

# Relationship Education Guidance for Primary Schools

## Consulting Parents

“(As parents) you can express your opinion, and this will help your child’s school decide how and when to cover the content of the statutory guidance. It may also help them decide whether to teach additional non-statutory content. Schools are required to ensure their teaching reflects the age and religious background of their pupils.”<sup>1</sup>



**Statutory Guidance:** There is a new Statutory Guidance<sup>2</sup> and the new curriculum will be mandatory from September 2020. It requires schools to consult parents in developing and reviewing their Relationship Education policy.

**Inform Parents:** It may be useful to distribute government produced resources<sup>1</sup> informing parents of their rights.

## Resolving Objections



**Conflicts with beliefs:** Some parents may voice general concern over Primary Relationship Education (especially due to media coverage), believing lesson content will conflict with their beliefs. Expressing the curriculum in terms of ‘seeking knowledge’ (Families and people who care for me), ‘friendships’ (Caring friendships), ‘good manners’ (Respectful relationships) and ‘being safe’ (Online relationships, and Being safe) may demonstrate how the curriculum may actually be rooted in concepts very compatible with their worldview, and so alleviate parental concerns.

**Boyfriend/girlfriend:** Some parents may voice concern over teaching about boyfriend/girlfriend relationships in Primary Relationship Education (e.g. because of beliefs against relationships outside of marriage). The Statutory Guidance does not explicitly mention teaching about boyfriend/girlfriend relationships at the Primary phase, and therefore schools may choose not to include this optional content. However, schools may choose to include content

discussing, for example, good and bad reasons someone may choose a partner or friend (e.g. looks, wealth and personality) and many parents may not have concerns if the discussion was inclusive of pupils being able to choose to consider a ‘future husband/wife’ scenario (instead of only a boyfriend/girlfriend option).

**LGBT:** Some parents may voice concern over teaching about LGBT in Primary Relationship Education. The Statutory Guidance states: “Pupils should know... that others’ families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children’s families are also characterised by love and care.” The Statutory Guidance states: ‘LGBT... content is (to be) fully integrated... rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson’. For example, teachers may teach about forms of families (e.g. single parent families, adoptive parents) – including those with protected characteristics (e.g. parents of same and different ethnicities, parents of same and different religions, married and non-married parents, same-sex parents etc) – in the context of teaching about diversity and tolerance/respect. If explained to parents the intent of the lesson is ‘seeking knowledge / neighbourliness’ (relating to those in pupils’ community), teaching ‘good manners’ (tolerance/respect), and the extent of the LGBT element in this integrated lesson, the parent’s concerns may be alleviated.

**LGBT Positive narratives:** Some parents may voice concern over inclusion of positive narrative resources about sexual orientation or gender reassignment (e.g. a positive narrative storybook about an infant with two male parents) in Primary Relationship Education. This may be because some parents may not want their children considering a same-sex relationship or gender reassignment positively for themselves (e.g. because of beliefs related to their worldview or cultural stigma). The Statutory Guidance does not necessitate the inclusion of LGBT positive narrative resources and therefore schools may choose not to include such resources as whole class texts. However, schools may choose to include, for example, to offer positive counter-narratives to tackle prejudice and hate-crimes towards LGBT people and some parents may not have concerns if explained in this context. If context is broadened to celebrate wider diversity and tackle all forms of prejudice (e.g. includes positive narratives of religious communities and tackling prejudice that affects them), parents may be able to further empathise.

Resources:

<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-sex-and-health-education-guides-for-schools>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>