



What is Relationships and Sex Education?

Relationships and sex education is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of human development, relationships, sexuality, wellbeing and sexual health.

What does Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) aim to achieve?

RSE aims to:

- Help children and young people to understand and take care of their physical health;
- Improve children and young people's emotional well-being and mental health;
- Safeguard children and young people by supporting them to report harmful behaviour, including online;
- Inform children and young people of their rights and responsibilities;
- Develop emotional intelligence and critical thinking skills, including around gender equity and power dynamics in relationships;
- Reduce harmful behaviour, including sexual violence and relationship abuse, stigma and discrimination;
- Help children and young people to develop positive relationships with themselves and others, based on respect and equality

What does the research evidence say?

Independent and published research from a wide range of academic and credible sources in the UK and internationally demonstrate that RSE contributes to improved physical and mental health for children and young people. When they have received RSE, young people are:

- More likely to seek help or speak out;
- More likely to practice safe sex and have improved health outcomes;
- More likely to have consented to first sex, and for first sex to happen at an older age;
- More likely to have an understanding of digital safety in regard to relationships and sex;
- More knowledgeable and aware of discrimination, gender equity and sexual rights;
- Less likely to be a victim or perpetrator of sexual violence.

Why are we doing it?

- The average age at which children first see pornography is 13, with 50% of young people in this age group having viewed it (UK Children's Commissioner, 2023)
- Evidence shows that RSE works best if it starts before a young person is sexually active and if it responds to the needs of young people as they mature (UNESCO, 2018; Kirby, 2007)
- The Equality Act 2017 which places a clear expectation upon schools to promote equality for those with the protected characteristics of sexual orientation, gender reassignment, sex, race, disability, age and marriage or civil partnership.
- Over 80% of children (aged 12- 15) have had potentially harmful experiences online (DfE, 2021)
- Young people express a desire to be taught about subjects such as healthy relationships, abuse, including online harms, and consent from a younger age (Ringrose et al., 2021; Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2017).
- Young people view RSE to be out of date, both in terms of old-fashioned binary sexual politics (straight and gay) and a failure to engage constructively with contemporary digital cultures (Brook, University of Sussex, 2021).

What are we doing?

The RSE Advisory Curriculum was launched in September 2022 to ensure children and young people receive key information to enable them to stay safe and live happy, healthy lives. It identifies themes and concepts from a number of sources including, but not limited to, Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP), Childnet, The PSHE Association and Public Health England. School professionals, will select the resources they wish to deliver within their school to meet the needs of their students.

The structure and content of the RSE Advisory Curriculum has been guided by Scotland's (RSHP) resource to ensure content is mapped from Reception to Year 11. The content provided is tailored and adapted for our Island's schools, it is not an exact replication. The RSHP resource has been quality assured and peer reviewed by a partnership of educators, health professionals and third sector organisations.