

RSHE - DfE update statement

Statutory Relationships Education and Health Education came into effect at key stage 1 and 2 from September 2020, as did Relationships, Sex and Health Education at key stage 3 and 4. This statutory content — sometimes referred to as ‘RSHE’ — makes up the majority of schools’ PSHE education.

Many schools, including Norden, are ready for these requirements, but many others are still working towards being ready due to enormous pressure and challenges of the pandemic. The Department for Education therefore gave more time and advised that schools had until the beginning of the summer term to be prepared.

The DfE has now asked if we can share the following statement, which clarifies their expectations of schools in relation to implementing statutory RSHE:

‘We are aware of the unique pressures that schools are facing this academic year, and the difficulties that they may have in teaching some RSHE content remotely. We know that many schools have been providing excellent RSHE teaching during this academic year and that, where this has been possible, it will have had benefits for pupils and supported their mental health during this challenging period. We also appreciate that some schools may struggle to offer a comprehensive RSHE curriculum this year, which covers everything in the Department’s statutory guidance, and we would like to reassure schools that it is for them to decide what can reasonably be achieved within the confines of their statutory duties.

The law requires schools to provide some relationships, sex and health education to all secondary age pupils in the academic year 2020/21, and to provide some relationships and health education to all primary age pupils. Schools are also required to publish a Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy and to consult parents on this. In all teaching, we expect schools to comply with relevant legislation. We are aware however that for many schools, development of a fully comprehensive relationships education/RSE policy and RSHE curriculum will be an iterative process, which will need to continue into next year. Detailed curriculum planning will be required to consider how the RSHE subjects relate to and are supported by other subjects within the curriculum, including science and citizenship, and it is important that schools take the time to get this right.

Engagement with parents on the school’s RSE policy could be delivered online and does not necessarily need to be in person, and we are aware that many schools have been able to do this effectively. Some schools may choose to focus this year’s RSHE teaching on the immediate needs of their pupils, introducing a more comprehensive RSHE programme in September 2021. Teaching in the 2021/22 academic year should seek to address any gaps in pupils’ RSHE education this year.

Teachers and school leaders know their pupils best, and with the additional pressures of Covid-19 and home learning, we encourage schools to prioritise RSHE content based on the needs of their pupils, with particular attention to the importance of positive relationships, as well as mental and physical health. ‘