

Relationship and Sex Education Statement

December 2020

Tower Hamlets is a place where we celebrate our differences and see our diversity as strength. Our borough is 'No Place for Hate' and we work to tackle all forms of hate and intolerance. We want our schools to be places which champion this diversity and can make all children, and their families, feel welcome in the school community and within our borough. From September 2020, the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education aspects of PSHE education has been compulsory in all schools. We recognise there are concerns about some elements of the new RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) curriculum. We are committed to supporting schools to deliver age appropriate education which helps keep children safe and secure. These changes have been consulted on nationally and legislation passed. The law is supported by additional statutory guidance and the government has confirmed that primary schools are strongly encouraged to include LGBT content within primary schools that is age appropriate and that children should be taught about puberty in science and have knowledge of the main external body parts. The final decision about the policy and approach will need to be agreed by the Governing Body of each school.

LBTH RSE Update to Primary schools

National Context

In the new statutory Department for Education (DfE) Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Guidance, the Government has made age appropriate Relationships and Health Education compulsory in all primary schools. In Secondary schools, Relationships and Sex Education will be compulsory. Health Education will also be compulsory in all state funded schools. National Curriculum Science remains statutory. The Government carried out a public call for evidence which received 23,000 responses from parents, young people, schools and experts. This was followed by a DfE public consultation, which had responses from over 40,000 people. This legislation has now been passed and the guidance is statutory. Schools are therefore obliged to fulfil their legal duty to teach this subject.



London Borough of Tower Hamlets' (LBTH) Position

LBTH is advising schools on how best to implement the statutory guidance from the DfE and what the best ages are to teach certain topics. Schools will make a decision on their policy with their Governing Body. Schools are very mindful about teaching in a culturally sensitive and age appropriate manner and have experience in teaching these sensitive matters. RSE in Tower Hamlets needs to ensure children stay safe and healthy with a knowledge and understanding of their own body. Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against people because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation, which are all considered to be Protective Characteristics. To undermine the rights of one of these Protected Characteristics is to undermine the rights of everyone. Relationships Education nurtures tolerance, encouraging children to grow up to be respectful of others.

LGBT Content

LBTH recommends teaching about LGBT relationships, in the context of different types of families, in the statutory part of the curriculum in Key Stage 1. This is so that children coming from same sex families feel welcomed and included in school, from the very beginning of their school career, in Key Stage 1. It is also important in terms of tackling homophobic behaviour and bullying and demonstrates LBTH's commitment to equalities, as outlined in the Equality Act. Relationships Education prepares children for the world they are growing up in and it is important to teach respect for all other people. This includes respecting people from other religions, ethnic backgrounds or sexual orientations. LBTH is committed to protecting children and families against discrimination, whether knowingly or unintentional. This includes discrimination against people's religion, culture or sexuality, to name just a few of the Protected Characteristics in the Equality Act. The statutory guidance strongly encourages and enables schools to teach LGBT content, in the context of different types of families.

"Teaching about families requires sensitive and well-judged teaching based on knowledge of pupils and their circumstances. Families of many forms provide a nurturing environment for children. (Families can include for example, single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures.) Care needs to be taken to ensure that there is



no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances and needs, to reflect sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them; e.g. looked after children or young carers.”

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019)

On the Gov.uk website it states:

“...Primary schools are strongly encouraged and enabled to cover LGBT content when teaching about different types of families.”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs>

The Department for Education RSE Guidance reads:

“28. Under the provisions of the Equality Act, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation (collectively known as the protected characteristics).”

“31. Schools should be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled. Staff have an important role to play in modelling positive behaviours. School pastoral and behaviour policies should support all pupils.”

“36. In teaching Relationships Education and RSE, schools should ensure that the needs of all pupils are appropriately met, and that all pupils understand the importance of equality and respect. Schools must ensure that they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, (please see The Equality Act 2010 and schools: Departmental advice), under which sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics.”

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019)

Naming of the Sexual Body Parts

LBTH recommends that children are taught in Key Stage 1, in the statutory part of the curriculum, about naming of the sexual body parts as a safeguarding issue. This is so pupils can report abuse if it happens or so that they can accurately report medical symptoms if they are unwell. The more children are able to name these body parts and to know about appropriate and inappropriate touch, the more they are protected from abuse. The following words are recommended to be taught in Key Stage 1:

- Penis
- Vulva
- Testicles
- Vagina
- Nipples / Breast
- Bottom / Anus

Pupils will also be taught about stable, caring, healthy family life and friendships and how to recognise if or when relationships are making them unhappy or unsafe. Lessons will cover staying safe both online and offline, how to identify risks online, harmful online content and contact and how to report it. Pupils will also learn how to seek help and advice from others.

LBTH also recommends that lessons about puberty begin in Year 4, to prepare children for puberty and girls for the start of menstruation, before it occurs.

The DfE Guidance states:

“ The content set out in this guidance covers everything that primary schools should teach about relationships and health, including puberty. The national curriculum for science also includes subject content in related areas, such as the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals. It will be for primary schools to determine whether they need to cover any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of their pupils. Many primary schools already choose to teach some aspects of sex education and will continue to do so, although it is not a requirement.”

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019) – Pg. 23



“At key stages 1 and 2, the national curriculum for science includes teaching about the main external parts of the body and changes to the human body as it grows from birth to old age, including puberty.”

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019) – Pg. 39