

RSHE – ready for a review?

05 May 2023  Laura Murphy

Relationships education has been compulsory for pupils in primary education since September 2020. For secondary pupils, relationships and sex education (RSE) must be taught. Health education is compulsory in all phases.

Given the importance RHSE plays in the curriculum and as a building block for healthy, respectful relationships the review planned by the government aims to ensure that this is being carried out and taught appropriately at all levels.

The aim is that the proposed review will be completed by the end of 2023 and will be carried out by a team of experts. They will look at how the curriculum is introduced to different age groups and whether age-ratings should be introduced for different topics. The statutory guidance will be reviewed and if necessary updated.

It was published in 2019 and is seen as in need of overhaul as the commitment was to review and update guidance every 3 years in order to ensure that the guidance accurately reflects the needs and issues of young people.

When the review was announced the Education Secretary reminded schools of their duty to share materials in relation to the RHSE curriculum with parents and that consultation with parents should be taking place when developing or reviewing a written policy for RSHE. Schools should ensure that the policy meets the needs of pupils and parents and reflects the community they serve.

There remains some flexibility for schools to determine the age-appropriate, developmental curriculum which meets the needs of young people. This also allows the schools to respond to public health and needs of their community and adapt materials and programmes to meet the needs of pupils (for example in teaching about gangs or high local prevalence of specific issues).

Schools should continue to develop their curriculums in line with the consultations with stakeholders and particularly pupil needs and be ready to implement any new guidance when it is published.

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