

CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON CHANGES TO THE TEACHING OF SEX & RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION AND PSHE



A GUIDE FOR MARRIAGE SUPPORTERS

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This is a guide for supporters of the Coalition for Marriage interested in participating in the call for evidence on Relationships and Sex Education in England launched by the Department for Education in December 2017.

The Government is currently deciding what its new subjects of Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education will look like in practice. Formal guidance will be issued by the Secretary of State for Education later this year. This call for evidence is to help shape this guidance.

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

The online consultation portal is available at this address:

www.bit.ly/RSE-EVIDENCE

The call for evidence takes the form of seven open questions. A maximum of **250 words** may be entered for each of these.

All evidence must be submitted by:
Monday 12th February.

This guide is not a substitute for your opinion or experience. The call for evidence requests that respondents consider their personal knowledge and experience of the English education system. This guide is intended to help supporters unfamiliar with some of the terminology used in the call for evidence by highlighting areas where the teaching of traditional marriage may be affected.

ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

In 2017 the Government passed the Children and Social Work Act. This provided for two types of teaching to begin in 2019:

- **Relationships Education** for children between five and 11 at primary school. This would be compulsory with no parental right of withdrawal and apply to all schools: state and independent, faith and secular.
- **Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)** for children at secondary school. A right of parental withdrawal will be available covering sex education.

As is already the case, primary schools will continue to be able to choose to deliver sex education (from which there will be a right of withdrawal) in addition to Relationships Education (from which there will not be a right of withdrawal).

The topics to be covered include, in the Government's words:

- Different types of relationships, including friendships, family relationships, dealing with strangers and, at secondary school, intimate relationships;
- How to recognise, understand and build healthy relationships, including self-respect and respect for others, commitment (including marriage and civil partnerships), boundaries and consent, tolerance, and how to manage conflict, and also how to recognise unhealthy relationships, including bullying, coercion and exploitation;
- Healthy relationships and safety online, including use of social media, cyberbullying, sexting;
- How relationships may affect health and wellbeing, including the importance of good mental health and resilience; and
- [Be] set firmly within the context of relationships, factual knowledge at secondary school about sex, sexual health and sexuality.¹

Prime Minister Theresa May has said “we are pressing ahead with inclusive relationships and sex education in English schools, making sure that LGBT issues are taught well.”² **Under the current proposals teaching children about adult relationships, potentially including same-sex marriage and transgenderism, will be mandatory from five years old.**

The Coalition for Marriage believes that there is no ‘age-appropriate’ way to teach primary school children about same-sex marriage or transgenderism. We should be teaching young children broad values of respect and tolerance, not ordering them to accept adult sexual relationships which they are far too young to understand. Nor should schools be encouraging young children to question their biological gender. Furthermore, parents must be given the right to withdraw their children from Relationships Education lessons in primary school and to inspect lesson material before it is delivered to ensure suitability.


Foundational issues of morality and human nature and purpose are inescapable in Relationships Education and these are inherently controversial. As a result, parents must retain the right of withdrawal.

Parents must retain the ultimate responsibility for their children’s emotional wellbeing. This means that we are asking policy makers to both **give parents a right to withdraw their children from Relationships Education** and also to **give parents the right to inspect Relationships Education material before it is delivered to their children.**

¹ https://consult.education.gov.uk/life-skills/pshe-rse-call-for-evidence/supporting_documents/Sex%20and%20Relationships%20Education%20%20A%20call%20for%20evidence.pdf

² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/19/trans-not-illness-theresa-may-says-vows-make-reforms/>

QUESTION ONE

 **Thinking about Relationships Education in primary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for different age groups/key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.**

Context: This covers Key Stage 1 (five to seven years) and Key Stage 2 (seven to 11 years).

Considerations: Page 1 sets out the broad scope of compulsory Relationships Education. When selecting the three foremost considerations for your list please consider which of these you believe would be appropriate for very young children. You may wish to consider:

- Learning broad principles of respect for and kindness towards others;
- The importance of strong family relationships including traditional marriage;
- Respect and support for other children who do not have two parents at home;
- The importance of friendships and how to maintain them;
- Why bullying is wrong and how to react if it happens;
- How to stay safe on the internet or with strangers;
- How to interact politely with others;

You may also wish to consider what would not be appropriate for children of primary school age. The Coalition for Marriage believes that children of this age are not able to critically assess complex adult sexual relationships, particularly same-sex marriage, and so neither these nor transgenderism should be taught. Instead we believe that parents are best placed to determine how and when young children encounter these concepts.

QUESTION TWO

? Thinking about relationships and sex education in secondary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for different age groups/ key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.

Context: This question covers Key Stage 3 (11 to 14 years) and the older age groups (between 14 and school leaving age at 16 to 18 – Key Stages 4 and 5).

Considerations: The broad scope of RSE is set out on page 1. When selecting the three foremost considerations for your list please consider which of these you believe would be appropriate for teenaged children. You may wish to consider:

- Marriage between a man and a woman as the gold-standard of adult relationship;
- The health, wellbeing and financial benefits of traditional marriage for spouses;
- The health, wellbeing and educational attainment benefits of marriage for children;
- The advantages to society from strong marriages;
- Why it is important to avoid over-sharing on social media;
- How to resist being pressurised into sexual relationships;
- That a person's gender is determined by biology;
- How relationships impact families and go beyond the individuals involved;
- Learning broad principles of tolerance, respect for and kindness towards others;
- The importance of friendships and how to maintain them;
- Why all bullying is wrong and how to react if it happens.

You may also wish to consider what would not be appropriate at this age. As children become more sexually aware, you may wish to consider to what extent, if any, that they should be taught about same-sex marriage or transgenderism by their schools.

QUESTION THREE

? We are particularly interested in understanding stakeholder views on Relationships Education and RSE which are specific to the digital context. Are there important aspects of ensuring safe online relationships that would not otherwise be covered in wider Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education, or as part of the computing curriculum?

Considerations: While this question does not have a direct bearing on marriage, you may want to reiterate that the points below should be covered:

- Principles of kindness, consideration and self-respect which are important online as well as off;
- The harm caused to individuals and their ability to form relationships by internet pornography;
- Why it is important to avoid over-sharing on social media.

QUESTION FOUR



We are also interested in understanding more about how schools communicate with parents on Relationships Education and RSE and are able to make informed decisions that best meet the needs of their children. This includes a right to withdraw their child from sex education within the RSE subject but not from sex education in the national curriculum for science. How should schools effectively consult parents so they can make informed decisions that meet the needs of their child, including on the right to withdraw? For example, how often, on what issues and by what means?

Context: This question asks how schools should involve parents in deciding what and how to teach both at primary and secondary school.

Please note: the question omits to mention that at present it is planned that the parents of primary school age children will have no right of withdrawal from lessons, irrespective of the content.

Considerations: We believe that it is absolutely imperative that parents retain the final say in deciding how and when children encounter complex adult relationships. As such, we have campaigned consistently for a parental right of withdrawal from Relationships Education at primary school age. In thinking about your response you may wish to consider:

- A parental right of withdrawal for primary school age children from Relationships Education;
- Schools should consult with parents when drafting and reviewing their Relationships Education policy and ensure they are acting in accordance with parents' wishes;
- Parents should have the right to inspect Relationships Education and RSE material prior to it being delivered in lessons;
- A briefing at the start of each school year for parents to allow them to understand what will be taught and raise any objections;
- Explanations provided for parents of children at faith schools on how the school will adapt taught material to be consistent with the faith ethos of the school;
- A core part of Ofsted inspection of school provision in this area should be an assessment of how well parents have been consulted and this should have an impact on the final Ofsted judgement.

Questions five to seven relate to Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education. This subject does not have the same direct relevance to marriage as Relationships and Sex Education, and so the Coalition is not providing any guidance. You do not have to answer every question in the call for evidence.

KEEP UPDATED

To stay updated on the work of the Coalition for Marriage, including hearing updates on the Government's response to this call for evidence, please join the mailing list on our website: www.c4m.org.uk