

**A GUIDE TO RESPONDING TO THE
GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION**

Draft Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health education

**Statutory guidance for governing bodies,
proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior
leadership teams, teachers**

**RESPONSE DEADLINE: Thursday 11 July
(11.59pm) 2024**

www.muslimfamilyinitiative.org

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Consultation Link

**YOU CAN READ THE DRAFT GUIDANCE AND
RESPOND TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE
LINK BELOW**

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/rshe-team/review-of-the-rshe-statutory-guidance/>

INTRODUCTION

The government has launched a consultation, and we are urging the Muslim community to participate.

This guide outlines why anyone with a vested interest in the wellbeing of children in England's schools should respond. Whether you are a Muslim parent or a Muslim organisation, your input is crucial.

The guide is divided into two main sections:

1. A summary of the draft guidance.
2. A guide to responding to the questions.

It will take you 25-40 minutes to complete, depending on the level of detail you wish to include. The consultation is open until 11 July 2024.

Many organisations are dissatisfied with the draft guidance, and their supporters will be responding in large numbers. What will we say to our Creator, Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala, if we had the chance to take a small action to minimise potential harm to children and did nothing?

Respond today

"You are the best community ever raised for humanity—you encourage good, forbid evil, and believe in Allah." [Surah Ale-Imran:110]

If you have any questions, queries or feedback, please email yusuf@MuslimFamilyInitiative.org

BACKGROUND

When Relationships and Health Education (RHE) and Relationships, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) became mandatory in primary and secondary schools, many parents were understandably unhappy. At the time, the government assured that schools would collaborate with parents to ensure appropriate delivery, but the guidance had several issues. These problems include:

- Lack of clarity regarding the inclusion of 'LGBTQ' teaching in primary schools, leading schools to believe they must include same-sex families when discussing families.
- Many RHE/RSHE policies lack clarity or transparency. They often fail to specify the materials used and clarify what is taught and in which year group.
- Many schools include non-mandatory sexual content in statutory lessons, fail to outline what parents can withdraw their children from, and do not provide guidance to teachers on answering questions that involve adult topics.
- Numerous schools use unregulated materials, which include teaching sexual content to children too early and presenting 'LGBTQ' topics in a way that promotes 'sexual orientation' and 'gender ideology'.
- Many schools are not transparent with parents about the materials they use.

- Schools have not been fulfilling their legal obligation to consult parents. They are required to engage parents when reviewing the policy and should collaborate with them when developing their RHE/RSHE programmes.
- Although the guidance mandates that all schools must consider the religious backgrounds of all pupils when planning lessons, most schools provide vague responses to parents or seem unsure why this is necessary when asked how they implement this in practice.

The consultation on the draft guidance closes on **11 July 2024**.

Once you have submitted it, please complete the form below so we can gauge the number of participants in the consultation.

<https://www.cognitoforms.com/SREIslamic/RSEGuidanceConsultation>

BASIC SUMMARY OF THE CHANGES

- The new guidance is based on five guiding principles: teaching about the law, ensuring child safety, adhering to specified age limits, transparency about teaching materials, and allowing parents to withdraw their children from sex education.
- Age Limits: The guidance sets specific age limits for topics like sexual acts, pornography, and rape, detailed on pages 16 and 17.
- Schools must not teach 'gender identity' as it is a highly contested and complex concept. As children under 18 cannot legally undergo 'gender reassignment,' social transitioning has no basis in law. This is addressed in the draft guidance on gender-questioning children.
- RSE policies must clearly differentiate sex education from relationships education, so parents know what they can withdraw their children from. Policies must outline what is taught and when, clarify parents' rights to withdraw, explain how parents can view materials, detail how teachers address questions beyond the primary level, and ensure withdrawn children are not exposed to this content. The policy should also include information on how it was developed and who was involved, with parental involvement legally mandated in the review process.
- Schools are reminded to show parents the resources, following two letters from the Secretary of State for Education last year. Schools must make all materials available to parents. This requirement has been integrated into the draft guidance.
- Additional topics have been added to the curriculum, including suicide prevention and loneliness.

DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE CHANGES

The Department for Education states the review into the statutory guidance was brought forward 'following reports of pupils being taught inappropriate content in RSHE in some schools'.

This summary covers:

- 1. The key changes and add**
- 2. Important elements taken out or downgraded**

There are **five guiding principles** set out in the guidance, which schools must follow when developing a curriculum:

- 1. RSE should teach children about the law** and the importance of tolerance and respect for the entire school community.
- 2. The curriculum should seek to keep children safe** and informed about growing up.
- 3. Schools should follow the age limits as set out in the guidance** to ensure children don't learn about sensitive topics earlier than is necessary or at an inappropriate stage of their development.
- 4. Schools should be transparent with parents about all materials used in RSE.**
- 5. Parents have the right to request that their children are withdrawn from sex education.**

Developing an RHE/RSHE policy

14. The policy must:

- differentiate between Relationships Education and Sex Education so parents are clear about what they can withdraw from. Relationships Education must not explain different forms of sexual activity.
- Set out clearly what sex education topics are taught and when.
- Be clear about parent's right to withdraw.
- Set out how parents can view curriculum materials.
- Explain how teachers answer questions that cover adult content or from which children have been withdrawn.
- Explain how the policy has been produced. (This should also include how parents have been involved in its review, as the law sets out).

Developing a curriculum, choosing resources and working with external agencies

- 19. Schools should ensure that external speakers submit materials and a lesson plan in advance. Schools should also seek the views of parents and ensure materials are shared with parents.
- 20. It is the responsibility of schools to ensure resources and teaching materials are appropriate for the age and maturity of pupils. (The government has commissioned Oak Academy to produce resources that comply with the new guidance).

Openness with parents, and parents' right to request withdrawal from sex education

- 22. Parents, as the first educators of their children, should be made aware of what is taught. Schools should use a range of strategies to build relationships with parents, including inviting parents into the school to discuss any concerns.
- 24. Schools should show all materials to parents.
- 27. If parents are unable to access a parent portal where the resources are hosted or attend a presentation, schools must provide parents with materials to take home. As long as parents sign an agreement not to share them.

“It is therefore vital that parents have confidence in what is being taught to their children and it is important that parents have the ability to discuss and analyse the contents.”

- 28. Parents have the right to withdraw from any aspect of sex education except topics related to puberty or sexual reproduction in science. (Note: this paragraph needs to be clearer to distinguish between elements of science, such as the signs of puberty that is statutory in primary science and those related to human sexual reproduction in secondary science).

- 29. Parents cannot withdraw from Relationships Education, but this subject must not include topics which explain different forms of sexual activity. Safeguarding information may require children to understand different parts of the body but this should not include descriptions of sexual activity. (Note: This is based on the assumption that safeguarding from abuse necessitates that children understand the names of intimate body parts at all let alone at year 1).
- 32. "If a pupil is excused from sex education, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal."

Equality

- 37. Schools are required to comply with the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 38. "Schools must ensure topics in RSHE are taught in a way which does not discriminate against pupils or amount to harassment."
- 39. "Pupils should learn about the law relating to the protected characteristics by the end of their secondary education. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sex."

Sexual Orientation

- 41. "We expect the majority of primary schools to teach about healthy loving relationships. Primary schools have discretion over whether to discuss sexual orientation or families with same-sex parents."

Gender-Reassignment

- 41. "Schools should be clear that an individual must be 18 before they can legally reassign their gender. This means that a child's legal sex will always be the same as their biological sex and, at school, boys cannot be legally classified as girls or vice versa."
- 45. Schools must not teach about 'gender identity', it is a contested area.
- 46. Schools must teach the facts about biological sex and not 'gender identity'. Schools must not use any resources which present contested views as facts, such as 'gender' is a spectrum. Material that associates interests or clothing choices with gender identity should not be used as it may lead to children questioning their 'gender identity'.

Religion and Belief

- 47. RSHE should be sensitive to the religious background of pupils, and schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.
- 48. All schools may teach about faith perspectives on these topics.

Managing Difficult Questions

- 57. "Pupils may ask questions related to topics which go beyond any sex education covered by the school, or which cover age-restricted content. The school's policy should explain how teachers will handle such questions, with an emphasis on supporting the child."

Age Limits and Flexibility

- 58. The age limits set out in this guidance are designed to ensure children are not introduced to adult topics too early.
- 59. In exceptional cases, where the need arises, children may need to be supported in response to a safeguarding issue. Parents will need to be alerted to this exceptional case where the age limits may not be fully adhered to.
- 60. It is essential that schools inform parents in advance where they plan to teach a topic earlier than set out in this guidance.

Relationships Education (Primary)

- 63. "Schools can most commonly refer to families with a mother and a father when discussing families, but should be sensitive to pupils' circumstances, recognising that some children may have a different structure of support around them."

Sex Education (Primary)

- 71. The objective of sex education at primary level is to keep children safe and to understand human reproduction. Schools should use the secondary RSHE curriculum tables to take account of age restrictions.
- 72. Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools. The Department recommends it is taught in years 5 or 6, but no earlier than year 5. The science curriculum includes teaching about the human body as it grows to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in plants and animals. **“Schools may also cover human reproduction in the science curriculum, but where they do so, this should be in line with the factual description of conception in the science curriculum.”**
(Note: the science programme of study does not include any overt requirement to teach about human reproduction, this statement needs further clarity)

Primary Age Limits

| TOPIC | AGE LIMIT |
|--|-------------------|
| The risks relating to online gaming, video game monetisation, scams, fraud and other financial harms, and that gaming can become addictive. Why social media, some apps, computer games and online gaming, including gambling sites, are age restricted. | Not before year 3 |
| Growth, change and the changing adolescent body. This topic should include the human lifecycle. Puberty should be mentioned as a stage in this process, including the key facts about the menstrual cycle, including physical and emotional changes. | Not before year 4 |
| Sex education topics taught in primary, which should be in line with what pupils learn about conception and birth as part of the national curriculum for science. | Not before year 5 |

Secondary Age Limits

| TOPIC | AGE LIMIT |
|--|-------------------|
| <p>What constitutes harmful sexual behaviour, including sexual harassment and the concepts and laws relating to it, including revenge porn, upskirting and taking intimate sexual photos without consent, public sexual harassment, and unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching.</p> <p>The concepts and laws relating to sexual exploitation and abuse, grooming, stalking, and forced marriage.</p> <p>Circulating images and information and how to safely report to trusted adults the non-consensual creation or distribution of an intimate image.</p> <p>The risks of inappropriate online content, including pornographic content, without discussing the details of sexual acts.</p> | Not before year 7 |
| <p>Direct references to suicide (as part of teaching about health and wellbeing).</p> | Not before year 8 |
| <p>Discussing the details of sexually explicit materials, in the context of learning about the risks of inappropriate online content, including pornographic content.</p> <p>Discussing the explicit details of violent abuse, including the detail of topics such as rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty.</p> <p>Discussing the explicit details of violent abuse when discussing the concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse including coercive control, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour.</p> | Not before year 9 |
| <p>Explicit discussion of the details of sexual acts, in the context of teaching about intimate and sexual relationships, including in relation to contraception and STIs.</p> | Not before year 9 |

New curriculum subjects

The government plans to introduce new subjects into the curriculum. These include:

- **Suicide prevention**
- **Sexual harassment and sexual violence**
- **Loneliness**
- **The prevalence of 'deepfakes'**
- **Healthy behaviours during pregnancy, as well as miscarriage**
- **Illegal online behaviours including drug and knife supply**
- **The dangers of vaping**
- **Menstrual and gynaecological health including endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and heavy menstrual bleeding.**



CONCERNS ABOUT THE DRAFT GUIDANCE



Although the draft guidance includes several positive changes. There are some elements which have been watered down.

CURRENT GUIDANCE

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)

NEW DRAFT GUIDANCE

All schools must have an up-to-date written policy for relationships education or, where they teach sex education, for RSE, and must consult parents when they develop and review their policy. (page 6)

CURRENT GUIDANCE

“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. Schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.” (Page 12)

NEW DRAFT GUIDANCE

RSHE should be sensitive to the religious background of pupils, and schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics. (page 13)



USING CHATGPT TO SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE



You can use ChatGPT as a tool to write your responses. This is a simple guide to use it effectively.

SET UP AN ACCOUNT

1. Go to chatgpt.com
2. Click on 'Sign up' (log in if you already have an account)
3. You will be sent a verification email. **Click on it.**
4. Add your name and birthday, **you now have access.**

PROMPT

Use this prompt followed by a couple of responses in this guide.

Can you provide a unique summary of the following points but not exceeding 250 words relying strictly on the provided text, without including external information and in British English: [followed by one or two answers (in this guide) that reflect your views].

EXAMPLE

Can you provide a unique summary of the following points but not exceeding 250 words relying strictly on the provided text, without including external information and in British English:

Providing guidance to clarify the restriction on teaching about same-sex families in primary schools is long overdue but is a welcome change. Most schools had already assumed this to be a mandatory part of the primary school curriculum.

The previous guidance was very unclear about the status of 'LGB' teaching and the inclusion of same-sex families in primary schools. The new guidance is a welcome clarification, providing schools with the necessary direction to recognise this is not a required aspect of teaching in a primary school.

**CONSULTATION
QUESTIONS
AND
SUGGESTED
ANSWERS**

Questions 1-10 ask questions about the respondent. We have included them only for the sake of completeness.

About you

Confidentiality Questions

This section is all about you / your organisation and where you are from.

1. Are you responding to this consultation as an:

- Organisation, for example, a charity, school/college or think tank
- Individual

Please clarify whether you are responding as an individual or an organisation.

2. If you are responding as part of an organisation, would you prefer your response was kept confidential?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

If you are responding as part of an organisation and you want your response to remain confidential you must make that known. This is not to say your request will be accepted. You must provide a convincing reason in question 6.

3. If you are responding as an individual, are you responding as (please select all that apply):

- A parent or carer
- A teacher
- A student
- A school or college leader
- A school or college governor
- A designated safeguarding lead
- A student support or pastoral care team member
- A medical professional
- Other, please specify

Clarify the capacity in which you're responding if you're an individual.

4. If you are responding to this consultation as an organisation, are you responding as:

- A school
- A college
- An academy trust
- A local authority
- A union
- A charity
- N/A
- Other, please specify

Clarify the capacity in which you're responding, only if you're an organisation.

5. Are you responding to the consultation with an interest in: Please tick all that apply

- Primary schools
- Secondary schools
- Faith schools
- Alternative provision/special schools
- School sixth forms
- FE college
- Sixth form college
- Designated institutions

Clarify which types of schools you're interested in.

6. If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated confidentially in response to a freedom of information request, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If you said you wanted your response to remain confidential in question 2, this is your opportunity to explain the reasons why. All responses to this public consultation are subject to the Freedom of Information Act, so there is no automatic right in law to confidentiality. But your reasons will be considered when deciding whether to treat your response as confidential.

You should complete your consultation response expecting that it will be made public.

Age

7. If you are responding as an individual, are you:

- Over 18
- Under 18

8. What is your sex?

- Female
- Male

9. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say or not applicable

10. Where are you based?

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Other (please specify)

Although this guidance only applies to England, it seems to be open to any interested party throughout the UK. But it may well be this question is being used to filter out responses from participants who live outside of England. If you are not based in England your response may be ignored.

YOUR CONSULTATION RESPONSE MATTERS, MAKE IT COUNT, INSHA ALLAH

From this point on, the questions you will be asked, relate to the content of the guidance.

When answering the questions please ensure:

- You read the guidance or at least the summary, in order to familiarise yourself with the content.
- Be sure to use your own words. We will present some suggested answers, you mustn't copy and paste them. If you do this your response may be ignored.
- Use ChatGPT to draft your answers, always check answers before submitting. Refer to the guide to answering questions using ChatGPT on page 20.
- Including any personal experience with RSE in schools is very important.

Review timetable

Previous guidance included a commitment to review the content of the RSHE statutory guidance every three years. There is a risk that a rigid timetable could undermine stability for teachers, but we are still committed to monitoring the curriculum to ensure it remains fit for purpose. We have, therefore, revised the commitment to “This guidance will be kept under review?”

11. Do you agree that we move away from a rigid commitment to review the guidance every three years?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick Yes. Regular opportunities to re-look at the guidance is important as long as they include a meaningful consultation process whenever the statutory guidance is revised.

Structure of the guidance

We have heard feedback that many teachers find the guidance is too long and confusing. We have restructured the guidance to simplify the content and remove repetition.

12. Do you agree that the changes to length and style of the guide make the guidance easier to understand and follow?

Yes

No

Schools' relationships and sex education policies

All primary schools are required to have a policy for relationships education, and secondary schools are required to have a policy for relationships and sex education. We have made some changes to the guidance on schools' policies for relationships and sex education, including asking schools:

- to differentiate between relationships and sex education (if they teach sex education) so that parents are clear about the content they can request withdrawal from.
- to explain how they will handle questions from pupils in relation to content that is restricted to older children, that relates to topics in primary sex education that the school doesn't cover, or relates to sex education from which the pupil has been withdrawn.
- to explain how parents can view curriculum materials.

13. Do you agree that these changes will do enough to ensure that schools are transparent with parents and that parents have sufficient control regarding what their child is learning?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick yes.

14. If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here. 250 word limit

CHOOSE ONE OR TWO ANSWERS – USE CHATGPT (P15)

Although the changes are welcomed, they don't go far enough and there are significant gaps:

1. Broad Range of Relationships

School policies must clearly state that teachers are required to educate students about the broad range of relationships that exist in society. They should not feel obliged to promote one particular type of relationship over others, ensuring a balanced and inclusive approach to relationship education.

2. Respect for Diverse Moral Perspectives

School policies must explicitly clarify that children who express moral perspectives that differ from others about relationships should not be subject to punishment. This encourages a respectful and open dialogue within the classroom, fostering a safe environment for diverse viewpoints protected in law.

3. Guidance on Answering Sensitive Questions

School policies must include a clearer explanation to guide teachers on how to appropriately respond to questions that exceed what is suitable for the primary level. This will help ensure that teachers provide age-appropriate information while addressing students' enquiries responsibly.

4. Neutrality on Family Relationships

School policies should clearly state that teachers must not promote any particular type of family relationship. The focus should be on providing information and understanding about various family structures without endorsing one as superior to others. This factual teaching approach reassures parents that teachers are not exceeding their professional roles.

5. Separation of Personal Views

School policies should mandate that teachers separate their personal views from their professional role. Teachers must present information impartially and refrain from letting their personal beliefs influence their teaching.

6. Objective, Critical, and Pluralistic RSE Teaching

School policies must make clear that Relationships and Sex Education teaching should be objective, critical, and pluralistic. This means presenting information in a balanced manner that allows for critical thinking and acknowledges the diversity of perspectives and experiences.

7. Equality includes all the Protected Characteristics

School policies must clarify that all protected characteristics are of equal standing in law and that there is no hierarchy. This ensures that no particular group is prioritised over another, promoting a fair and inclusive educational environment.

8. Detailed Consultation Statement

RSE policies must include a clearer statement on the consultation process. Rather than providing generic statements, schools should detail how consultation with parents and the community was undertaken. This transparency helps build trust and ensures that the development of RSE policies is inclusive and reflective of the community's views.

Openness with parents

Parents are the first teachers of their children. It is vital that they know what their children are being taught and are reassured that the resources used are factual and appropriate. The Secretary of State has already written to schools setting out her expectations about how schools share RSHE materials with parents and the revised guidance is clear that: • There is a strong public interest in parents being able to see all materials used to teach RSHE, if they would like to, and schools should not agree to contractual restrictions which prevent this.

- Contractual clauses which seek to prevent schools sharing resources with parents at all are void, given the public interest in parents being able to see all RSHE material.
- Schools should comply with any applicable copyright law when sharing materials with parents, and this may be through a parent portal or a presentation, but might include parents being given copies of material to take home.

15. Do you agree with our proposed approach to increased transparency on RSHE material?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

16. If you would like to offer any comments to explain your answer, please do so here.

CHOOSE ONE OR TWO ANSWERS – USE CHATGPT (P15)

1. Sharing Resources with Parents

Including guidance on sharing all resources with parents is important, but simply knowing what is being taught is insufficient. There must be clarity that parents' views on the appropriateness of content will be considered to ensure meaningful engagement and collaboration.

2. Transparency and Clear Definitions

While I welcome the changes requiring schools to share teaching resources with parents to enhance transparency, this alone does not address the crucial need for clear definitions of appropriate content. Without these definitions, the information shared may not align with parental expectations and community standards.

3. Consideration of Parents' Views

Parents need assurance that their views will be considered when choosing educational materials. Clear guidelines on what is deemed appropriate content would foster better collaboration between schools and families, ensuring that the educational material is suitable and accepted by parents.

4. Reflecting Diverse Backgrounds

Schools must recognise that what is considered appropriate content can vary and should reflect the diverse backgrounds of the pupil cohort. This approach ensures that educational materials are inclusive and respectful of the various cultures, values, and beliefs represented in the school community.

Flexibility for age limits

17. Do you think this will help to ensure that pupils are adequately safeguarded?

This question refers to the new age limits section. Go to the page 14 summary on 'Age Limits and Flexibility' and the age limit tables on pages 16 and 17.

Yes

No

We suggest you tick NO

18. Do you think this flexibility is warranted?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick NO

19. If you would like to explain your answer to questions 17 or 18, please do so here Please try to limit your response to under 250 words.

1. Flexibility Around Age Limits

Providing flexibility for schools regarding age limits could undermine the very purpose of having age limits. Schools might justify teaching sensitive topics at much earlier ages based on a general, rather than specific, local need. This could lead to inconsistent application of age-appropriate content across different schools, making the age limits essentially meaningless.

2. Definition of 'Imminent Safeguarding Risk'

Although the guidance provides an example, the term 'imminent safeguarding risk' lacks an objectively clear definition. This ambiguity can lead to varied interpretations by different schools, potentially causing confusion and inconsistency in how safeguarding issues are addressed.

3. Informing Parents in Advance

The guidance states that parents need to be informed in advance before a school decides to teach certain sensitive topics much earlier. However, it is not clear what 'in advance' means in practical terms. Does this mean parents should be informed the day before, on the day of the session, or at some other time? Clear guidelines on the timeframe for advance notice are necessary to ensure parents have sufficient time to respond appropriately.

4. Opportunity for Parents to Withdraw

Informing parents in advance is insufficient if they are not given the opportunity to withdraw their children from the session. Parents should be afforded the choice to discuss and decide on these matters themselves. A unilateral decision by the school removes this choice, potentially leading to conflicts and dissatisfaction among parents who may feel their rights and moral perspectives are being disregarded.

Sexual orientation

We have streamlined the section on teaching Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender topics, so that relevant content is in one place. This includes additional content on gender reassignment and gender identity, which is discussed in the section below. We have also clarified that primary schools have discretion over whether to discuss sexual orientation or families with same-sex parents.

20. Do you agree with changes to the lesbian, gay and bisexual content in the LGBT section (note that the next section provides an opportunity to comment on text about gender identity and gender reassignment)?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

21. If you have any comments to explain your answer, please do so here. Please try to limit your response to under 250 words.

1. Inclusion of Same-Sex Families in Teaching

Clarifying the legal status of teaching about same-sex families in primary schools is long overdue but is a welcome change. Most schools had already believed this to be a mandatory part of the primary school curriculum.

2. Clarity on 'LGB' Teaching

The previous guidance was very unclear about the status of 'LGB' teaching and the inclusion of same-sex families in primary schools is not mandatory. The new guidance is a welcome clarification, providing schools with the necessary direction to recognise this is not a required aspect of teaching in a primary school.

3. Improved Clarity in the Section

The revised section is much clearer and provides much-needed clarity on the fact that teaching about same-sex families is not required in primary schools. This ensures that schools can respond to parental views when deciding what to teach at primary level.

4. Questioning the Concept of 'Sexual Orientation'

The notion of 'sexual orientation' should be scrutinised just as rigorously as 'gender identity'. It's important to recognise that 'sexual orientation' is a concept rather than an inherent trait of human beings. Similar to how the concept of 'gender identity' is contested, the idea of a distinct 'sexual orientation' is a modern construct, originating in the 19th century. Terms like 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality' were invented to describe human behaviour as an identity but do not represent an objective reality. The assertion that 'sexual orientation' is an intrinsic, unchangeable characteristic is rooted more in ideology than in fact. Whilst the law allows for people to live their lives as they choose in a liberal society, it is crucial that no single idea is enforced as absolute truth. Classrooms should be spaces where all ideas are explored and discussed, reflecting the diversity of thought present in society.

Gender reassignment

The new guidance states that pupils should know the world around them, and understand the law on equality and the protected characteristics, including gender reassignment. However, the guidance is clear that schools should not teach pupils about the contested concept of gender identity. Along with other factors, discussing such theories with pupils could prompt some pupils to start to question their gender. The new content is informed by the outcome of the Cass Review and the principles that underpin the draft guidance for schools and colleges on gender questioning pupils (gender questioning guidance), both of which advocate for a cautious approach. We consulted on the draft gender questioning guidance separately, from 19 December to 12 March, and are currently considering the outcomes, so the content of that guidance is not within the scope of this consultation. The new guidance states that:

- Schools should teach about the protected characteristics, including gender reassignment.
- Schools should be clear that an individual must be over 18 before they can legally reassign their gender. This means that a child's legal sex will always be the same as their biological sex and that, at school, boys cannot be legally classified as girls or vice versa.
- Schools should not teach about the concept of "gender identity" which is a highly contested and complex concept.
- If asked about the topic of gender identity, schools should teach the facts about biological sex and not use any materials that present contested views as fact, including the view that gender is a spectrum.
- Schools should not use materials that use cartoons or diagrams that oversimplify this complex concept or that could be interpreted as aimed at younger children.
- Schools should consult parents on the content of external resources on this topic in advance and make all materials available to them on request.

22. Do you agree with the proposed changes related to gender identity and gender reassignment in the guidance?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

23. If you have any comments to explain your answer, please do so here: Please try to limit your response to under 250 words.

1. Clarification on 'Gender Identity' Teaching in Primary Schools

It is important that the government has clarified that 'gender identity' must not be taught in primary schools. This ensures that primary education focuses on age-appropriate content and avoids introducing complex and contested concepts too early.

2. Integration of Guidance on Gender-Questioning Children

Following the guidance on gender-questioning children, it is crucial to integrate the recognition that 'gender identity' is a highly contested concept into the broader educational guidelines. This will help maintain a balanced approach to teaching about gender-related topics.

3. Distinction Between Biological Sex and Gender Identity

It is essential that schools are reminded that biological sex is a factual aspect of human biology, whereas gender identity is a socially constructed idea that is not universally accepted. This distinction helps ensure that educational content is grounded in widely accepted scientific understanding while acknowledging the diversity of perspectives on gender.

Addressing prejudice, harassment and sexual violence

We have included a new section in the guidance specifically on addressing prejudice, harassment and sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviours, in light of evidence of the prevalence of sexual harassment in some schools. The section includes new content on addressing the harmful behaviours that pupils may be exposed to, including online, which may normalise harmful or violent sexual behaviours - for example, by giving pupils the opportunity to identify positive male role models. This new section also highlights the role of staff in avoiding language that might perpetuate harmful stereotypes or suggest that victims are to blame for abusive behaviour. We have also included new content relating to sexual harassment and sexual violence in the curriculum, including by adding fixated and obsessive behaviours, such as stalking, to the secondary Respectful Relationships topic, and offering clearer guidance on teaching about image-based sexual abuse in the secondary Online and Media topic. The secondary Being Safe topic has been strengthened to include more of the detail on communicating and recognising consent, to be clear that this is a key plank in pupils' learning to keep others safe. The Being Safe topic also now lists specific forms of sexual harassment that may otherwise be neglected, including revenge porn, upskirting, public sexual harassment, and unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching.

24. Do you agree that the revised content on addressing prejudice, harassment and sexual violence is a helpful response to evidence of the prevalence of sexual abuse in schools?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

25. If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words

1. Factual and Developmentally Appropriate Teaching

These topics can be effective and important if they are presented in a wholly factual manner. However, educational content often includes ideologically shaped positions such as 'not all pornography is bad,' 'sex work (prostitution) is real work,' or 'your body belongs to you so you decide when you're ready for sex.' While children need to understand the law, teaching must be tailored to their developmental maturity to ensure it is appropriate.

2. Age-Appropriate Exposure

Children should not be exposed to aspects of the adult world before they are mature enough to fully comprehend them. It is crucial to ensure that the content they are exposed to is suitable for their age and cognitive abilities.

3. Understanding Boundaries of Acceptable Conduct

Children need to understand the boundaries of acceptable conduct with the opposite sex. This education is essential for fostering respectful and healthy interactions and ensuring children have a clear understanding of appropriate behaviour in line with the law but also shaped by ethical considerations.

Primary sex education

The new guidance is clear that where primary schools choose to teach sex education, its purpose is not to prepare pupils for sexual activity in later life, but to focus on giving pupils the information they need to understand human reproduction and for their own safety. Primary schools should take account of the age restrictions in the secondary RSHE curriculum tables. The new guidance continues to recommend that primary schools have a sex education programme, but restricts this to no earlier than years 5 or 6, and is clear that if a primary school teaches sex education, it should draw on the knowledge pupils are developing about the human life cycle, as set out in the national curriculum for science.

26. Do you agree with the restriction on teaching sex education only in years 5 or 6?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

27. If you would like to make any comments to explain your answer, please do so here. It would be helpful if you could share your own views on appropriate age limits for this topic, for example if you think they are too low or too high.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words

1. Minimum Age for Sex Education in Primary Schools

Establishing a minimum age for teaching sex education in primary schools is crucial. This measure ensures that children are not exposed to content that is inappropriate for their developmental stage, protecting their emotional and psychological well-being.

2. Adherence to the requirements of the science curriculum

The draft guidance states, "pupils learn about conception and birth as part of the national curriculum for science." However, more needs to be done to ensure that schools adhere strictly to the Science Programme of Study and do not exceed its scope. Currently, some schools teach human reproduction in primary science because they mistakenly believe this is mandated by the curriculum.

3. Clarity and Notice for Sex Education Classes

In addition to minimum age requirements, schools need to provide clear information about when sex education classes will take place. Parents should be given sufficient notice before RSE lessons occur, allowing them to prepare and, if necessary, discuss the content with their children in advance. This transparency helps foster trust and cooperation between schools and families.

Secondary topics: Online and Media, Respectful Relationships, including friendships, and Being Safe

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Respectful Relationships, including Friendships topic: What constitutes harmful sexual behaviour and why, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it. This should not be taught before year 7.

28. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Respectful Relationships, including Friendships topic: That some types of behaviour, including within relationships, are criminal, including violent behaviour and emotional abuse, such as controlling or coercive behaviour. Schools should not, however, teach about the details of violent abuse before Y9 as it is important that pupils are not introduced to distressing concepts when they are too young to understand them.

29. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Online and Media topic: About circulating images and information and how to safely report to trusted adults the non-consensual creation or distribution of an intimate image. Pupils should understand that making, keeping or sending naked or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime, even if the photo is of themselves or of someone who has consented, and even if the image was created by the child and/or using AI generated imagery. Pupils should understand the potentially serious consequences of asking for naked, semi-naked or sexual images, including the potential for criminal charges and severe penalties including imprisonment. This topic should not be taught before year 7.

30. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Online and Media topic: The impact of viewing harmful content, including pornography, that presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others, and can negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners. This can affect pupils who see pornographic content accidentally as well as those who see it deliberately. The risks of inappropriate online content can be discussed in an age-appropriate way from year 7, however, the details of sexual acts should not be discussed before year 9.

31. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Online and Media topic: The impact of viewing harmful content, including pornography, that presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others, and can negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners. This can affect pupils who see pornographic content accidentally as well as those who see it deliberately. The risks of inappropriate online content can be discussed in an age-appropriate way from year 7, however, the details of sexual acts should not be discussed before year 9.

31. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The concepts and laws relating to harmful sexual behaviour, including sexual harassment, revenge porn, upskirting and taking/sharing intimate sexual photographs without consent, public sexual harassment, and unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching. This should not be taught before year 7.

32. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The concepts and laws relating to sexual exploitation, grooming, stalking, and forced marriage. This should not be taught before year 7.

33. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The concept and laws relating to sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault. Whilst it's important for pupils to understand the key principles around sexual offences and violence, for example the importance of understanding what consent means, schools should not teach about this in any sexually explicit way before year 9.

34. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The physical and emotional damage which can be caused by female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty, where to find support, and the law around these areas. This should include that it is a criminal offence to perform or assist in the performance of FGM, virginity testing or hymenoplasty, or fail to protect a person under 16 for whom someone is responsible from FGM, or to take girls who are UK nationals abroad for FGM, regardless of whether it is lawful in that country. This should not be taught before year 9, except for where schools have identified a greater risk of FGM at an earlier age or have pupils who have been affected by FGM and need support.

35. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour¹. Schools should not teach about the details of violent abuse before year 9 as it is important that pupils are not introduced to distressing concepts when they are too young to understand them.

36. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

37. If you would like to offer any comments about the age restrictions in the secondary Online and Media, Respectful Relationships, including Friendships, and Being Safe topics please do so here. It would be helpful if you could share your own views on appropriate age limits for these topics, for example if you think they are too low or too high.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words

Please offer any suggestions, but in our opinion it is enough to back the age limits.

Secondary topic: Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

This topic includes information about choices around sex, including about when and whether to have sex, about sexual consent, reproductive health, strategies for resisting sexual pressure, facts about contraception, facts about pregnancy and choices around pregnancy, facts about STIs and reducing risks of transmission, facts about the impact of alcohol and drugs on sexual behaviour, and information about where to get help. Explicit discussion of the details of sexual acts should only take place in so far as it is necessary to teach these topics and should not be taught before year 9

38. Do you agree with the age restriction on the secondary Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health topic?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

39. If you would like to offer any comments about this age restriction, please do so here. It would be helpful if you could share your own views on appropriate age limits for these topics, for example if you think they are too low or too high.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words

Please offer any suggestions, but in our opinion it is enough to back the age limits.

Health and wellbeing

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the primary Online Safety and Harms topic within health education: why social media, some apps, computer games and online gaming, including gambling sites, are age restricted. This should not be taught before year 3.

40. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the primary Online Safety and Harms topic within health education: the risks relating to online gaming, video game monetisation, scams, fraud and other financial harms, and that gaming can become addictive. This should not be taught before year 3.

41. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

We have placed an age restriction on the whole of the primary Developing Bodies topic within health education. This should not be taught before year 4.

This covers:

- growth, change and the changing adolescent body, This topic should include the human lifecycle. Puberty should be mentioned as a stage in this process.
- the key facts about the menstrual cycle, including physical and emotional changes.

42. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

The secondary Health and Wellbeing

topic is now clear that, given the sensitivity and complexity of content on suicide prevention, direct references to suicide should not be made before year 8.

43. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes

No

We suggest you tick YES

44. If you would like to offer any comments about these age restrictions, please do so here. It would be helpful if you could share your own views on appropriate age limits for these topics, for example if you think they are too low or too high. (25 word limit)

Please offer any suggestions, but in our opinion it is enough to back the age limits.

Health and Wellbeing We have renamed Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing in the guidance, which now appears as Health and Wellbeing. We have also renamed the primary Mental Wellbeing topic, which now appears as General Wellbeing. We have also added a learning outcome in the primary General Wellbeing topic and the secondary Mental Wellbeing topic, that pupils should understand that worrying and feeling down are normal and affect everyone at different times and are not in themselves a sign of a mental health condition.

45. Do you agree with changes to the Health and Wellbeing section of the guidance?

- Yes
- No

You can decide how you answer. If you have some experience or expertise in this area you can include it in the next question.

46. If you would like to offer any comments to explain your answer, please do so here.

Suicide prevention

The guidance says that if addressing suicide directly, teaching should focus on equipping pupils to recognise when they, or someone they know, needs support and where they can seek help if they have concerns. This should include details on which adults in school (e.g. school nurses), and externally can help. Teachers should use language and content that is accurate, straightforward and appropriate to the level of understanding of the class. They should take particular care to avoid discussing instructions or methods of self-harm or suicide and avoid using emotive language, videos or images. Given the sensitivity and complexity of content on suicide prevention, direct references to suicide should not be made before Year 8.

47. Do you agree with the proposals on suicide prevention as set out above?

- Yes
- No

You can decide how you answer. If you have some experience or expertise in this area you can include it in the next question.

48. If you would like to offer any comments to explain your answer, please do so here.

Additional topics

There are a number of additional areas that we propose adding to the statutory guidance following submissions from other government departments, stakeholders and experts.

These include:

- Loneliness
- New content on gambling
- Prevalence of 'deepfakes'
- Antimicrobial resistance
- Healthy behaviours during pregnancy
- Illegal online behaviours including drug and knife supply
- Personal safety, including road, railway and water safety
- Vaping,
- Menstrual and gynaecological health including endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), heavy menstrual bleeding
- Parenting and early years brain development
- testing and hymenoplasty
- Bereavement

49. Do you agree with this additional content?

- Yes
- No

You can decide how you answer. If you have any experience or expertise in this area you can include it in the next question. This includes your views as a parent.

50. If you have any comments to explain your answer, please do so here

Feel free to include any comments you have.

51. Is there anything else in the draft guidance you'd like to comment on?

250 word limit

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

The statutory guidance needs revision to highlight the importance of teachers separating their personal beliefs from their duty to provide factual instruction, similar to the 'pluralism requirement' in Wales. It states: "In all schools and settings, RSE must be objective, critical, and pluralistic in both content and teaching approach. When it comes to questions of values, schools and settings must present a range of views that are widely held within society."

Schools must be reminded they must consult and engage parents

The Parental Engagement on Relationships Education supplementary guidance states: "Engagement means schools providing the opportunity for parents to share 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)

The draft guidance must include more details about how parents can contribute to what is being taught, not as a veto on final decisions, but so their views are respected and valued.

RSE programmes must be sensitive to the needs of the distinct pupil group.

The Parental Engagement on Relationships Education supplementary guidance states: “Schools should particularly consider whether aspects of their curriculum may be sensitive to the pupils or to the parents of their specific cohort and, if so, should ensure they have properly engaged them on this content.

What is considered 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)

The draft guidance needs to incorporate the sensible recommendations in the supplementary guidance.

The RSE Guidance has diluted a couple of areas

The previous policy stated: "Schools should ensure that the policy meets the needs of pupils and parents and reflects the community they serve." This should remain in the policy.

The previous policy stated: "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 included in the core content of this guidance are appropriately handled." This should remain in the policy.

The guidance must clarify that the curriculum must be implemented not interpreted

Many schools are teaching children in Year 1 or 2 the names of intimate body parts, such as penis, vagina, vulva, anus, etc. While the curriculum does indeed teach the importance of being safe from abuse, it does not mandate teaching the names of body parts. When parents question where the curriculum requires this, schools provide an answer influenced by lobbies promoting a sex-positive approach for children. They argue that children need to know the correct names to report abuse accurately, claiming that some court cases have failed because children could not identify

where they were inappropriately touched. They cannot cite these cases. Additionally, the NSPCC's PANTS Rules resource effectively helps children stay safe and understand abuse in a simple way. Before statutory RSE, it did not include the names of intimate body parts. When Relationships Education became mandatory, the PANTS Rule resource was reinterpreted to integrate the perceived new curriculum requirements. The inclusion of the names of intimate body parts was not seen as an important requirement to keep children safe prior to statutory Relationships Education.

The draft statutory guidance states: "Safeguarding information may require children to understand different parts of the body." The guidance needs to be clear that knowing the names of intimate body parts is not a requirement of the curriculum but a mere interpretation.

Public Sector Equality Duty [PSED]

40. Do you have any comments regarding the potential impact of the guidance on those who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, whether negative or positive? How could any adverse impact be reduced and are there any other ways we could advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?

Feel free to include any comments you have.

JazakAllahu khairan for submitting a response.

Once you have submitted your response, please let us know. We would like to know how many of our supporters respond.

Please complete this simple form to let us know.

<https://www.cognitoforms.com/SREIslamic/RSEGuidanceConsultation>

MUSLIM FAMILY INITIATIVE

Muslim Family Initiative, formerly SREIslamic, was established in 2008, to support Muslim parents to Navigate sex education in schools.

Since then we've been supporting Muslim parents navigate RSE in England's schools, RSE in Wales schools and RSHP in Scotland's schools. We also support parents to navigate the 'LGBTQ' challenge and to support parents to become confident in talking to their children about sex, relationships and 'LGBT'.

Muslim Family Initiative.



Our Vision

Building a world where Muslim families are focused on success

Our Mission

To build strong Muslim families that are equipped to meet the contemporary challenges (RSE, 'LGBTQ+', hypersexualisation) through the provision of education, support and guidance. www.Muslimfamilyinitiative.org



www.MuslimFamilyInitiative.org



<https://linktr.ee/MuslimFamilyI>