

Sex and Relationships Education

Definition of Sex and Relationships Education

'SRE is lifelong learning process of acquiring information, developing skills and forming positive beliefs and attitudes about sex, sexuality, relationships and feelings' (Sex Education Forum, 1999).

Effective SRE can make a significant contribution to the development of the personal skills needed by pupils if they are to establish and maintain relationships. It also enables children and young people to make responsible and informed decisions about their health and well-being.

SRE makes an important contribution to health and well-being by supporting children and young people's ability to learn, achieve and flourish.

"The right to education includes the right to sexual education, which is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realising other human rights, such as the right to health, the right to information and sexual and reproductive rights."

Report to the UN General Assembly - July 2010 | Item 69, paragraph 18

Current SRE requirements

Maintained primary and secondary schools are legally obliged to have an up-to-date SRE policy that describes the content and organisation of SRE taught outside science in the National Curriculum. This includes special schools. In primary schools if the decision is taken not to teach SRE beyond the National Curriculum this should also be documented in the policy. The policy should be made available to parents on request. It is the school governors' responsibility to ensure that the policy is developed and implemented. School governors are in law expected to give 'due regard' to the SRE 2000 guidance and to maintain an up to date RSE policy which must be made available to parents. (Learning and Skills Act, 2000).

It is good practice for academies, free schools, colleges and independent schools to have a policy on SRE. All state-funded schools must publish information in relation to each academic year, about the content of the school's curriculum for each subject, and this includes any teaching in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and SRE (see 2.5 in the National Curriculum framework (DfE 2013a) and Statutory Instrument 2012 No. 1124).

There is a useful guide to [understanding sex and relationships education](#) from the Sex Education Forum.

Compulsory aspects of SRE

The sex education contained in National Curriculum science (Key Stages 1–4) is compulsory in maintained schools. In maintained secondary schools it is also compulsory for pupils to have sex education that includes HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. All state-funded schools must have 'due regard' to the Secretary of State's guidance on SRE (DfEE, 2000). This states that:

- 'All children, including those who develop earlier than average, need to know about puberty before they experience the onset of physical changes' (1.13)
- Children should learn 'how a baby is conceived and born' before they leave primary school (1.16)

The Learning and Skills Act (2000) and the model funding agreements for academies and free schools require that state-funded schools ensure that within sex education children 'learn the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and the bringing up of children', and 'are protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate'. The guidance includes some specific information about meeting the needs of young people, whatever their sexuality, including boys and girls and those with special educational needs. It also has advice about addressing specific issues in SRE such as menstruation, contraception, safer sex and abortion.

SRE and statutory duties in school

SRE plays a very important part in fulfilling the statutory duties all schools have to meet. SRE helps children understand the difference between safe and abusive relationships and equips them with the skills to get help if they need it. State-funded schools have responsibilities for safeguarding and a legal duty to promote pupil well-being (Education and Inspections Act 2006 Section 38).

- Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) is an important part of PSHE education (DfE, 2014).
- When any school provides SRE they must have regard to the [Secretary of State's guidance](#); this is a statutory duty. Academies do not have to provide SRE but must also have regard to Secretary of State's guidance when they do (DfE, 2013). Ofsted will evaluate how schools help to ensure a healthy lifestyle for their children (Ofsted, 2013, Subsidiary Guidance Para 64).
- It is compulsory for all maintained schools to teach the parts of sex education that fall under National Curriculum Science which must be taught to all pupils of primary and secondary age e.g. the biological aspects of puberty and reproduction (Education Act 1996, National Curriculum 2014).

Updated government safeguarding guidance is now available (Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2014a) and includes a section about being alert to signs that young girls may be at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM). School summer holiday especially during the transition from primary to secondary schools is thought to be a key risk time for FGM. See also the government Multi-agency practice guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation (2014) which includes a section for schools.

Equalities

The Equality Act 2010 covers the way the curriculum is delivered, as schools and other education providers must ensure that issues are taught in a way that does not subject pupils to discrimination. Schools have a duty under the Equality Act to ensure that teaching is accessible to all children and young people, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT). Inclusive SRE will foster good relations between pupils, tackle all types of prejudice – including homophobia – and promote understanding and respect. The Department for Education have produced advice on The Equality Act 2010 and schools (DfE 2014b).

Schools have a legal duty to promote equality (Equality Act 2010) and to combat bullying (Education Act, 2006) (which includes homophobic, sexist, sexual and transphobic bullying) and Section 4.2 of the national curriculum (2014) states "Teachers should take account of their duties under equal opportunities legislation that covers race, disability, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment."

Jigsaw SRE Content

The grid below shows specific SRE learning intentions for each year group in the 'Changing Me' Puzzle.

<i>Year Group</i>	<i>Piece Number and Name</i>	<i>Learning Intentions 'Pupils will be able to...'</i>
1	Piece 4 Boys' and Girls' Bodies	identify the parts of the body that make boys different to girls and use the correct names for these: penis, testicles, vagina
2	Piece 4 Boys' and Girls' Bodies	respect my body and understand which parts are private recognise the physical differences between boys and girls, use the correct names for parts of the body (penis, testicles, vagina) and appreciate that some parts of my body are private
3	Piece 1 How Babies Grow	tell you what I like/don't like about being a boy/girl understand that in animals and humans lots of changes happen between conception and growing up, and that usually it is the female who has the baby
	Piece 2 Babies	express how I feel when I see babies or baby animals understand how babies grow and develop in the mother's uterus and understand what a baby needs to live and grow
	Piece 3 Outside Body Changes	express how I might feel if I had a new baby in my family understand that boys' and girls' bodies need to change so that when they grow up their bodies can make babies identify how boys' and girls' bodies change on the outside during this growing up process recognise how I feel about these changes happening to me and know how to cope with those feelings
	Piece 4 Inside Body Changes	identify how boys' and girls' bodies change on the inside during the growing up process and why these changes are necessary so that their bodies can make babies when they grow up recognise how I feel about these changes happening to me and how to cope with these feelings
4	Piece 2 Having A Baby	correctly label the internal and external parts of male and female bodies that are necessary for making a baby understand that having a baby is a personal choice and express how I feel about having children when I am an adult
	Piece 3 Girls and Puberty	describe how a girl's body changes in order for her to be able to have babies when she is an adult, and that menstruation (having periods) is a natural part of this know that I have strategies to help me cope with the physical and emotional changes I will experience during puberty

5	Piece 2 Puberty for Girls	explain how a girl's body changes during puberty and understand the importance of looking after myself physically and emotionally
		understand that puberty is a natural process that happens to everybody and that it will be OK for me
	Piece 3 Puberty for Boys and Girls	describe how boys' and girls' bodies change during puberty
		express how I feel about the changes that will happen to me during puberty
6	Piece 4 Conception	understand that sexual intercourse can lead to conception and that is how babies are usually made
		understand that sometimes people need IVF to help them have a baby
		appreciate how amazing it is that human bodies can reproduce in these ways
	Piece 2 Puberty	explain how girls' and boys' bodies change during puberty and understand the importance of looking after myself physically and emotionally
		express how I feel about the changes that will happen to me during puberty
	Piece 3 Girl Talk/Boy Talk	ask the questions I need answered about changes during puberty
		reflect on how I feel about asking the questions and about the answers I receive
	Piece 4 Babies – Conception to Birth	describe how a baby develops from conception through the nine months of pregnancy, and how it is born
		recognise how I feel when I reflect on the development and birth of a baby
	Piece 5 Attraction	understand how being physically attracted to someone changes the nature of the relationship
		express how I feel about the growing independence of becoming a teenager and am confident that I can cope with this

Withdrawal from SRE lessons

Parents/carers have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the Sex and Relationships Education provided at school except for those parts included in statutory National Curriculum Science. Those parents/carers wishing to exercise this right are invited in to see the head teacher and/or SRE Co-ordinator who will explore any concerns and discuss any impact that withdrawal may have on the child. Once a child has been withdrawn they cannot take part in the SRE programme

until the request for withdrawal has been removed. Materials are available to parents/carers who wish to supplement the school SRE programme or who wish to deliver SRE to their children at home.

Working with parents and carers

The government guidance on SRE (DfEE 2000) emphasises the importance of schools working in partnership with parents and carers. Under current legislation schools should enable parents to exercise their right to withdraw their children (until the age of 19) from any school SRE taught outside National Curriculum Science (Education Act 1996). This applies to maintained primary and secondary schools and includes pupils attending a sixth form that is part of a school. It does not apply to sixth form colleges and further education colleges. Parents have a legal right to see the school SRE policy and to be given a copy of it (Education Act 1996). Parents should also be aware that schools are legally required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Sex and relationships topics can arise incidentally in other subjects and it is not possible to withdraw pupils from these relatively limited and often unplanned discussions.