

## **Luton Borough Council (LBC): Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What is the difference between relationships education and sex education?**

Relationships education is teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults.

This starts with children being taught about what a relationship is, what friendship is, what family means and who the people are who can support them. From the beginning of primary school, building on early education, children are taught how to take turns; how to treat each other with kindness, consideration and respect; the importance of honesty and truthfulness; permission seeking and giving; and the concept of personal privacy. Establishing personal space and boundaries, showing respect and understanding the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical contact — these are the forerunners of teaching about consent. The principles of positive relationships also apply online especially as, by the end of primary school, many children will already be using the internet.

Sex education ensures that both boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings and — drawing on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the national curriculum for science — how a baby is conceived and born.

### **2. Does school encourage marriage? I believe this is the most stable way to live.**

Marriage between two loving adults is very much recognised within relationships education along with other relationships which people decide upon. Relationship education does not focus on one particular narrative but gives factual unbiased information which allows for children to make their own informed choices in adulthood.

### **3. When will my child be taught about pornography?**

Pornography is not mentioned during the primary stage as it is not age appropriate. When discussed, not taught, with young adults the focus is on the dangers of addiction, the harmful effects pornography can have on future adult relationships in terms of expectations versus reality and the negative portrayal of women.

### **4. Can I withdraw my child from lessons?**

The new legislation brought in through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 will bring about some important changes in relation to parental rights to withdraw children from school RSE:

- Parents will not be able to withdraw their child from relationships education in primary school or secondary school.
- Parents will be able to withdraw their child from primary school classes which address sex education - i.e. those that do not sit within the Relationships Education curriculum.
- Maintained primary schools are required to teach National Curriculum science, which includes some elements of sex education. Parents do not have a right to withdraw from this.
- If you wish to withdraw your child from the non-statutory elements, you can arrange an appointment with your school to discuss this.

## **5. Don't children learn anything else in PSHE other than sex?**

The PSHE curriculum is extremely broad and covers many other topics such as:

- Financial capabilities
- Emotional and mental wellbeing
- Health eating
- Physical activity
- Gangs and knife crime
- Citizenship
- The Law

Relationships and sex education consists of approximately 3 lessons per year.

## **6. I believe that a family should be a man and a woman. How does this match up with what is taught in schools?**

In schools we teach that families are made up in many different forms and can include, for example: single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, and foster parents/carers amongst other structures. The most important element of any family group is that it provides a nurturing environment for children.

## **7. Everyone in my child's class is Muslim and feels the same as me. Shouldn't this be reflected in what is taught?**

The RSE curriculum fully supports the Luton Council values of embracing equality and diversity, cohesion and inclusion whilst showing respect for others. The guiding principles being that all of the compulsory subject content must be age appropriate and developmentally appropriate. It must be taught sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of pupils and parents while always with the aim of providing pupils with the knowledge they need of the law.

## **8. My child is too young to learn about sex - I believe that RSE will sexualise my child — how can school prevent this?**

There is a myth that talking or learning about sex and relationships sexualises children and young people. There is strong evidence (Kirby 2007, UNESCO 2009, NICE 2010) that comprehensive relationships and sex education actually delays the initiation of sex, reduces the number of sexual partners and increases the use of condoms and contraception in adulthood. There is no evidence that RSE hastens the first experience of sex.

## **9. I teach my child that being gay is wrong in our culture. Surely school should respect this?**

Under the provisions of the Equality Act, 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 (collectively known as the protected characteristics). To undermine the rights of one of the protective characteristics is to undermine the rights of them all. Relationship education nurtures tolerance allowing children to grow up to be respectful of people who are different.

**10. It is my job to teach my child about sex and relationships — you are taking away my right to bring up my child within my values.**

The role of parents in the development of their children's understanding about relationships is vital. Parents are the first teachers of their children. They have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships.

All schools will work closely with parents when planning and delivering these subjects. Schools will ensure that parents know what will be taught and when, for example, by inviting parents into school to discuss what will be taught, address any concerns and help support parents in managing conversations with their children on these issues and keeping children safe.

**11. Teaching children about sex just encourages it — I don't want my child to know about adult matters so young.**

Primary RSE does not teach children about sex. It educates children on the importance of loving respectful relationships along with biological information regarding how the body changes during puberty and conception.

**12. Why does my child have to know about homosexuality?**

Everyone in Britain is protected by the Equality Act 2010. This act protects people against discrimination because of the protected characteristics.

Relationship education prepares children for adulthood in modern Britain, teaching respect for other people's human rights and tolerance of those that are different from themselves; this includes respecting people from different religions, different ethnic backgrounds as well as people of different sexuality.

**13. How will teaching about RSE keep my child safe on the internet?**

Children are taught the rules and principles for keeping safe online. This includes how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how and to whom to report issues. Some children are exposed to harmful behaviours online, and via other forms of media, which may normalise violent sexual behaviours. A focus on healthy relationships and broader Relationships Education can help young people understand acceptable behaviours in relationships.

**14. Surely learning about homosexuality and transgender issues is going to encourage my child to consider this as an option for themselves.**

Raising awareness around LGBT issues does not encourage or teach children to become homosexual or transgender. It does however teach tolerance and respect for others. It can also provide support and comfort to those who may be homosexual or transgender or have family members or friends that belong to this group.