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THE VALUES FOUNDATION

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Retaining Values in RSE: a Guide for Parents

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What is RSE and Who is this Guide for?

Relationships Education in primary schools and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in secondary schools will be compulsory from September 2020.

This guide is for **parents who hold faith and/or traditional family values**

This guide is also for **parents of children in faith schools AND parents of faith and/traditional family values who send their children to non-faith schools.**

What You Need to Know:

The Law, also known as “Regulations”, dictates that pupils must learn about:

- (i) safety in forming and maintaining relationships,
 - (ii) the characteristics of healthy relationships, and
 - (iii) how relationships may affect physical and mental health and well-being, and
- (a) the education is appropriate having regard to the **age** and **religious background** of the pupils.

The Department for Education (DfE) has published **Statutory Guidance** recommending what should be studied within RSE.

Some topics in the DfE Statutory Guidance go **beyond the letter of the law**.

The DfE’s Guidance clearly states that the teaching of RSE, must be done in an **age appropriate** and developmentally appropriate way and must have **regard for the religious background of the pupils and their families**.

Therefore, **schools can select what they teach** from the DfE Guidance and justify their selection regarding age and faith.

There is **no requirement to teach sex education** in primary school.

Parents can **opt out of sex ed** in secondary school for their child up to 3 terms before the pupil is 16 years of age.

So, before you make your enquiries:

- ✓ Make sure you know **what is law and what is a choice**.
- ✓ Remember that schools **must take into account the background of your child** when teaching RSE.

Parents' Responsibilities

As a parent, **you must find out:**

- ✓ what your child will be **learning in RSE**
- ✓ at what age RSE is taught and whether you think this is **age-appropriate**
- ✓ is the RSE in your school **coherent with your views and beliefs?**
- ✓ in primary school - is sex education provided?
- ✓ in secondary school - how can you **opt out of sex education** for your child if you wish to
- ✓ how the school promotes diversity and equality
- ✓ the school approach to gender identity
- ✓ the school attitude towards gender, changing rooms and toilets

This may influence **the school you choose** for your child.

Parents' Rights

Schools are **obliged to inform you** of their plans for teaching RSE including providing samples of schemes of work and resources.

You have a **legal right to be informed** about what is being taught.

Your opinions must be **taken into consideration**.

Remember: UK law protects the right of parents to guide the education of their children as fundamental and protected. This is particularly true of educational content which has a moral character; schools MUST NOT undermine the manner in which parents seek to bring up their children. Schools MUST respect the manner in which you seek to raise your children in accordance with your own religious or philosophical convictions.

Finally, **some important points:**

1. It is **up to the discretion of the school as to whether they teach about same-sex parents:** they are only obliged, under the Public Sector Equality Duty to do so if/when there is a same sex family in a particular class and then the duty only stretches to that class, not the entire school. This also applies to pupils, parents and teachers in the school.
2. There is **no obligation for any school to “teach” the Equality Act 2010.**
3. Nick Gibb, Minister for School Standards explained during the Parliamentary Question Period on 25 June 2019, that **primary schools are not required to teach LGBT elements.**¹

¹ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-06-25/debates/8F61FF43-BA5E-401D-A3AD-3B742236F757/ParentalInvolvementInTeachingEqualityAct>.