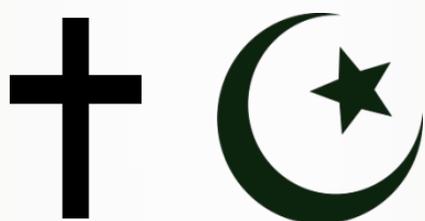


Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

Practical Guide to Faith Sensitivities for Schools



Creating faith-inclusive schools



June 2021



Kirklees Parents and Community Alliance

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- Jam-e-Masjid Abu Bakr - Huddersfield
- Pakistan Muslim Welfare Society - Batley
- The Peace Institute

We thank them for their dedication and support in developing and reviewing this document, notably their expert advice and encouragement throughout this challenging project, particularly the section on the Faith Sensitivities.

A special thank you to the KPCA Team who provided invaluable advice and contribution to the final shape of this document.

We pray to the Almighty, that this practical guide on Faith Sensitivities is helpful to all and serves the purpose for which it is intended and not misinterpreted.

This guide is intended to empower parents and school staff in both Primary and Secondary Schools. The guide is divided into seven sections consisting of four main areas as follows.

- a) The first four sections comprise of an introduction, Faith and Equality in the RSHE Guidance, Context and Consultation.
- b) Faith Sensitivities which comprise of religious facts.
- c) FAQs.
- d) Scenario.

It should be noted that the content of this guide is based on the dialogue with the parents who engaged with KPCA. Some people of faith may hold differing views. Child safety and welfare is always paramount therefore current Government guidance should be adhered to and parental consultation should always take place. This guide is not in any way an attempt to influence schools to adopt the teachings of faith schools or a request for special treatment. It is an effort to raise further awareness around the Faith Sensitivities on behalf of the parents in a bid for consistency.

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Information Reader Box

Document Purpose and Disclaimer	<p>For information only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This document does not constitute legal advice but best practice • All current Government Guidance should be followed including safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children • Specific advice from a legal professional should always be sought in relation to individual circumstances
Title	“Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), Practical Guide to Faith Sensitivities for Schools”
Date issued	June 2021
Review date	June 2022
Issued by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirklees Parents and Community Alliance (KPCA) • Kirklees Faith Partners
The need	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) In light of the recent events occurring in schools within the Kirklees area and elsewhere; the parents of the faith community in Kirklees strongly felt that there was a pressing need to support schools, assisting them to understand the Faith Sensitivities of the communities they serve. 2) Relationship Sex and Health Education (RSHE) introduced into UK schools from September 2020 states <u>“the religious background of all pupils must be taken into account when planning teaching, so that sensitive topics that need to be taught are appropriately handled.”</u>
Summary	<p>This practical guide has been produced to assist:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Schools to understand and highlight some of the Faith Sensitivities to be considered when delivering RSHE and other related subjects in schools with faith communities. 2) Parents in engaging positively with their schools.
Audience	<p>This document is primarily aimed at schools with pupils from faith backgrounds. It will be a useful source of reference for and not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing bodies of maintained schools (including schools with a sixth form) • Trustees or directors of academies and free schools • Proprietors of independent schools (including academies and free schools) • Management committees of pupil referral units (PRUs) • Teachers, other school staff and school nurses • Head teachers, principals and senior leadership teams • Local Authority Directors, Managers and other staff
Contact Details	<p>Kirklees Parents and Community Alliance (KPCA) c/o Al-Hikmah Centre, Track Road, Batley, WF17 7AA, UK kirkleespca@gmail.com</p>
Document Status	<p>This document may be reproduced and communicated without alteration, providing the source is acknowledged. Should there be any changes to the RSHE legislation or parental concern this guide document will be reviewed and updated.</p>
Key Word	<p>Unless otherwise specified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Faith” refers to Christianity and /or Islam • “Parents” means parents, carers and guardians • “DfE” means Department for Education • “School” means all schools with faith pupils • “RSHE Guidance” DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance

Reader feedback

We welcome any feedback particularly from schools to enable us to improve this guide.

Please complete and return to:

Address | Kirklees Parents and Community Alliance (KPCA) c/o IMWS Al-Hikmah Centre,
28 Track Road, Batley, West Yorkshire, WF17 7AA, UK

Email | kirkleespc@gmail.com

Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), Practical Guide to Faith Sensitivities for Schools

Name:

School / Organisation / Individual:

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

Circle as appropriate

1) I found this practical guide very useful

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree
nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

2) I was previously unaware of the Faith
Sensitivities

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree
nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

3) I will pass this guide to other
colleagues

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree
nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

4) What did you find most useful?

5) What did you find least useful?

6) How can we improve the guide?

7) Any other comments? _____

8) Please contact me to:

Discuss this practical guide

Arrange training

Other (please specify)

9) Any other comments: (use separate sheet if required)

1

Introduction

Modern-day Britain consists of numerous diverse family structures, many distinct communities, beliefs, religions, cultures and lifestyles. In Kirklees 67.9% of people identified as either Muslim or Christian.

(Source: ONS Census 2011)

In England & Wales 64.1% of people identified as either Muslim or Christian.

The faith commitments of faith pupils and their families encompass all aspects of everyday life and conduct, including daily life in school. Therefore, it is important that educators in schools have a good understanding of how they can respond positively in meeting the needs of faith pupils in relation to education.

Many schools have a cherished tradition of fostering an inclusive ethos which values and addresses the different needs of the communities they serve.

We at KPCA are convinced that with a reasonable degree of mutual understanding further progress can be made in responding positively and faith-inclusive of faith pupils, their parents, families and the local community.

With the introduction of the DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance for schools and more recently the events that have occurred in some schools within Kirklees and elsewhere, KPCA were approached and held extensive ongoing dialogue with numerous parents and the faith community. They have expressed their concerns and views about whether their particular faith backgrounds are being considered within schools. We gathered greater understanding and took their concerns and views into consideration in the preparation of this guide.

Parents consistently told us:

- There is an urgent need to support schools to understand their Faith Sensitivities
- There should be an urgent reassessment of the government's RSHE policy
- The DfE guidance has at times been misinterpreted, leading to a further divide
- They would have to consider seeking alternative schools
- They feared being marginalised for voicing their concerns

They fear for their children's:

- Mental wellbeing
- Physical wellbeing
- Loss of religious values

In Kirklees 67.9% of people identified as either Muslim or Christian



As a result of this engagement process, KPCA were urged by the parents and the faith community to produce a guide on behalf of the parents' faith perspective. The purpose of this practical guide is to promote greater understanding of their Faith Sensitivities and how they can be considered within schools under the guidelines set by the DfE.

This "Practical Guide to Faith Sensitivities for Schools" is presented for consideration to assist schools to navigate through the Faith Sensitivities and consider the individual needs of all pupils from religious backgrounds, so that no family or child feels isolated.

"Schools should ensure that the religious backgrounds of all pupils is taken into account when planning teaching (RSHE guidance)"

DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance.¹

This practical guide is primarily aimed for parents and schools within a catchment area of mainly faith families or any other schools with pupils of faith.

It is envisaged that this guide will be used for staff training. The Faith Sensitivities section can be used as a practical tool.

This practical guide has been developed in conjunction with many faith organisations throughout the UK to support schools around the Faith Sensitivities of the communities they serve.

When parents are made aware that schools are taking this practical guide into consideration, it should:

- Avoid recurrence of recent distressing events that have sadly and negatively affected children, parents, school staff and the community in the Kirklees area and elsewhere or future similar incidents
- Ensure all children from are safeguarded including those from faith families
- Empower school staff with matters sensitive to the faith of their pupils
- Ensure the process of local consultation with parents is much smoother

In practical terms, it should assist in building respectful relationships between all those concerned.

If there are any changes to the RSHE legislation or parental concerns this guide will be reviewed and updated accordingly.

Parents stated - Children and young people should be offered a RSHE/PSHE and a whole school curriculum which is:

- **Age-appropriate, equitable and balanced**
- **Free from emotive, persuasive materials and influence from political pressure groups**
- **Without having their faith (A protected characteristic in the Equalities Act) ridiculed, insulted and vilified**

¹ [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

2

Faith and Equality in the RSHE Guidance

The Statutory Guidance for RSHE published by the Department of Education (DfE) in July 2019² outlines what schools need to cover from September 2020. Under the new regulations' schools **must**:

Consult Parents:

The following should be considered:

"Parents are the first teachers of their children." ([Ibid](#), page 17 para. 40)

"All schools should work closely with parents when planning and delivering these subjects." ([Ibid](#), page 17 para. 41)

"Schools should ensure that parents know what will be taught and when." ([Ibid](#), page 17 para. 41)

During the consultation process schools should also ensure that, *"they provide examples of the resources that they plan to use"*. ([Ibid](#), page 13 para. 24)

Ensure that the curriculum is age-appropriate:

"...Schools should ensure that their teaching is sensitive, age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate and delivered with reference to law." ([Ibid](#), page 15 para. 35)

Additionally, under the Secretary of State Foreword section, it states:

"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." ([Ibid](#), page 4)

Ensure teaching is sensitive to faith and belief:

"The religious background of all pupils must be taken into account when planning teaching, so that sensitive topics that need to be taught are appropriately handled." ([Ibid](#), page 12 para. 20)

"All schools may teach about faith perspective." ([Ibid](#), page 12 para. 21)

Legal Duties

The Public Sector Equality Duty³ requires all schools in England, Scotland and Wales to:

- Eliminate discrimination, including on the grounds of religious belief
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relationships between different groups of people



Fundamental British Values

Schools in the UK are required to promote fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.⁴

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805781/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/review-of-public-sector-equality-duty-steering-group>

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/schedule/made>, the Education (Independent School Standard) Regulations 2014, Part 2, para.

3

Context

The role of Religion or Belief in Education

We live in a society with an ever widening and diverse array of cultures, religions, lifestyles, morals and beliefs. All these legally should be offered equal respect.

Over the years in the UK, levels of awareness of different cultures, religions and beliefs have grown. In the main, equitable treatment of individuals and inter-faith relations have improved very positively. However, despite this discrimination on the grounds of culture, religion or belief, religious intolerance and prejudice still exist in certain areas.

Legal requirements

Schools must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Under this Act schools must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of any protected characteristic including religion or belief.



The Equality Act 2010 sets out the 9 protected characteristics

- 1) Age
- 2) Disability
- 3) Gender reassignment
- 4) Marriage or Civil Partnership
- 5) Pregnancy or Maternity
- 6) Race
- 7) Religion or Belief
- 8) Sex
- 9) Sexual orientation



DfE FAQ's

“Your child’s school will have flexibility to deliver the content in a way that is age and developmentally appropriate and sensitive to the needs and religious background of its pupils.”

DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance⁵

5(a); Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools, Department

⁵ [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_and_Health_Education_guidance_(publishing.service.gov.uk))

4

Consultation

Government's definition of consultation

Consultation is a process by which an organisation over a specific period seeks the opinions of relevant people about activities or proposals to better understand their views and take them into account when making final decisions⁶.

RSHE is best delivered with cooperation and support from parents. However, Schools are statutorily mandated to deliver specific content set out in the DfE RSHE Guidance.

School's existing consultation mechanisms

Most schools have existing mechanisms in place to consult and engage with parents. These methods are valued and can be enhanced further given the parents' Faith Sensitives around RSHE.

It is beneficial to create and maintain an open dialogue between parents, relevant faith communities, stakeholders and teachers as early as possible.

The DfE statutory guidance states:

"Parents should be given every opportunity to understand the purpose and content of Relationships Education and RSHE. Good communication and opportunities for parents to understand and ask questions about the school's approach help increase confidence in the curriculum." [Ibid Page 17 para 42](#)

Meaningful Consultation

Ordinarily, schools are not required to consult parents on any other aspect of the school's curriculum; however, as RSHE is a sensitive subject for many communities the government has mandated consultation.

Therefore, schools should involve a range of stakeholders, share their curriculum and be prepared to seek their views on subjects about which they know parents, have strongly held beliefs (*Ibid* - page 3).

To be effective consultation should:

1. Be genuine which brings about involvement.
2. Help to ensure that everyone involved understands what is being taught, when and how.
3. Give parents and the community reassurance and the knowledge that they are involved in developing and reviewing the policy.
4. Help to dispel myths about the subjects.
5. Create an opportunity to build stronger relationships with parents and the community.
6. Allow parents and faith leaders to sit in mock RSHE lessons.
7. Allow faith leaders and religious clergies to assist in the delivery of sensitive areas of RSHE.
8. Listen to the concerns of the parents and be open to making appropriate changes before finalising the policies

⁶https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836503/6.5987_DfE_Consult-Paper_Relationships-Parental_A4-P_Op4_v7_weba.pdf (Page 2)

Types of engagements and consultations

Types of engagements		Recommendation
Engagement for Information only	Letting stakeholders know what will happen in RSHE only.	X
Engagement for consideration (Sounding)	Letting stakeholders know what will be covered in RSHE and what scope would be for their comment only.	X
Engagement for involvement	Seeking stakeholders' views and listening to comments on the RSHE policy as a mere tick box exercise.	X
Meaningful consultation	Involving stakeholders in the development of the RSHE policy and its delivery. Taking the religious background and age-appropriateness of the pupils into account.	✓

Suggestions on who to consult

- 01 Parent Steering Group
- 02 Community Group
- 03 Faith Leaders
- 04 Group Parent Meetings
- 05 Individual Parents Meeting
- 06 Age-appropriate Pupil View

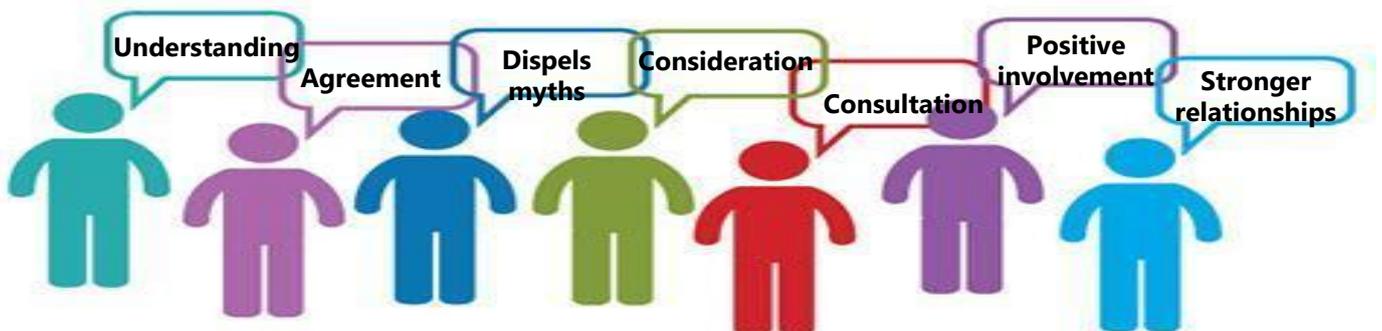
Parents feel Meaningful Consultation should be open to making changes

Example - School informs parents of a resource intended to be used in a year 4 RSHE class. Parents find the use of the intended resource:

- Age-inappropriate.
- Does not take their faith background into account.

For the consultation to be meaningful the school should be open to making changes.

["When and how content is taught is ultimately a decision for the school." \(Relationships education, relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education: FAQs](#)



5

Matters Sensitive to Faith Communities

Sensitivities regarding the teaching of RSHE and related subjects will differ from family to family. The RSHE curriculum has some welcomed and valuable aspects covered. However, concerns from the faith communities are likely to arise. In general, the concerns of faith communities will be in regards to:

1. Lack of transparency from schools about what they teach, when they teach and how they teach RSHE.
2. Use of resources.
3. Age-appropriateness.
4. Pupils' religious background taken into account.
5. Safeguards to ensure that schools do not introduce sex education content into Relationships Education lessons when parents have withdrawn their children from sex education.



Below are the Faith Sensitivities composed after engagement with parents, faith leaders and the faith communities across Kirklees and UK wide.

Age appropriateness

The sensitivities due to the age at Primary level are heightened. This list is not meant to be exhaustive of all the sensitivities. Some families from faith backgrounds may hold differentiating views.

Encourage children to be confident

The school curriculum, including RSHE should not “encourage” learners to become something they are not. Parents feel that the school should support their children to be confident and feel accepted whilst respecting those who differ.

Faith perspective always be taught

Parents expressed that their faith perspective should always be put forward to their children when teaching opposing beliefs or values for the teaching to be equitable and pluralistic.

Support available form KPCA

KPCA has a panel of faith scholars and faith academics who can support pupils from faith backgrounds, on all matters regarding relationships and sex education. Local Mosque Imams, Church Priests, other faith scholars and faith academics will be able to offer guidance (if required). For further support see back of this document.

“RSHE should support children to be self-confident whilst respecting those who are different.”



Sensitivities relating to: The Body

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parent feedback
Naming private body parts or illustrations of genitals (male or female)	<p>Using biological names of the private parts at a young age is considered age-inappropriate.</p> <p>Islamic scriptures do not use biological names.</p> <p><i>(Quran 7:26)</i> and numerous Hadith</p> <p>NOTE: The Quran can only be fully understood when explained in conjunction with authentic Hadith and Ijma.</p>	<p>Using biological names of private parts at a young age may be considered age - inappropriate by some families.</p>	<p>Faith communities understand the importance of keeping children Safe. It is imperative to teach children that they have a right not be abused by other people or to be taken advantage of.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 1. The Body</p>
Self-Touching or providing instructions on how to self-stimulate	<p>Providing instructions on self-touch or self-stimulate contradicts Islamic teachings.</p> <p><i>(Quran 23:5)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>	<p>Some Christians may find discussing self-touching to be age-inappropriate at primary school age.</p>	<p>There is no requirement in the DfE RSHE guidance to teach this topic in schools.</p>
Puberty education	<p>Puberty is covered when age appropriate, children should not be burdened beyond their capacity.</p> <p><i>(Quran 2:286)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>	<p>Puberty is covered when age appropriate.</p> <p>All teachings to consider Faith Sensitivities as outlined.</p>	<p>When age appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puberty should be covered factually and scientifically • Male staff teaching the boys and female staff teaching the girls • Notify parents in advance of teaching • Teaching to be Faith Sensitive
Body image	<p>Showing photographs, pictures, cartoons, or online nude images of other people to counteract negative body image contradicts Islamic teachings.</p> <p><i>(Quran 24:30)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		



Sensitivities relating to: Relationships

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parent feedback
Pre-marital relationships	<p>Premarital relationships are against the key tenets of faith and are prohibited.</p> <p>The process of finding a life partner is very carefully laid down in the holy text.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:32)</i> <i>(Quran 30:21)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>	<p>The Bible talks about sex before marriage being wrong and not conforming to the blueprint for marriage as set out in the scriptures.</p> <p><i>(See the Book of Genesis)</i></p>	<p>For some Christians and for all Muslims sex before marriage' is prohibited.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 2. Relationships and Intimate Relationships</p>
Same-sex and bi-sexual relationship	<p>Sexual relationships are only valid in the context of marriage between a man and a woman as stated in the holy text.</p> <p>In terms of discrimination, faith teachings all indicate that people should be able to live their lives without fear of persecution.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:32)</i> <i>(Quran 7:81)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>	<p>The Bible says that same-sex relationships are forbidden.</p> <p>In terms of discrimination, faith teachings all indicate that people should be able to live their lives without fear of persecution.</p> <p><i>(Leviticus 18:22)</i></p>	<p>Some Christians have taken a more liberal view and are happy to accept same-sex relationships.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 2. Relationships and Intimate Relationships</p>



Sensitivities relating to: Intimate Relationships

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parents feedback
Sex outside marriage	<p>Sex outside marriage is against the key tenets of faith.</p> <p>Marriage is a divinely ordained partnership between a man and a woman. Preservation of lineage is very important in faith communities.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:32)</i> <i>(Quran 30:21)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>	<p>The Bible talks about sex before marriage being wrong and not conforming to the blueprint for marriage as set out in the scriptures.</p> <p><i>(See the Book of Genesis)</i></p>	<p>For some Christians and all Muslims sex before marriage is prohibited.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 2. Relationships and Intimate Relationships</p>
Sex education	<p>Sex Education is age-inappropriate at primary age and children should not be burdened beyond their capacity.</p> <p><i>(Quran 2:286)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>	<p>Sex Education may be considered age inappropriate at primary age by some Christians.</p>	<p>Parents have an automatic right to withdraw their children from sex education lessons in primary schools up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16.⁷</p> <p>After this point the subject matter can be delivered Faith Sensitive.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 2. Relationships and Intimate Relationships</p>
Use of explicit graphic sexual materials	<p>To use explicit graphic sexual materials or encourage discussion of sexual experiences or fantasies is inappropriate and goes against the tenets of faith.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:32)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>	<p>Some Christians may consider the use of explicit graphic sexual materials or to encourage discussion of sexual experiences and fantasies as inappropriate.</p>	

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-fags> - "Parents will continue to have a right to request to withdraw their child from sex education delivered as part of RSE in secondary schools which, unless there are exceptional circumstances, should be granted up to three terms before their child turns 16. At this point, if the child themselves wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements for this to happen in one of the three terms before the child turns 16 - the legal age of sexual consent."

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parents feedback
Establish abstinence before marriage	<p>Sexual relationships outside the context of marriage between a man and a woman are against the key tenets of faith.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:32)</i> <i>(Quran 24:31)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>	<p>Within the Christian faith sex outside of marriage is discouraged. Sex should be practiced within a lifelong committed relationship.</p>	<p>For further details see FAQs 2. Relationships and Intimate Relationships</p>
Promoting the concept of: “If sexual behavior is consensual between adults, “where no one is harmed” is ok	<p>Consent by definition is not the only moral value by which sexual relationships are determined. Also, many prohibited acts fall under this theory. i.e. incest, prostitution.</p> <p>Sexual relationships are only valid in the context of marriage with mutual consent.</p> <p>Part of a healthy marital sexual relationship is the mutual-pleasure experienced by both husband and wife.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:32)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>		<p>Parents understand the importance of teaching young people that sexual contact without consent is illegal whatever the age of the people involved. If someone does not give consent and a person still engages in sexual acts with them, this is a criminal offence.</p>
“Normalising heterosexual promiscuity”	<p>Sex outside marriage goes against the key tenets of faith.</p> <p><i>(Quran 33:35)</i> <i>(Quran 17:32)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>		<p>For further details see FAQs 2. Relationships and Intimate Relationships</p>



Sensitivities relating to: Gender

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parent feedback
Gender identity and gender reassignment	<p>The Quran states that God has created “male and female” as a complementary pair with defined roles and each honored equally in the eyes of God.</p> <p><i>(Quran 92:3)</i> <i>(Quran 49:13)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>	<p>The Bible says that God created male and female.</p> <p><i>(Genesis 1: 27)</i></p>	<p>School should not reinforce harmful stereotypes. Parents would like to be informed on any decisions regarding a school’s treatment of their child, in line with the school’s safeguarding policy and the statutory guidance.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 3. Gender</p>
To purposely adopt the appearance of the opposite gender	<p>Islam prescribes dress requirements for both men and woman with the aim of consistently maintaining morality without compromising the integrity of men or women.</p> <p><i>(Quran 59:7)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>	<p>As above however with specific reference to</p> <p><i>(Deuteronomy 22:5)</i></p>	<p>For further details see FAQs 3. Gender</p>
Stereotyping	<p>In terms of spiritual status and human rights, both men and women are equal in God’s sight.</p> <p><i>(Quran 5:8)</i> <i>(Quran 49:13)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>		<p>Promoting to adopt traits of the opposite sex in order to break stereotypes goes against the teachings of the faith.</p>



Sensitivities relating to: Resources

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parents feedback
Use of faith insensitive resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Books ● Images ● Diagrams ● Media ● Websites ● External agencies 	<p>It is not acceptable to use faith insensitive materials.</p> <p><i>(Quran 24:30)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>	<p>It is not acceptable to use faith insensitive materials.</p>	<p>This includes referring to or directing children to faith inappropriate resources, websites, materials or outside entities.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 4. Resources</p>
The use of caricature, image or any depiction of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)	<p>There is a prohibition in depicting the Prophet (ﷺ).</p> <p><i>(Quran 42:11)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		<p>For further details see FAQs 4. Resources</p>



Sensitivities relating to: Health and Wellbeing

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parent feedback
Sexual Health Secondary School	<p>Faith recognises that sexual health is an important topic.</p> <p><i>(Quran 2:195)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>	<p>Faith recognises that sexual health is an important topic.</p>	<p>The compulsory teaching of sexual health within the national science curriculum should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be age appropriate. 2. Be medically and legally accurate. 3. Consider similar Faith Sensitivities as outlined in this guide.
Abortion	<p>Islam protects all life as a creation of the almighty. The fetus in the womb is protected by Islam as a Human life.</p> <p>Abortion is permissible in extremely limited cases.</p> <p><i>(Quran 6:151 and 81:9)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>	<p>The Bible teaches that all human life is created in God's image and so is intrinsically valuable from conception. Christians therefore should seek to defend the sanctity of life.</p>	<p>The faith community would refer to Medical Professionals for further advice.</p>
Offering young people contraception in schools	<p>It is against the tenets of faith to normalise premarital sexual activity.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:32)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>	<p>Christians would acknowledge that sex should not be encouraged where young people are underage but that teaching about the use of contraception is to be encouraged to reduce the chance of unwanted pregnancy when legal.</p>	<p>Parents would like to be informed if their children are being offered contraception in school.</p>
Introducing or normalising unhealthy sexual behavior and endorsing early experimentation	<p>Sex outside of marriage goes against the tenets of faith.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:32)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		<p>For further details see FAQs 2. Relationships and Intimate Relationships</p>

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parent feedback
SEND Children	<p>SEND children require tailored extra support and care.</p> <p><i>(Quran 2:286)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		
Personal Hygiene	<p>Cleanliness is half of faith. It is a religious obligation to cleanse after attending to toiletry needs.</p> <p><i>(Quran 5:6)</i> <i>(Quran 9:108)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		<p>There is a direct correlation between health and mental wellbeing.</p> <p>Where required, schools could provide dedicated water containers in toilets to ensure personal hygiene in addition to toilet paper.</p>
Changing in front of others	<p>Changing in front of others is immodest.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:32)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		<p>There is a direct correlation to health and mental wellbeing. This will protect all children so that they can feel safe and respected.</p> <p>Should they choose to do so, children should be allowed to dress modestly throughout the school day.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 1.2. The Body</p>



Sensitivities relating to: Safeguarding

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parents feedback
Online safety- all online content	<p>In Islam all children have a right to dignity and protection from abuse and harm. Parents have been given this responsibility by God.</p> <p><i>(Quran 66:6)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		<p>In a bid to teach children and young people the dangers of being online, showing of pornographic, nude cartoons, images, videos or literature goes against the tenets of faith.</p> <p>Teaching should be age appropriate.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 6. Safeguarding</p>



Sensitivities relating to: Cross Curricular Teaching

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parents feedback
Cross-Curricular Teaching	<p>Islam is a complete way of life. The religious obligations are observed throughout daily life.</p> <p><i>(Quran 2:208)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		<p>Cross-curricular teaching should consider similar Faith Sensitivities as outlined.</p>



Sensitivities relating to: Spiritual and Moral Inclusivity

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parents feedback
Worship during school hours	<p>The ablution, five daily prayers and fasting are obligatory for Muslims at a prescribed age and time.</p> <p><i>(Quran 4:103)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		<p>There is a direct correlation to health and mental wellbeing. All schools should have a designated “quiet” area for prayer accessible by all faiths.</p> <p><u>Ablution</u> Children can use the existing washing facilities.</p> <p><u>Worship</u> For worship only a small amount of clean space is required. Any non-traffic clean space will suffice. If required children can be asked to bring their own prayer mats.</p>
Parental Rights	<p>Children are God’s trust given to the parents. Parents are accountable for this trust. Parents are responsible for their moral, ethical and religious teachings. Therefore, parents are instructed to become involved in all aspects of the child’s learning and development.</p> <p><i>(Quran 66:6)</i> and numerous Hadith</p>		<p>For further details see FAQs 5.1 Health and Wellbeing</p>
Celebrating or promoting differential characteristics	<p>Respect for all as Children of Adam (ﷺ) is the most important virtue in Islam. Islam states that Muslims are</p>		<p>There is a line between teaching respect for others and encouraging children to take on or affirm</p>

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parents feedback
	<p>to respect the rights of all individuals. However, Muslims are prohibited to imitate.</p> <p><i>(Quran 17:70)</i> <i>(Quran 49:13)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>		<p>characteristics that are contradictory to their own belief system.</p>



Sensitivities relating to: Questioning and Reasoning

Sensitivity	Islamic Faith Perspective	Christian Faith Perspective	Parent feedback
Questioning and reasoning	<p>Islam encourages independent thought; however, the fundamental creed will always remain unchanged and the human intellect is secondary to the divine revelation.</p> <p><i>(Quran 4:82)</i> <i>(Quran 16:43)</i> <i>(Quran 47:24)</i> <i>and numerous Hadith</i></p>		<p>Age-appropriate questions should be sensitively addressed taking into account faith and belief. Respectful disagreement should be accepted. The school's policy should cover how the school handles sensitive questions. Education should be balanced and fair without compelling thought or expression.</p> <p>For further details see FAQs 8. Questioning and Reasoning</p>

6



Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a list of questions KPCA have been asked by teachers, pupils and parents. The answers have been provided to KPCA via extensive engagement with parents, faith leaders and the community.

1. The Body

1.1 Is it necessary to teach the names of the private body parts to young children?

Schools inform us that naming private body parts keeps children safe from abuse. Faith families teach children the scientific names of the private parts when they deem it age appropriate to do so. This is done so without the use of explicit materials, drawing self or opposite sexual private parts, using media, pictures, drawings, modelling or showing explicit images of the bodily private parts.

Faith families' place great emphasis on modesty. Therefore, parents feel that breaking down the child's natural sense of reserve and modesty may have the opposite effect of what it is set out to do. Young children have a natural sense of shyness which is considered healthy. The NSPCC announced a 29% increase in children seeking help from Childline due to peer-on-peer sexual abuse⁸.

Childline counselling sessions about sexual abuse in the family tripled during the lock down⁹. These alarming figures emphasise the urgent need to educate children on how they can keep themselves safe and to ensure that when abuse does happen, perpetrators are effectively brought to justice.

Faith families feel that the NSPCC Pantosaurus Pants resource (version without private parts naming) is an age-appropriate and an effective resource to educate young children on how to keep themselves safe. Parents do not feel that creating an atmosphere in the classroom where young children are talking amongst themselves and their teachers openly about their own, or opposite sex's private parts and looking at pictures or images of private parts with each other helps in maintaining a child's natural sense of reserve and modesty. This could possibly lead to doing more harm than good.

The NSPCC Pantosaurus resource "Talk PANTS song and animation" (version without private parts naming) can be used to safeguard children¹⁰.

⁸ <https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2019/10/04/what-is-peer-on-peer-abuse/>

⁹ <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2020/child-sexual-offences-rise/>

¹⁰ [PANTS resources for schools and teachers | NSPCC Learning](#)

1.2 How would faith parents want the school to respect their child's right to privacy whilst changing and showering?

Changing, showering and toileting facilities should allow for privacy and be safe.

2. Relationships and Intimate Relationships

2.1 Why are faith parents concerned about their young children learning about sex and sexuality?

For faith families, sex and sexuality of a person is a private matter and a person is not recognised for one's sexuality. Teaching children about any types of sexual labels or gender identity / reassignment when it is not developmentally appropriate for their age and maturity is considered age- inappropriate.

Every child is unique and develops at a different rate. The parent's main concern is the compromising of their religious and moral values, teaching children too much too soon and more worryingly without parental knowledge of the content.

The consensus from parents is that they have concerns about how, when and by whom their young children will learn about sex and sexuality. They want schools to clearly define the mandatory and non-mandatory aspects of the National Science curriculum, Relationship Education, Sex Education and Health Education so that they have a clear understanding of the statutory and non-statutory aspect of the curriculum.

The compulsory elements of the RSHE Curriculum, which all schools must teach within the school years should follow meaningful consultation and 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 of the DfE guidance are appropriately handled. Parents stated that all teaching should be age appropriate, safe, factual, scientific, legal and that the faith perspective of pupils should always be put forward when teaching differing views. *“Effective RSHE does not encourage early sexual experimentation”¹¹ and “particularly at primary level, schools should be careful not to expose children to over-sexualised content”¹²*

Faith parents feel that going beyond the family structures within the cohort of the pupils in the classroom and teaching young children about adult concepts of sexuality and sexual labels, is considered age inappropriate. As they feel this does not take their religious background into account.

2.2. Isn't it better for children to learn about sex and sexuality from teachers as they are the professionals?

Faith communities believe children are born with a natural disposition. Parents are best placed to judge the age appropriateness of their children. They know when their children are mentally and emotionally able to understand adult concepts of sex and sexuality.

¹¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908013/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf. (DfE Guidance, page 25, Para 70)

¹² Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Knowing that children come from families where parents hold religious beliefs, schools should take their religious background into account. The way they broach these topics must be sensitive and should not delve in theological discussions which claim that relationships which contravene their faith are permitted by their religion.

2.3. What is the faith parents' perspective on teaching relating to Marriage?

The Abrahamic faiths and some other faiths stipulate that sexual relationships are valid only between a man and a woman in the context of marriage. The faith teachings specify that all of mankind are of God's creation and Children of Adam (ﷺ) and brothers and sisters in humanity, deserving respect and kindness.

Parents feel that the subject of marriage should be covered after parental consultation and at an age when young people are intellectually capable of understanding the law.

Faith parents understand that marriage is a subject that may incidentally arise in the classroom by children in relation to their home setting. Parents felt that when marriage is covered it should be in a legal, sensitive, reasonable, respectful and in a balanced way. Teaching should be based on facts and should enable pupils to understand how the law applies to marriage.

Parents expressed that whenever a differing belief is mentioned the faith perspective of pupils should also be put forward. This can be done in the following way: -

“The Abrahamic faiths and some other faiths and some people of no faith hold the moral view that marriage is only valid between a man and a woman”.

2.4. Why does religion discriminate against people who are LGBT?

Religious texts and teaching have been in existence since God created Adam and Eve (ﷺ). People of faith choose to follow their faith teachings which is a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010. If people choose an alternative lifestyle to the faith norms, that is a personal choice. Religious people do not dictate how others choose to live their lives.

In terms of discrimination, faith teachings all indicate that people should be able to live their lives without fear of persecution.

2.5 Some Primary schools do not teach about sex; what is wrong with reading simple books about different families?

Parents feel that having primary school children read simple books about sexuality is age-inappropriate and goes beyond teaching tolerance and respect.

Every child in the class should feel safe, included and welcome. Going beyond the family structures within the cohort of the pupils in the classroom and teaching young children about adult concepts of sexuality and sexual labels, is considered age inappropriate by faith families. Parents feel this does not take their religious background into account.

3. Gender

3.1 Will gender reassignment and identity be covered?

Parents have great concerns over schools teaching young children about gender identity or reassignment. *While teachers should not suggest to a child that their non-compliance with gender stereotypes means that either their personality or their body is wrong and in need of changing, teachers should always seek to treat individual student with sympathy and support*¹³.

Children go through many phases that do not necessarily manifest into adulthood. As mentioned above, every child in the class should feel safe, included and welcome. Going beyond the family structures within the cohort of the pupils in the classroom and teaching primary age children about gender reassignment or identity is considered age in-appropriate by faith families.

Teachers are respected educational professionals, but this subject requires professionals in the field of medicine, theology and psychology.

In terms of discrimination, faith teachings all indicate that people should be able to live their lives without fear of persecution.

4. Resources

4.1 Why do Muslims find the use of a caricature or any pictorial depiction of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) unacceptable?

1.8 billion Muslims do not use any pictorial depiction of any Prophet or God. Therefore, Muslim children have not and would not like to see any image, picture or drawing of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). For Muslims respecting the Prophets is not just part of their Islamic identity, but the very fabric of who they are and who they see themselves to be. It gives meaning to their life.

Muslim parents and the Muslim community also have serious concerns around the use of the resource that portrays the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a terrorist which has injudiciously been used in few schools around the UK. Muslims try to emulate the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in their lives, so this is a living tradition and not just part of some distant history. For Muslim children to see an inflammatory, mocking, stereotypical caricature of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), any Prophets or Virgin Mary (ﷺ) has a very negative impact on their mental wellbeing. Therefore, it is important when choosing resources to safeguard children from becoming marginalised or being victimised.

Using resources which are inflammatory and humiliate any child does not promote tolerance or respect. This does not help to safeguard the children, eliminate discrimination, foster good relations and create community cohesion or trusting relationships. They spread fear, hatred and bullying.

¹³ Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

5. Health and Wellbeing

5.1. Why do parental rights matter in the education of children?

People of faith believe that children are a trust given to them and a gift from God Almighty. Parents will be held accountable for this trust. They are essentially responsible for the moral, ethical and religious teaching of their children. When parents and teachers work in partnership, it will help to create an environment of respect and trust that children hold for both authorities. This will lead to better educational outcomes, mental wellbeing, happiness and security.

5.2. Are people of faith who hold concerns about what their children are taught in RSHE religious extremists?

People have followed faith since the beginning of time. To imply that all parents who have concerns about what their children are taught in school are extremists, contravenes their human rights. Some parents feel that if they voice their concerns on religious grounds about what and when their young children are being taught, they are being demonised, marginalised and silenced. Many parents have been scared to come forward and speak about their concerns for those very reasons.

During our extensive engagement process, KPCA have been made aware that some schools consider parents and the community who have raised concerns about what their children are taught in schools as being religious extremists. It has been implied that they may be referred to PREVENT¹⁴. We have facilitated psychological and spiritual support for these parents and asked them to come forward and raise their concerns. However, they have continued to hold reservations due to the fear of victimisation of them and their children.

Religion is one of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. There are safeguards in place in the RSHE guidance¹⁵. If people of faith feel their rights are not being considered, then they should make appropriate peaceful representation without fear or prejudice. KPCA and its partners are happy to support parents if they find themselves in this predicament.

6. Safeguarding

6.1. Does online safety include discussions around pornography?

To ask children to distinguish between different types of porn is considered highly inappropriate for faith families. There is also a danger of children and young people searching for these terms on the internet which is deemed unacceptable by faith parents. (Please refer to “online safety” section in Faith Sensitivities).

¹⁴ Prevent is about safeguarding people and communities from the threat of terrorism. Prevent is one of the four elements of CONTEST, the Government’s counter-terrorism strategy. It aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
<https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2019/12/19/prevent-and-channel-factsheet/>

¹⁵ (DfE guidance, page 12, para 19) “ensuring that a good understanding of pupils’ faith background and positive relationships between the parents and the local faith communities help to create a constructive context for the teaching of these subjects”

6.2. What does faith teach about bullying?

Faith stipulates to:

- Not **mock and bully** others
- Not **backbite**
- Not **ridicule** by **offensive nicknames**
- Not **slander**

People of faith believe that **any** form of bullying should never be tolerated and whenever an incident of bullying occurs it should be dealt with immediately and appropriately.

6.3. Is there a problem with race or religious bullying? Is the student body most likely to face race or religious discrimination in the wider world?

Parents feel that the school's anti bullying policy should reflect and address the above concern. For example, where pupils are from faith or race backgrounds, the school could take positive action on supporting these pupils in school and the disadvantages they may face in the wider world.

For example: -

The anti-bullying policy could address Islamophobia, Christianophobic racist or other religious bullying.

It is also with great sadness that parents have expressed at times they have felt bullied. They have been the victim of derogatory remarks, like being labelled bigots and homophobic. Parents have felt that expressing concern for their own children has led to others making them feel isolated as a family and this type of humiliating bullying would result in creating a further divide. It should be noted here that the opposite is also true. Some schools have been excellent in communicating with the parents and have created RSHE policies and chosen appropriate resources for the school curriculum after meaningful consultations.

7. Inclusivity

7.1. Do Schools have to teach certain topics because of the Equalities Act 2010?

Equality law requires schools not to discriminate in how they educate or treat pupils. It also requires all public bodies to be mindful of the need to foster good relations between people.

“The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires Ofsted, when exercising all our functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- *Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010*
- *Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it*
- *Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

Schools are not required to teach about all the protected characteristics in every year group; that is a matter for the school to decide, and how it plans its curriculum. However, the curriculum should be planned and delivered so that children develop age-appropriate knowledge and understanding during their time at the school. In secondary schools, this includes age-appropriate knowledge of the protected characteristics of sexual orientation and gender reassignment.¹⁶

The DfE's statutory guidance requires that all schools must:

- Take into account the age and religious background of all pupils and ensure that their teaching is appropriate to their age and religious background, to ensure that the topics outlined in the statutory guidance are appropriately handled
- Comply with the [relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010](#), including that they: Must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils by treating them less favorably because they have one or more of the protected characteristics.
- Ensure that the materials used to support teaching are appropriate for **the age and maturity of pupils and sensitive to their needs.**
- Ensure that the **needs of all pupils are appropriately met**, and all pupils understand the importance of equality and respect.
- Ensure that teaching is sensitive, **and age-appropriate** in approach and content.
- **Work closely with parents in all cases when planning and delivering the subjects, ensuring that parents know what will be taught and when**, and clearly communicate the fact that parents have the right to request that the child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. (DfE RSHE Guidance)

As Schools are not required to teach about all the protected characteristics in every year group; Faith families often have questions around how the school is: -

- Ensuring the **needs** of all pupils are appropriately met?
- Taking their **religious backgrounds** into account?
- Working closely with parents when planning and delivering of these subjects?
- Building positive relationships with the local faith communities? (As these helps to create a constructive context for the teaching of these subjects).
- Whether the school is teaching about the faith perspective of the pupils or reflecting on the faith teachings about certain topics?
- What the school deems as age-appropriate and why?

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-teaching-of-the-protected-characteristics-in-schools/inspecting-teaching-of-the-protected-characteristics-in-schools>

8. Questioning and Reasoning

8.1 Schools have been teaching about sexuality and sexual orientation for many years. Why is this suddenly an issue with parents?

Previously, most parents were unaware of when and how these topics were covered. This may be because there was no mandatory requirement for consulting. Since the government has now mandated RSHE, parents have become more aware.

8.2. The school is not a faith school; should non-faith schools take the religious backgrounds of their pupils into account?

The RSHE guidance is absolutely clear, the religious backgrounds **MUST** be taken into account. Children have a right to bring their whole selves to school. The faith of a person is part of their identity and makes them who they are.

This practical guide has been developed after consultation with relevant stakeholders. Many parents of the faith community have urged KPCA to develop this guide to voice their concerns.

At times they have felt afraid that their long cherished and established relationship with the school would be negatively affected, have lacked confidence or were unable to communicate their questions with regards to the school policies and resources due to a language or other barrier.

This guide is not in any way an attempt to influence state schools to adopt the ethos or curriculum of faith schools. It is an informative guide to support school staff to understand the Faith Sensitivities of faith pupils and their families. This will ensure no child or family feels isolated.

Schools are required to consult with parents and the local community when developing their policies for Relationships Education and RSE, which will inform schools' decisions on when and how certain content is covered.

Some schools have undertaken meaningful consultations with the parents before developing their RSHE/PSHE policies. Whereas, in some other schools there is clearly room for further communication, deeper understanding and training.

8.3. Shouldn't we ask the children what they want to learn?

Parents understand the importance of letting their children make decisions to enable independence. However, complex life decisions can only be made when the young person has the mental, emotional and intellectual maturity to make such decisions. In other walks of life there are minimum age requirements.

Parents feel that they would like to be involved and consulted about what their children are taught and when.

9 Support

9.1. What are KPCA and its partners doing to support schools?

This practical guide has been produced as a result of extensive engagement with relevant stakeholders and parents. KPCA hopes that it helps to provide some clarification of the Faith Sensitivities of pupils from faith families.

If required, KPCA has a panel of faith Scholars who can support schools on all matters regarding delivering relationships and sex education for pupils from faith families.

This guide will be reviewed and updated in line with parental concern and the review or amendment of the Government legislation.

9.3 How can Local Authorities and Independent schools support the faith communities they serve?

KPCA recommends that:

- 1) Local authorities across the UK proactively engage with faith communities to understand their concerns.
- 2) Raise awareness of the Faith Sensitivities.
- 3) Share and acknowledge this practical guide to Faith Sensitivity with schools as a tool for training.
- 4) School governing bodies are sensitive to the needs of the faith community and consider the Faith Sensitivities as an integral part of their RSHE policy and school curriculum.

9.4. I am a parent; how can I support my child's school to ensure that they are aware of my Faith Sensitivities?

Faith Sensitivities have been documented in this guide allowing for better understanding. Building a positive and respectful relationship with the school will ensure that the school understands your faith and cultural sensitivities. Teachers should always be respected.

Parents can:

- Present this practical guide to schools for their consideration
- Engage in positive, respectful and meaningful dialogue with the school. Schools are mandated to consult with you when developing and renewing their policies on RSHE
- Respectfully raise concerns without being afraid. This will allow for better understanding and trusted sincere home and school relationships, which the schools will no doubt appreciate
- Create a parent steering group and work with the school to develop the RSHE policy.
- Contact local community support groups for further assistance
- KPCA has professionals and scholars who can offer support to parents, local authorities and schools

9.5. I am a pupil in school; how can I ensure that my religious background is taken into account?

Pupils **must** always show upmost respect for their teachers.

Pupils can:

- Present this practical guide to schools for their consideration
- Build a positive and respectful relationship with the school, this will ensure that the school understands the faith and cultural sensitivities
- Respectfully raise concerns without being afraid. This will allow for better understanding and trusted sincere pupil and school relationships, which the schools will no doubt appreciate
- Older children can create a student group and work with the school to develop the RSHE policy. You will also need to engage with your local Imams, Priests or Religious Leaders to ensure holy text is interpreted correctly

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and religion. RSHE is not about compelling thought or expression. For children and young people to thrive and be tolerant, they need to be confident. Young people should be able to respectfully disagree without being deemed disagreeable.

9.6. I work in a school; what support is available for me to ensure that I take into account the faith backgrounds of pupils?

If you work in a school and particularly if you develop RSHE policy or deliver RSHE then this guide will be very useful for you. KPCA have documented Faith Sensitivities to give you a better understanding of the needs of the pupils from faith families.

Building positive and respectful relationships with parents through meaningful consultations will ensure that they feel they are listened to and their faith backgrounds are being taken into account.

Parents and schools should work together for the betterment of children. Build strong trusting relationships and ensure each family is accepted and respected for their particular family setting.

Witnessing respectful relationships between their teachers and parents will no doubt lead to better outcomes for the children in the long run. Children thrive when school and home, work in partnership and maintain an effective two-way communication. This reinforces and extends classroom learning and mental stability, so children see both environments as safe and caring places that work together as a team.

Parents appreciate that many schools are sensitive to faith needs of their children.

KPCA has professionals and scholars who can offer any support you require.

9.7. I am a parent and I feel that my child's school has not taken my religious background into consideration. Is there anything I can do?

The Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education: FAQs state that:

“Your child’s school will have flexibility to deliver the content in a way that is age and developmentally appropriate and sensitive to the needs and religious background of its pupils.”¹⁷

The Guidance on Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics in schools states that:

*“Schools are not required to teach about all the protected characteristics in every year group; that is a matter for the school to decide, and how it plans its curriculum.”*¹⁸

KPCA’s engagement with parents and schools indicate that even within the same Local Authority there can be a vast difference between what and how schools are choosing to deliver their RSHE curriculum. Some schools are covering sexuality content from the very early years. Others are covering these topics sensitively, much later on. Some schools are covering the content they are required to do so by law, whilst also taking into account the various faith positions and sensitivities within their teaching whilst other schools are not.

Therefore, it is crucial for the parents to be involved in the development and the reviewing of the RSHE policy and to clearly put forward their religious sensitivities and views on age appropriateness. This is vital so that the schools are in a better position to plan the curriculum and its policies depending on the cohort of the class and can cater for the needs of their pupils.

Schools are required to follow the DfE guidance. Most schools want to maintain and build on good relationships with the parents and are more than happy to take on board parental concerns and take the faith backgrounds of their pupils into account. The only way for schools to be able to do this is, if parents engage with their children’s school and build positive and respectful relationships

If you still feel that your concerns are not addressed, you can write to the head of the school. Should you feel that you have exhausted all avenues of polite and respectful engagement, you can follow the school’s curriculum complaints policy. If you are still not happy, you have a choice to take matters further within the boundaries of the law. The faith community does **not** condone any threats of intimidation or violence against any teacher or member of staff. Anyone who attacks or threatens to attack any teacher or member of staff is not adhering to the faith teachings and does not represent the Religion.

¹⁷ [Relationships education, relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education: FAQs - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs)

¹⁸ [Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/inspecting-teaching-of-the-protected-characteristics-in-schools)

7



Scenario – Understanding Faith Sensitivities

Below is a factual scenario and has been added to emphasise equality, true inclusivity and that every child/family is valued.

This scenario can be utilised in the schools for RSHE teacher training.

Child Led Scenario

Boys wearing girl's clothes.

A young boy raises his hand in the classroom and says,
“**Boys are not allowed to wear girl's clothes**”.

The teacher responds by saying:

“**No, some do and that is ok**”.

What do the children in the class hear?

- The boy said something wrong.
- The child is wrong to hold the religious belief that people are not allowed to purposely adopt the appearance of the opposite gender.
- The boy's parents are wrong to hold the religious belief that people are not allowed to purposely adopt the appearance of the opposite gender.
- In future, the children in the class may feel that they should be less expressive.
- In future, the children in the class may withdraw from sharing their belief for the fear of rejection or objection from their class teacher.
- The children may stop participating in all classroom discussions, for fear of rejection and embarrassment in the class setting in front of their peers and friends.
- In future, the children in the class may withhold from talking about their home life or family morals and feel isolated.
- Children may feel that they need to change their belief on this subject.
- Children may feel that the teachers and parents are giving mixed and confusing messages.
- The classroom setting is not inclusive, as the young boy's faith perspective was marginalised.

How would the faith community want the above situation addressed?

Firstly, validate the child, acknowledging he has a right to his belief and secondly teach the child the importance of inclusivity.

This can be addressed in the following way, depending on the cohort of the class:

“**I Understand, that is your belief and that is ok, but some people do.**” “**The main thing is, you should be kind to everyone, even if they are different from you or your family.**”

The above situation addresses sensitivities which may arise in classroom settings and where all children from diverse backgrounds and beliefs feel included. It is important that every child's voice is equal, acknowledged and accepted. The above scenario can be applied in other situations.

There is no one way or answer to address every situation. Every classroom setting is different. The aim of the above scenario is not to suggest that teachers who are experienced educational professionals do not have the knowhow on how to address their pupils in different scenarios, but rather to give insight into Faith Sensitivities of the pupils from faith families in the classroom setting.

We appreciate that teachers are respected professionals with extensive training, experienced and knowledge of the law.

As mentioned above, from a faith perspective every family should be acknowledged, and every child's voice validated. Therefore, if the situation was reversed and a child said that they believed that boys were allowed to wear girl's clothes, the exact same response can be used.

- a. First validate the child, as he has a right to his belief.
- b. Teach the child the importance of Inclusivity. That people of faith or some of no faith do not hold the same belief.

"The main thing is, you should be kind to everyone, even if they are different from you or your family."

In the classroom setting when a child's faith perspective, culture, home environment and voice are not taken into consideration, it may affect the child's long-term mental wellbeing. As these are important components of a child's sense of self and family setting.

Without being acknowledged and accepted for who they are how can children be expected to gain confidence, have self-respect, respect others and learn tolerance and acceptance for all? Both schools and families should progressively work together in tandem for the betterment of children in relation to the child's education.

Services offered by KPCA and its Partners

Kirklees Parents and Community Alliance (KPCA) is an organisation of parents, community leaders, Imams, Priests and other professionals who have come together to support parents, schools and the faith community.

Our aim is to ensure community cohesion, respect, tolerance and understanding for all.

We offer the following support to schools and colleges;

- Advice on Faith Sensitivities
- Advice and guidance on Faith Sensitives in RSHE and other subjects
- Advice, arbitration and reconciliation services
- Educational staff can also benefit from our consultancy and training Services on:
 - ✓ Faith Sensitivities on Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) related lessons
 - ✓ Religious Education (RE) and Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE)
 - ✓ Advice and guidance on other faith-related matters
 - ✓ Conducting whole schools or year group assemblies
 - ✓ Support for staff and pupils on matters related to religious inclusivity
- Training on a range of sensitive subjects including:
 - ✓ Religion and belief
 - ✓ Religion and science
 - ✓ Sufism and spirituality
 - ✓ Community cohesion
 - ✓ De-Radicalisation
 - ✓ Origins of Islam and Christianity
 - ✓ Jesus is Islam and Christianity
 - ✓ Abraham the father of faith
 - ✓ Interfaith work in UK
 - ✓ Other bespoke training

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Disclaimer

Document purpose - For information only:

- This document does not constitute legal advice but best practice
- All current Government Guidance should be followed including safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children
- Specific advice from a legal professional should always be sought in relation to individual circumstances