

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

Department for Education (DfE) statutory requirements for Relationships and Health Education including non-statutory Sex Education

Parents retain the right to withdraw their child from Sex Education at secondary school. The right to withdraw refers only to the Sex Education element of RSE. Parents are not able to withdraw their child from Relationships or Health Education.

At secondary school level, parents are entitled to withdraw their child from sex education, other than the sex education contained in the National Curriculum as part of science. As stated by the DfE, “at key stage 3 and 4, the national curriculum for science includes teaching about reproduction in humans; for example, the structure and function of the male and female reproductive systems, menstrual cycle, gametes, fertilisation, gestation, birth and HIV/AIDS.”

The Health Education element of RSHE includes a section for secondary schools including the changing adolescent body, puberty, the menstrual cycle and menstrual wellbeing.

It remains the school’s responsibility to interpret what is deemed solely ‘sex education’ and this should be explained to any parent that requests their child is withdrawn. Consideration should be given as to whether being withdrawn from education really benefits the child and this should be discussed in depth with parents. The DfE explains, “Relationship and sex education (RSE) is compulsory from age 11 onwards. It involves teaching children about reproduction, sexuality and sexual health. It does not promote early sexual activity or any sexual orientation.”

PARENT’S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

Primary

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from relationships education.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory/non-science components of sex education within RSE.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found below and addressed to the Head Teacher.

Alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education.

Secondary

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory/non-science components of sex education within RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found below and addressed to the Head Teacher.

A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The Head Teacher will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action.

Alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education

Advice on the right to withdraw

If you wish to withdraw your child from Sex education, the head teacher will discuss the benefits of your child receiving this important education, detailing any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have. This may include the social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was discussed in class, rather than what was directly discussed by the teacher.

A common reason for withdrawing a child from sex education is their religious beliefs. Guidance states that in all schools, the religious background of all pupils must be considered so that the topics covered in RSE classes are appropriately handled. Schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or beliefs are protected characteristics.

Also note, a child has the right to opt into sex education from their 15th birthday (specifically three academic terms before they turn 16). At this point, if they wish to receive sex education, the school will make arrangements for this to happen. The head teacher will discuss the request with parents and carers and, as appropriate, with the child to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum.

The school will keep a record of the withdrawal process and our dialogue with parents relating to requests to withdraw from sex education.

Relationships Education, Health Education, Science and Sex Education are designed to work together to protect children by ensuring they understand their bodies, emotions, the human life cycle, acceptable behaviour as well as right and wrong.

Link to statutory Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>