



durex committed to RSE in schools



Discover
the evidence



Aim

To inform and increase awareness of the importance of high quality RSE for young people, their parents, their schools and society

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Why is RSE so important?

“Sex and relationships education is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health... It also gives young people essential skills for building positive, enjoyable, respectful and non-exploitative relationships and staying safe both on and offline”

Brook, PSHE Association and Sex Education Forum - Sex and relationships education for the 21st century, 2014¹

Promoting good sexual health is an important public health priority and, in schools, RSE provides a ‘universal opportunity to promote healthy lifestyles and behaviours’.² In fact, health is just one aspect of RSE’s many and far reaching benefits. To name but a few, RSE:

- Contributes to a positive ethos and environment for learning in school, improving young people’s ability to achieve and promoting their emotional development^{1,2}
- Increases understanding of diversity and inclusion, reduces gender-based and homophobic, biphobic and transphobic prejudice^{1,2}
- Promotes the safeguarding and wellbeing of young people, helping them to keep themselves safe from harm, both on and offline¹
- Helps young people enjoy their relationships by teaching about consent and helping them avoid exploitative, bullying and violent relationships^{1,2}
- Builds young people’s confidence in accessing services if they need help and advice, as well as addressing child poverty and health inequalities via in-school access to services, regardless of background^{1,2}
- Reduces early sexual activity, teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, sexual exploitation, abuse, domestic violence and bullying¹



Are schools and our stakeholders aware of its importance?

The consensus in support of good quality RSE from young people, teachers, parents and carers, teaching unions, the voluntary sector and government is stronger than ever.¹

In a study of 1,500 school leaders, school governors and parents of school-aged children, conducted in 2010:³

~8 in 10 school leaders and governors

~9 in 10 parents

...understood that it is very important for children to receive information on practicing safe sex, always using contraception, understanding how relationships are formed and developed, and getting to know the other person before sex.³

And yet, in the same study...

Nearly 1 in 5 school leaders

>1 in 4 school governors

...felt that the current provision of RSE in schools is either 'poor' or 'very poor'.³

And it's not because young people don't want and need more good quality RSE...

..YOUNG PEOPLE:

- Want to learn about people's views and opinions in school about growing up and sex⁴
- Want to learn about body confidence, love and sexual attraction, responding to peer pressure, and how to behave in a relationship¹
- Need help to understand how their bodies and feelings change as they grow up, and to develop skills and confidence⁵
- Need reliable facts to fight misinformation – for example, in a survey conducted by Brook, 1 in 4 thought they could only get HIV from "gay sex", and over half thought women couldn't get pregnant during their period or if a man withdraws before he ejaculates⁵



If understanding isn't the main problem, what is?

After repeated appeals, discussions and the initiatives of committed organisations, the government has decided to pass legislation which requires all secondary schools to teach Relationships and Sex Education.

This should hopefully mean school stakeholders will feel supported to build on their capacity and ability to provide their students with quality RSE.

MISCONCEPTIONS⁶

Because of its content matter, RSE continues to be a contentious, stigmatised subject.

Part of the reason for this is that various misconceptions persist about its intentions and influence.^{1,6}

FALSE

RSE sexualises children – there's no evidence it works^{1,6}

There is extensive research that shows high quality RSE at school is actually part of the solution to sexualisation; amongst other things, RSE delays sexual activity, increases use of contraception, and reduces the likelihood of sexually transmitted infections.^{1,7,8}

FALSE

The best RSE tells young people to abstain from sex⁶

The basis of effective RSE is encouraging young people to wait until they're ready to have sex. In fact, there's evidence that just telling young people not to have sex has little effect on changing their behaviour long-term.^{6,9,10}

FALSE

RSE will make children lose their innocence; they don't need this information

High quality, age-appropriate RSE is about much more than sex. It provides them with the correct information to make informed choices and challenge misinformation. Young people need it to learn about themselves and others, and to help them weigh up often misleading and inappropriate messages about relationships and sex in everyday life.⁶⁻⁸

The partnership between home and school

In the past, parents, carers and school governors sometimes thought RSE could be delivered just as well at home. Due to the new government regulations this is no longer an option. While home involvement is an important aspect of high quality RSE, and parents and carers want to be a source of this information, they admit that embarrassment, lack of knowledge, and a poor experience of their own relationships and sex education gets in the way.⁶

Parents and carers are mostly supportive of RSE in schools – 88% of parents of school-aged pupils wanted RSE to be taught in all schools in a 2013 NAHT survey.¹¹ Many parents and carers assume schools cover more in RSE than they actually do, so avoid raising the topic at home and end up feeling disappointed about how little has been taught and how late.^{5,6} And yet the role of parents and carers at home is very important – we need to ensure they have the support they need from schools.⁶

Furthermore, parents and carers of young people with learning difficulties have shown anxiety about their child's ability to understand and manage feelings about relationships, as well as a fear of them being taken advantage of. These parents and carers are often the most likely to have concerns about what is taught as part of RSE; they often prefer time was spent talking about relationships and feelings, rather than sex itself, so that their child knows how to react. Schools must be additionally aware and sensitive of these concerns, and any other special educational need, and work closely with parents and carers to ensure that RSE can remain appropriate for these young people.

Teacher competence

Teaching any amount of RSE can feel like a daunting task, and embarrassment is frequently a major barrier for teachers.³

We know that a trained and competent teacher is better than any other resource. However, we also know that current training provision for teachers is 'simply insufficient' according to a 2007 Ofsted report.² And a large proportion of teachers recognise this – around 80% don't feel confident and trained to talk about RSE.³

Moreover, it's not just training that is blocking the way for teachers. There isn't enough time in the curriculum to begin with, and for any RSE time allocated, good quality, useful RSE resources that enhance learning are in short supply.³ This all means that even those teachers, who feel they can teach RSE, don't get the opportunity to be better at it.

Why are we, as school leaders, best placed to improve RSE?

High quality RSE based in schools continues to be the most efficient route to 'universally, comprehensively and uniformly targeting adolescent populations'¹²

It seems school leaders, teachers and parents are mostly aware of the importance of RSE, it's just our ability and confidence to deliver RSE that is holding it back. So, with these barriers in mind, how can we transform our ability to deliver RSE in our schools?

- We can put policy and process in place that ensures our RSE is open and honest, that it includes every young person – whatever their identity, values or experiences – and ensure its importance is instilled across the whole school
- We can ensure that RSE becomes part of lifelong learning, that it begins in early childhood and continues throughout life and that it reflects the age and level of the learner⁶
- We can create learning environments that are safe and ensure that prejudice, discrimination and bullying are unacceptable⁶
- We can use the DO... programme, and the help of other committed organisations, to build on the expertise our teachers already have, by providing training and resources that focus on values and skills, as well as information

What can good RSE mean for your school?

There is overwhelming evidence for the many and far-reaching benefits of RSE for young people and society. Ofsted have already shown that outstanding schools tend to have high quality RSE¹ – below are just a few of the positive effects high quality RSE could have on your school:

- Teachers who have the knowledge, confidence and skills to teach great RSE; with the same qualities that are synonymous with great teaching¹³
- Young people who achieve good results, become well-rounded and respectful members of society, and positively represent the school that inspired them¹⁴
- Young people who make valuable contributions in school and are capable of independent learning and taking responsibility¹⁴

NEXT STEPS:

- Use the **DO... Update your RSE policy** resource to evaluate your current policy – collaborate with parents/carers, school governors, teachers and anyone else you feel should be involved
- Evaluate the content of your current RSE offering with the **DO... Enhance your content** resource – assess what you could include on your curriculum beyond the compulsory basics
- Take a look at the **DO... Inspire great teachers** resource – help identify and encourage teachers who have the passion to train and develop into RSE champions in our schools
- Discover the rest of the DO... Optimising RSE resources and share ideas, policies and important information with governors, teachers, parents and carers, and even young people in your school
- Develop your own materials to discover needs, ideas and opinions – consider surveying your school leaders, governors, teachers, parents and carers on their understanding of the importance of RSE and how it is delivered in your school



Further support from the DO... Collaboration

DO... Resources for teachers

The **DO... Resources for teachers** have been specially developed by dedicated and experienced sexual health trainers and educators. They encourage a new approach to RSE that helps make it more relevant and approachable for students, and more comfortable for teachers to deliver.

Consisting of innovative lesson plans, unique teaching activities and a new focus on skills, values, emotions and critical thinking, the DO... resources for teachers will help them facilitate really engaging lessons that empower young people to learn for themselves and from each other.

Training for teachers

Many members of the DO... Collaboration provide quality training for teachers who want to develop their skills further.

Brook has been providing training to adults working with young people for more than 50 years.

www.brook.org.uk

FPA have a broad range of online training courses for teachers.

www.fpa.org.uk

Justin Hancock (Bish) offers a number of training courses on Relationships and Sex Education.

www.bishtraining.com

SEF offer a range of training opportunities (available both locally and nationally) to support the continued professional development of anyone involved in teaching RSE.

www.sexeducationforum.org.uk

RSE Hub offer a wide range of full day, half day or twilight training courses.

www.rsehub.org.uk

Brook, FPA, Bish and The Mix can also provide young people with free information, confidential advice, great sexual health services and emotional support.

www.brook.org.uk

www.fpa.org.uk

www.bishuk.com

www.themix.org.uk

Further information

- **Brook** – the UK’s leading sexual health charity for young people under 25 www.brook.org.uk
- **Bish websites** – online advice and information for both professionals and young people, created by Justin Hancock, an experienced relationships and sex educator www.bishtraining.com (for professionals) & www.bishuk.com (for young people)
- **Sex Education Forum** – a membership organisation that works together with its members for quality relationships and sex education www.sexeducationforum.org.uk
- **RSE Hub** – a membership organisation that believes that relationships and sex education (RSE) should be an entitlement for all children and young people www.rsehub.org.uk
- **Family Planning Association** – a UK registered charity working to enable people to make informed choices about sex and to enjoy sexual health www.fpa.org.uk
- **National Aids Trust** – the UK’s leading charity dedicated to transforming society’s response to HIV www.nat.org.uk
- **NAHT** – an independent trade union and professional association of over 28,500 members occupying leadership positions across a broad spectrum of educational institutions and settings, providing an effective voice in educational policy-making across all phases www.naht.org.uk
- **The Mix** – the UK’s leading support service for young people, helping them take on any challenges they’re facing and providing young people with free, confidential help and advice www.themix.org.uk

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