

Haytor View Community Primary School & Nursery

Relationships, Health and Sex Education Policy

2024-25



Learning together - enjoying success - aiming high - celebrating difference – enriching community

OVERVIEW

Our school's policy on sex and relationship education is based on the DfES document 'Sex and Relationship Education Guidance' (DfES 0116/2000). We recognise that 'Sex and Relationship Education' is the policy's full title, but for brevity's sake, we will refer in the rest of this policy as 'SRE'.

In the DfES document, sex education is defined as 'learning about physical, moral and emotional development'. The guidance states, 'It is about understanding the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health.'

Sex education is part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum in our school. When we inform our pupils through sex education about sexual issues, we do this with regard to morality and individual responsibility, and in a way that allows children to ask and explore moral questions. We do not use sex education as a means of promoting any form of sexual orientation.

We recognise that we have a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure the best for all pupils irrespective of disability, educational needs, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender identity, pregnancy, maternity, religion, sexual orientation or whether they are looked after children. As a result SRE needs to be sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils and may need to adapt and change as the pupils of the school change. Not only does the teaching need to be sensitive of these needs, but also to help the pupils realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours or prejudice-based language.

Whilst as a school we are aware we need to be mindful of and respectful to a wide variety of faith and cultural beliefs, and we will make every attempt to be appropriately sensitive; equally it is essential that young people still have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals. This must include clear, impartial scientific and factual information on matters such as; naming their body parts, puberty, menstruation, masturbation, the variety of family structures, gay marriage, gender identity, gender equality, sexuality, contraception, forced- marriage and FGM. Furthermore, all teaching should reflect the law as it applies to relationships, marriage, adoption and care.

We acknowledge that all young people deserve the right to honest, open and factual information to help better form their own beliefs and values, free from bias, judgement or subjective personal beliefs of those who teach them.

Rationale

The Department for Education defines relationships education as, *teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships and relationships with other peers and adults.*

We believe comprehensive relationship education is designed to help children to develop the skills to recognise and manage healthy relationships both online and in the real world. It is designed to build self-esteem and to explore personal identity. It is about helping children understand and make sense of the world they are growing up in; to recognise the differences and similarities

between their peers and their families; to understand the fact every human being is unique and has the right to be respected. There are many different family structures and all children have the right to feel safe.

Comprehensive relationship education has been shown to help keep children safe by allowing them to understand appropriate and inappropriate touching, to realise that their body is fantastic and belongs to them. It is about building the foundations of an understanding of consent and personal boundaries; in that no one has the right to touch you in a way you don't like but also the difference between public and private behaviours.

It is important for children to know the names and functions of their body and to be reassured it is natural to be curious about them. Indeed, by teaching children the correct terms for their private parts, children are proven to be safer from abuse.

In addition, we believe comprehensive relationship education helps children to develop their vocabulary and emotional literacy to enable them to talk about and manage their feelings. It helps children build their own support networks and the confidence to ask for help when they feel unsafe.

Aims and Objectives

Although The Relationships Education, Relationship & Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made Relationship Education compulsory in all primary schools, Sex education is currently **not** compulsory. However, the Department for Education continues to recommend that all primary schools should have a sex education programme tailored to the age and maturity of the pupils.

As set out in the guidance it is up to individual schools to determine whether they need to cover any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of their pupils. We, like many other schools already choose to teach some aspects of sex education and will continue to do so.

We recognise that some parents may be uncomfortable with the thought of their children receiving sex education in primary school. Equally, we recognise it is completely natural for children to have questions about sex, their bodies and to be curious about where they came from. In the age of information where children in primary school have access to the internet through mobile technology we believe it is better that children receive age appropriate answers from us than it being left to their peers or the internet.

In our school sex education is an opportunity to answer children's questions about where they came from, an opportunity to explore their own stories and to be clear about how a baby is conceived and formed as set out in human life cycle set out in the national curriculum for science. Furthermore, it should 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.

We believe that sex education should allow children a safe space to ask the questions they may have without shame or judgement. Evidence states that a graduated age-appropriate spiral curriculum is the best way of preventing the topic of sex, reproduction and private body parts of becoming taboo and children from becoming embarrassed by the topic.

We believe it is the duty of our school to give our young people the learning that will enable them to live safe, fulfilled and healthy lives. This includes ensuring that they have the skills to keep themselves safe from harm and develop positive and healthy relationships, free from exploitation pressure or abuse.

We teach children about:

- The physical development of their bodies as they grow into adults;
- The ways humans reproduce
- Respect for their own bodies and the importance of sexual activity as part of a committed, long-term and loving relationship
- The importance of family life
- Moral questions
- Relationship issues
- Respect for the views of other people
- Sexual abuse and what they should do if they are worried about any sexual matters

Context

We teach about sex in the context of the school aims and values. While sex education in our school means that we give the children information about sexual behaviour, we do this with an awareness of moral code, and of the values which underpin all our work.

We teach SRE on the understanding that:

- It is taught in the context of marriage and family life
- It is part of a wider process of social, personal, spiritual and moral education
- Children should be taught to have respect for their own bodies
- Children should learn about their responsibilities to others, and be aware of the consequences of sexual activity
- It is important to build positive relationships with others, involving trust and respect
- Children need to learn the importance of self-control

Curriculum Organisation

As a whole school, we teach children about relationships, and we encourage children to discuss issues.

We meet the learning objectives as set out in the Relationships Education, Relationship & Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 for primary schools with a whole school approach.

In Science lessons, in both Key Stages, teachers inform children about puberty and how a baby is born. For this aspect of our teaching we follow the guidance material found in the national scheme of work for Science. In Key Stage 1, we teach children about how animals, including humans, move, feed, grow and reproduce, and we also teach them about the main parts of the body.

Children learn to appreciate the fact that people are not all the same, and that we need to respect each other. In Key Stage 2, we teach about life processes, and the main stages of the human life cycle, in greater depth.

We have a whole school approach to Relationships Education within a systematic developmental procedure for enhancing social competence and understanding in children based on developing:

- Self-control
- Emotional understanding
- Positive self-esteem
- Relationships
- Interpersonal problem solving skills

This includes developing children's:

- Increased self-control - the ability to stop and think before acting when upset or confronted with a conflict situation. Lessons in this area also teach identification of problem situations through recognition of "upset" feelings.

- Attributional processes that lead to an appropriate sense of self-responsibility.
- Increased understanding and use of the vocabulary of logical reasoning and problem-solving, e.g., "if...then" and "why...because."
- Increased understanding and use of the vocabulary of emotions and emotional states; e.g., excited, disappointed, confused, guilty, etc. Increased use of verbal mediation.
- Increased ability to recognise and interpret similarities and differences in the feelings, reactions and points of view of self and others.
- Increased understanding of how one's behaviour affects others.
- Increased knowledge of, and skill in, the steps of social problem-solving: stopping and thinking; identifying problems and feelings; setting goals; generating alternative solutions; anticipating and evaluating consequences; planning, executing and evaluating a course of action; trying again if the first solution fails.
- Increased ability to apply social problem-solving skills to prevent and/or resolve problems and conflicts in social interactions.

Engagement of Children

We are aware that children are likely to have many questions that may occur at any time. Children tend to ask whatever is on their mind. We see this as a positive point and a sign that we have created a safe environment where children feel empowered to feed their natural curiosity and learn about themselves, their bodies and the world around them. However, we acknowledge that some parents may feel uncomfortable about how particular questions may be dealt with in class.

We believe children are better off receiving honest, open answers from safe adults in their lives, rather than it being left to the internet or older children with a smart phone. In the age of information, where children in primary have access to tablets, smart phones and the internet (often unsupervised) it is essential that we help children to recognise they are able to ask questions without judgement rather than searching for answers on the internet.

By tackling the topic in a matter of fact manner, without embarrassment means that we take the mystic allure out of the topic, making sex no longer the secret taboo. However uncomfortable a proposition that may be, it is far better than the alternative. For children these questions are not rude, they are simply signs of a healthy and natural curiosity. We can stop the topic becoming taboo and embarrassing and removing the stigma before it has had chance to form.

We believe that if children ask a question they deserve an answer. If ignored they merely build unnecessary barriers, making children think they have done something wrong; they are unlikely to ask again, and are instead left to seek their answers from less reliable or child friendly sources, due to shame. However uncomfortable the question may be, the thought is already in their head. It is much better we as safe adults take responsibility and tackle the question safely and age appropriately.

Staff will deal with children's questions age appropriately:

- Children will be praised for asking questions. We wish to encourage children to seek answers from safe adults.
- If a question is relevant to the whole class, we will answer it to the whole group.
- However, as with any other subject, there may occasionally, be the need to differentiate depending on children's knowledge and experience. Some children may need additional information or support compared to others.
- If a child asks a question that is not necessarily suitable for the entire class, we will respond, by saying: *"that is fantastic question, hold that thought, I am going to set everyone some work and I will come and talk to you and answer your question in a minute when everyone else is working."*

- If the member of staff doesn't have an answer or doesn't know, they will say so. There is no shame in not knowing the answer but the member of staff should make an effort to help the child to find the answer later.
- If the member of staff is not sure how best to answer a particularly tricky question, our suggested response is: *"That is a brilliant question, I would like to give you an equally brilliant answer, so let me have a think about it and once I know the best way to explain it clearly I will come back to you"*
- This will allow teaching staff time to think, seek help, advice or support from colleagues, or to speak to senior management.
- If a child asks a question we know parents may be uncomfortable with, staff may choose to delay answering the question (as above) until they have spoken to the parent/carer if possible and talk through their response.
- Teachers will answer questions, openly, honestly, scientifically and factually without relying on their own personal beliefs. Teachers will not be expected to answer personal questions about themselves or to ask direct personal questions of their students that could make either parties vulnerable.

The Role of Parents and Carers

The school is well aware that the primary role in child sex education lies with parents and carers. We therefore wish to build a positive and supporting relationship with the parents and carers of the children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and cooperation.

To promote this objective we:

- Answer any questions that parents or carers have about the SRE of their child
- Take seriously any issue that parents or carers raise with teachers or governors about this policy, or about arrangements for SRE in the school

Menstruation Statement

We recognise that the onset of menstruation can be a confusing or distressing time for children if they are not prepared. As a school we acknowledge we have a responsibility to prepare children for menstruation and make adequate and sensitive arrangements to help children manage their period. Especially children whose family may not be able to afford or will not provide sanitary products.

We recognise that period poverty exists in the UK and that some children are forced to avoid attending school if they are on their period, when they are unable to manage it sensitively. We do not want that to be the case in our school and will make every reasonable effort to support children to access their education and enjoy school.

Puberty is occurring earlier than ever before, and it is now not uncommon for children to start their periods whilst in primary school. For this reason we deliver puberty lessons to all children in years 5 & 6.

As part of these lessons children in years 5 & 6 will be told about 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.

Menstruation is a healthy biological function for 50% of our school. It should not be something that a person is made to feel embarrassed, shameful or be teased about. As a school we need to treat each other with respect and empathy and this includes changes that take place during puberty such as menstruation.

During lessons where puberty and menstruation are discussed, we will take the opportunity to highlight the location of sanitary bins available in school, and how these are to be used.

In school we have a menstruation kit available in year 4, 5 & 6 which contains sanitary products, spare underwear and plastic bags to wrap up underwear should there have been any accidents. Children will be made aware of where these are kept and how they can be accessed through designated members of staff, including lunchtime supervisors.

When school trips or residential visits are arranged for years 4, 5 & 6 provisions to deal with a child's period needs to be considered and added to the risk assessment and planned for.

Withdrawal from SRE Learning

We believe that successful teaching around SRE can only take place when parents and school work together. Especially, considering we both want children to grow up safe and happy in healthy relationships, with the ability to manage their emotions and speak up when they feel unsafe. Therefore, we are committed to working together with parents.

We endeavour to be transparent and give parents information about all the programmes and lessons we deliver around SRE as we recognise it can be a sensitive subject for some families for a number of reasons.

All new parents to our school will be given information about the SRE programmes we run as part of their induction to the school, including information of how they can get a copy of this policy.

We recognise the importance of parents knowing about the content of the lessons so they can carry on the conversations at home and have an opportunity to talk to their children about their own families, beliefs and values.

Parents retain the right to request their child is removed from some or all of the elements of sex education which go beyond the national curriculum for science. Maintained schools are required to teach about the main external body parts and changes to the human body as it grows from birth to old age, including puberty.

Should a parent decide that they do not wish their child to take part in lessons, we would ask that they first speak to their classroom teacher to discuss their concerns. Our teachers will happily show parents all the teaching material and context of any of our lessons and explain the reasons why any material is included in the programme. We will also highlight that whilst parents have the right to withdraw their child from these lessons, they do not have the right to withdraw other children from receiving these lessons. We believe it is better for children to hear from safe adults than to hear second hand from their class-mates at break-time.

If parents do decide to withdraw their child, they should inform the head who will find other provision for the child to engage in during the lesson. Currently, head teachers must comply with requests to withdraw from any non-statutory lessons in the programme.

Community Support

We encourage other valued members of the community to work with us to provide advice and support to the children with regard to health education. In particular, members of the local community, such as the school nurse, social workers, parent worker and other health professionals give us valuable support with our SRE programme.

Safeguarding

When teaching any sensitive topic, such as RSE which deals with family life, safe and appropriate touching, personal body parts and healthy relationships, we recognise the potential to uncover incidents of abuse through children's disclosures.

All members of staff who deliver any of our Relationship or Sex Education Programme, have statutory training around safeguarding children and are all aware of our school's safeguarding policy and procedures in the case of a disclosure or suspicion of a safeguarding concern.

It is our practice to review safeguarding procedures in team meetings before either programmes are delivered. Furthermore, if relevant, there may be conversations around protecting and supporting children for whom some of this work may make them vulnerable due to previous safeguarding concerns, past child protection investigations, ongoing concerns or changes in family or living situations if these may be triggered by scenarios or topics in their planned lessons.

We recognise that for children who may be vulnerable due to past or present abuse or changes in family situations, this type of work, whilst it may be sensitive, there may be needs to adapt the programme or offer additional support. It is also a protective factor in preventing further abuse, to help them make sense of their experiences and essential to help them develop skills and resilience to keep them safe in future.

Staff will refer any disclosures or concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (refer to Safeguarding Policy).

Assessment

Assessing SRE is an integral part of teaching and learning and central to good practice. It should be process orientated reviewing the way that techniques and skills are applied purposefully by pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and skills that they have developed during a particular unit. As assessment is part of the learning process it is essential that pupils are closely involved.

Teachers will use assessments to form a judgement as to whether each child has reached the targets for each key question in their year group. Evidence of work will be highlighted in children's books, on photographs, videos and notes on discussions with children etc. This will demonstrate achievement of objectives.

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring will support the self-evaluation process identifying areas of strength as well as those for development. The Phase Leader is responsible for the monitoring of this policy within their phase.

Areas for development will be incorporated into the School Development Plan as necessary.

Through monitoring the Phase Leader will:

- Ensure that there is clear progression throughout the Phase
- Analyse assessment data and pupil progress
- Identify any training needs and offer extra support and guidance to staff when it is appropriate
- Ensure that there are suitable resources to help with the teaching and learning of SRE

The Governing Board gives serious consideration to any comments from parents and carers about the SRE programme, and maintains a record of all such comments