering the many faiths and cultures of Britain today and knowing about the law. As a school we will deliver RSHE in a non-judgmental way, providing a balanced approach that acknowledges the wealth of beliefs, views and opinions of our community and country."
- The policy states, "If parents/carers have concerns about any aspect of the RSHE curriculum, they are encouraged to share these with the school. We will then invite parents/carers to come and talk to us. Alternatively, parents/carers can email or write a note or letter."

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in March 2023, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed. The policy also states that the policy will be reviewed annually, it hasn't been reviewed since March 2021.
- The policy states, "Teaching about diverse families (e.g. LGBT) is part of relationships education." It's not a statutory part of Relationships Education.
- The section on parental consultation has more positive content than lots of policies but it's very passively constructed and more about relaying information than seeking feedback.

https://www.mountpleasantschool.co.uk/serve_file/1021390

Moorlands Primary School

Good practice:

- In the policy Development section, the school sets out "The three key stages of policy development:" "INFORM Share the facts about the new guidance, including the statutory content. CONSULT Gather stakeholder views (children via the school council, staff, parents and Governors) SUPPORT (sic) Share the policy, materials and activities. Help parents complement the teaching in school."
- The policy states, "A draft policy was shared with stakeholders for comments. These comments were considered by the Governing Board and/or RSHE working group."
- The policy states, the headteacher's role is to "Encourage parents to engage with the formation of the policy and know about the final policy."

- The policy states, "Any parent, teacher or pupil is encouraged to offer feedback about the RSHE curriculum. The school offers a variety of ways to do this at Moorlands Primary School."
- The policy states, "a teacher will refer to different viewpoints and beliefs on a range of RSHE issues."
- The policy states, "Teachers are encouraged to use the correct terminology for body parts when working with the children, however the teaching of naming genital parts will be taught in Year 4 and years above, through the topics of adolescent change in RSHE or within science lessons."
- The policy contains the list of vocabulary used in each year group:
 - **Year 4** body parts, stereotypes, breasts, penis, vagina, broader hips, height, increased body hair, broader shoulders, facial hair, male, female, similar, different.
 - **Year 5** puberty, physical changes, emotional changes, emotions, feelings, mood swings, personal hygiene, budding, breasts, body shapes, increased body hair, pubic hair, facial hair, underarm hair, sweat, boy voices changing, skin care, spots, male, female, penis, vagina, lifecycle, babies, children, teenagers, adults, elderly, periods, menstrual cycle.
 - **Year 6** wet dreams, semen, erection, menstruation, periods, tampons, sanitary towels, male, female, penis, vagina, mood swings, pubic hair, voice breaking womb.
 - **Year 5** (Non-compulsory) Reproduction, pregnancy, pregnant, sperm, egg, fertilisation, sexual intercourse, conception, privacy, relationship, friendship, love, consent, ovary, uterine tube, testes, scrotum, ejaculated.
- The policy states, "Parents will have the opportunity to read the draft RSHE policy and provide feedback via a reflection document. These comments will be reviewed and prior to ratification of the governing body."
- The policy states, "Teaching RSHE effectively means considering the many faiths and cultures of Britain today and knowing about the law. As a school we will deliver RSHE in a non-judgmental way, providing a balanced approach that acknowledges the wealth of beliefs, views and opinions of our community and country. A diverse range of materials will be used so every child and family feels included, respected, and valued. Parents and carers are key partners in RSHE and are best placed to support their children to understand how their learning at school fits with their family's faith, beliefs, and values."
- The policy explains parents have the right to withdraw.

Areas for improvement:

- Although the policy attempts to clarify the non-statutory sex education content, it isn't completely clear.

<https://www.moorlandsprimary.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=5896&type=pdf>

Sheffield

Byron Wood Primary Academy

Good practice:

- The school's description of the Equality Act is balanced to include a broader range of equalities than is often included in policies. The policy refers to consideration of "faith perspectives in the context of balanced debate;"
- The policy states, "All learning centres on compassion; teaching our children respect and acceptance of difference, without infringing on the human rights of communities to their religious beliefs..."
- The policy sets out sensible advice on answering questions and depersonalising situations using distancing techniques.
- The policy has a good section on managing conflict. This is based upon two foundational principles:
 - Members of our community have a right to their own opinion, but not the right to control the beliefs of others;
 - We consider all protected characteristics to be equally important and do not prioritise any particular aspect of the equality act 2010.
- The policy states that the "personal beliefs, values and attitudes" should not interfere in the ability of teachers to provide RSE teaching that is 'balanced' and 'sensitive'.
- Teachers should also "encourage pupils to communicate concerns regarding their social, personal and emotional development in confidence and listen to their needs and support them seriously;"
- Teachers are told to "Tailor their lessons to suit all pupils in their class, across the whole range of abilities, faiths, beliefs and cultures."
- "Byron Wood recognise the primary role parents and carers have in the RSE of their children. We wish to build a positive and supportive relationship with the parents/carers of children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation."
- There is a good section on the use of external agencies in delivery of RSE.
- Not only does the school set out its intent to work closely with parents, it also provides a timeline of what it did to meet that aspiration.
- The policy clarifies that parents do have the right to withdraw from non-statutory content but because Byron Wood does not teach beyond the statutory requirements there is no right to withdraw.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy was meant to be reviewed in November 2022, it doesn't seem to have been reviewed.

<https://astreabyronwood.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Relationships-and-Sex-Education-Policy-2021.pdf>

Mossbrook Primary School

Although there's reference to the RSHP policy on the website, there isn't one anywhere on the website. Despite searching all sections of the website, including the policies section, using the school's search facility as well as external search engines, it could not be located.

<https://www.mossbrook.sheffield.sch.uk/downloadfile/16737051>

Meersbrook Bank Primary School

Good practice:

- The policy states, "The teaching of RSHE is NOT about the promotion of sexual orientation or activity.
- The policy includes a breakdown of what is taught and in which year group.
- The policy clarifies, "All learning centres on compassion; teaching our children respect and acceptance of difference, without infringing on the human rights of communities to their religious beliefs or to living their lives freely and openly."
- The policy includes guidance to teachers on how to handle sensitive or inappropriate questions.
- The school will "Support parent/carer involvement in the development of the RSHE curriculum."
- The school will "Ensure that their (teachers) personal beliefs, values and attitudes will not prevent them from providing balanced RSHE in school.
- The school has a clear policy statement on the use of external visitors.
- Parents are given the opportunity to view the materials.
- The policy outlines that parents can withdraw from the non-statutory elements of RHE and spells out what is non-statutory (optional).

Areas for improvement:

- The review date is 2024, but there's no specific month specified.
- The 'LGQTQ+' section is legally inaccurate. 'LGBTQ+' content is not statutory in primary schools, although the statement suggests it is.

https://meersbrookbank.sheffield.sch.uk/uploads/1/3/7/4/137414206/rshe_policy_-_july_2021.pdf

COMMON ISSUES IN SCHOOLS

Common Issues in Schools

Examining primary Relationship and Health Education (RHE) policies highlights some of the issues that parents consistently raise as concerns.

The five points below set out those concerns:

1. Consultation

Schools have a legal duty to consult parents when drafting and reviewing their RHE/RSHE policies, as well as working with parents when developing their curricula. Far too many policies lack detail about how parents are consulted, let alone whether they are consulted in the first place. Policies often copy generic consultation statements that fall short of explaining how parents are involved. These policy statements often frame parents as passive actors rather than collaborative partners.

The section on developing a policy in the statutory guidance needs to mandate that schools include details about how parents have been consulted. Far too many 'consultation' sessions are merely tick-box exercises where information is shared, rather than genuine opportunities for parents to provide feedback on the school's RHE/RSHE programme.

2. Materials

Parents want to know what resources are used at their children's schools. The Secretary of State for Education has written twice to schools reminding them that they must show parents the materials they use. This duty has also been added to the new draft guidance. Yet far too many schools fail to even name them. Some schools fulfil this basic step to be transparent, but many schools do not. This needs to be a requirement.

Parents need to be heard when they ask for adaptations to materials. Many schools are unresponsive to parental feedback. The government rightly built flexibility into the curriculum, so that the needs of the school community can be met. However, this flexibility is often lost when prescriptive materials are used. These materials often blur the lines between non-statutory content and statutory subjects.

For example, the inclusion of components from the 'Jigsaw' programme, which teach about 'the ingredients of a baby' (sexual intercourse) in Relationships Education or 'transgenderism' when talking about unfair stereotypes, is worrying. It is also concerning that primary schools are interpreting the science curriculum incorrectly. The mere inclusion of the word 'reproduction' is being used, by schools, to talk about human reproduction to primary-aged children. This is clearly a misinterpretation of the science curriculum.

3. Withdrawal

Many schools make clear that parents can withdraw from 'non-statutory sex education delivered outside of science', but this phrase often included in most policies is misleading, as it gives the impression that sex education (human reproduction) topics are mandatory in primary science lessons.

The science requirements at primary level mandate the following:

Year 1: Identify, name, draw and label the basic parts of the human body and say which part of the body is associated with each sense. (the basic parts of the human body do not include the sexual organs).

Year 2: Notice that animals, including humans, have offspring which grow into adults (they should not be expected to understand how reproduction occurs).

Year 5: Describe the life process of reproduction in some plants and animals; describe the changes as humans develop to old age [They should learn about the changes experienced in puberty.]

These requirements cannot be accurately described as sex education. Most schools interpret sex education as, 'how a baby is made', which includes the mechanics of reproduction. By that definition, sex education is not statutory in primary schools. This clarification needs to be made, so that primary schools do not, deliberately, or otherwise, teach sexual topics in science lessons.

Many schools teach sex education as non-statutory lessons in year 5 or 6. This is because the Department for Education has recommended it. Parents can withdraw from these lessons, but far too many schools do not make clear to parents when these non-statutory lessons take place.

Some schools include a curriculum map and highlight these non-statutory elements. They further remind parents before these sessions take place so that parents can make an informed choice about withdrawal.

These elements of good practice need to be shared across schools.

4. Equalities

Many schools are delivering a narrow interpretation of equality that recognises a hierarchy of equalities with 'LGBTQ+' equalities above all others. This hierarchy does not exist in law. The statutory guidance clarifies this, but it is often ignored in RHE/RSHE policies. This is exacerbated by mixed messages given to schools.

Whilst the guidance states: **"At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT, they should ensure that this content is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson. Schools are free to determine how they do this, and we expect all pupils to have been taught LGBT content at a timely point as part of this area of the curriculum."** (Statutory Guidance, page 15)

In response to a petition, the government clarified the law, **“Primary schools are not required to teach LGBT content but can choose to teach it in an age-appropriate way. The Department for Education has no plans to change its advice to schools on this subject.”**¹

Primary schools are not required to teach ‘LGBT’ content but can choose to teach it in an age-appropriate way. The statutory guidance must be updated with a clearer statement to schools.

5. Teachers

Most policies fail to guide teachers on how to conform to the law. When teachers give a partial, biased view of ‘sexual orientation’ or ‘gender identity’ or values-based discussions about sex and relationships, they are at risk of indoctrinating their pupils not teaching them. Teachers need to be reminded that they should not promote their own personal views about relationships and should talk through a range of views, including faith perspectives, without bias. Teachers need to be reminded to use phrases like, ‘some people believe...’, which clarifies that there are different moral positions on these topics.

Parents have raised several concerns about teachers communicating their own personal perspectives as definitive, rather than one of many opinions and when children push back, they are labelled or punished.

Addressing these concerns requires a comprehensive approach, including improved communication, clear mandates in statutory guidance and guidance for teachers to ensure compliance with the law while fostering an inclusive and respectful learning environment for all children.

¹ (<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/630932>)

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

1. Have you ever been invited to attend a consultation session with your child's school? **YES/NO**

2. Did you attend? **YES/NO/I was not invited**

3. How many sessions were there? **1/2/3/4/5/5+**

4. Were the sessions online or face to face? **Online/Face to face**

5. At the consultation event, I was given the opportunity to provide feedback?

Strongly disagree/disagree/Neutral/Agree/Strongly Agree

6. My feedback was considered.

Strongly disagree/disagree/Neutral/Agree/Strongly Agree

7. Some of my suggestions were accepted and led to changes to the way RHE/RSHE is delivered.

Strongly disagree/disagree/Neutral/Agree/Strongly Agree

8. I would characterise my engagement with the school as positive.

Strongly disagree/disagree/Neutral/Agree/Strongly Agree

9. Do you have any concerns about the consultation process?

Comment box

10. Do you have an example of good or bad practice from your child's school?

Comment box

11. What changes would you like to see to the way RHE/RSHE is implemented?

Comment box

12. Do you have any other comments?

Comment box



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