GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDING TO CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON CHANGES TO THE TEACHING OF SEX & RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION AND PSHE IN SCHOOLS.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE:

This is a guide for members of The Redeemed Christian Church of God as well as all concerned citizens, parents, aspiring parents and grandparents interested in participating in the call for evidence on Relationships and Sex Education in England launched by the Department for Education on December 19, 2017.

The Government is currently in discussion on what its new subjects of Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education will look like in practice. Formal guidance will be issued by the Secretary of State for Education later this year. This call for evidence is to help shape this guidance.

This consultation is an opportunity to set out a positive vision of how children could be taught about relationships and sexual matters in school. While these sensitive topics should not be compulsory school subjects at all, legislation passed in 2017 will make it compulsory from 2019 for schools these on the same basis as any other curriculum subject, this consultation is at least a chance to shape what is taught for the better.

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

The online consultation portal is available at this address: http://bit.ly/SREConsult. There are seven open questions. A maximum of 250 words may be entered for each of these.

All evidence must be submitted by: Monday 12th February at 11:45 PM.

*This guide is not a substitute for your opinion or experience. The call for evidence requests that respondents consider their personal knowledge and experience of the English education system. This guide is intended to help supporters unfamiliar with some of the terminology used in the call for evidence.

ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

In 2017, the Government passed the Children and Social Work Act. The following is a summary of the act which goes into action in 2019:

- Relationships Education is now compulsory in all primary schools, including faith schools, free schools, independent schools and academies. Parents may not withdraw their children from these lessons.

- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) has been made compulsory in all secondary schools. The Government claims it is committed to retaining the parental right of withdrawal from ‘sex education’ within RSE. However, it has also stated that it intends to make a decision on the age at which children have the right to make their own decisions on attendance at sex education — effectively allowing children to override their parents’ wishes.

The topics to be covered include, in the Government’s words:

- Different types of relationships, including friendships, family relationships, dealing with...
strangers and, at secondary school, intimate relationships;

- How to recognise, understand and build healthy relationships, including self-respect and respect for others, commitment (including marriage and civil partnerships), boundaries and consent, tolerance, and how to manage conflict, and also how to recognise unhealthy relationships, including bullying, coercion and exploitation;

- Healthy relationships and safety online, including use of social media, cyberbullying, sexting;

- How relationships may affect health and wellbeing, including the importance of good mental health and resilience; and

- [Be] set firmly within the context of relationships, factual knowledge at secondary school about sex, sexual health and sexuality.\(^1\)

Prime Minister Theresa May has said “we are pressing ahead with inclusive relationships and sex education in English schools, making sure that LGBT issues are taught well.” Under the current proposals teaching children about adult relationships, potentially including same-sex marriage and transgenderism, will be mandatory from five years old.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God believes there is no ‘age-appropriate’ way to teach primary school children about sexual relationships. Nor should primary school children be taught about homosexual relationships or transgenderism as they are too young to engage with such concepts.

Sex and relationships education cannot be taught in a moral vacuum. Young people need boundaries allowing them to know it is okay to say “no”.

At secondary school, marriage between a man and a woman should be taught as the gold standard of relationships. Marriage is the recognition of long-term, committed, stable, exclusive relationships which are the most fulfilling. Additionally this type of marriage has the most benefits for society as well as being the best environment in which to bring up children.

Also, children should be taught about relationships within a clear moral framework which gives them good grounds to resist sexual pressures and to prepare themselves for marriage. Sex should not be trivialised as something to play with or experiment with. Saving sex for marriage makes it more likely that your marriage will be long-lasting. Children should be taught to respect their bodies and to save sexual relationships for marriage.

Furthermore, parents are the primary educators of children. Children mature in different ways and at different times. Therefore, only parents can best know when a child is mature enough to discuss matters of sexual morality. Matters of morality are not for the state to dictate.

There is a legal right in the Children and Social Work Bill for faith schools to teach according to the tenets of their faith, and for parents to withdraw their children from sex education. These rights should not only be retained, but also extended to include relationships education across all age ranges. Parents must retain the ultimate responsibility for their children’s emotional wellbeing.

Children need to be provided with clear boundaries so that they know what is right and wrong. They should be protected from pressure to conform to the sexualisation of society.

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**QUESTION ONE:**

Thinking about Relationships Education in primary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for different age groups/key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.

**Context:** This covers Key Stage 1 (children ages 5-7) and Key Stage 2 (children ages 7-11). The rationale behind this new compulsory subject is to introduce children at the earliest possible age to the idea of diversity of relationships. Indeed, the Government has stated clearly that the new subject will be LGBT inclusive. Very young children will be told that two men or two women in a relationship or marriage is as valid and natural as a man and a woman. The promotion of same-sex relationships opens up the scope to introduce gender issues, with children encouraged to question their gender and the very idea of there being two distinct sexes.

A further aspect of this new subject is the emphasis on keeping children safe from sexual abuse. Talking to children about staying safe from sexual abuse is not the same as talking about matters like road safety. However child-friendly the approach may be, there are risks attached to introducing the subject of child sexual abuse to young children. A child’s sexual innocence may be disturbed or children may worry unduly that they might be victims of abuse. Children may become suspicious of normal interaction with their parents. A very worrying aspect of class lessons on children’s sexual safety is that children are encouraged to by-pass their parents and to contact organisations like Childline or confide in an adult other than their parents on any issues that concerns them. The overwhelming majority of children are not being abused and classroom discussions on sex abuse can undermine the relationship between children and their parents.

**Considerations:** When selecting the three foremost considerations for your list, please consider which of these you believe would be appropriate for very young children. You may wish to consider:

- Learning broad principles of respect for and kindness towards others
- Telling the truth
- Respectful behaviour towards parents, teachers and other authority
- Respect and support for other children who are different from them
- Age appropriate presentation of the uniqueness of the sexes and how they complement each other
- The importance and value of marriage between a man and woman and the natural family
- The courtesies and respect due to each of the sexes
- Why bullying is wrong and how to react if it happens
- How to stay safe on the internet or with strangers
- Importance of knowing every child is created as a unique individual. Each child has his or her own gifts and talents
- Everyone’s body is precious and should be protected with an emphasis on the home as the primary place where children learn to look after their bodies

You may also wish to consider what would not be appropriate for children of primary school age. Redeemed Christian Church of God believes children of this age are not able to critically assess complex adult sexual relationships, particularly same-sex marriage, and so neither these nor transgenderism should be taught. Instead we believe that parents are best placed to determine how and when young children encounter these concepts.
QUESTION TWO:

Thinking about relationships and sex education in secondary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for different age groups/ key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.

Context: This question covers Key Stage 3 (children ages 11 to 14) and the older age groups (between 14 and school leaving age at 16 to 18 – Key Stages 4 and 5).

As with primary schools, the LGBT agenda is being promoted in Secondary schools, especially as part of anti-bullying programmes and initiatives. However, in secondary schools, this agenda is more aggressive and explicit.

Secondary schools are becoming increasingly sexualised and this is likely to get worse now Relationships and Sex Education is a compulsory subject.

Considerations: When selecting the three foremost considerations for your list, please consider which of these you believe would be appropriate for teenaged children. You may wish to consider:

- The purpose and nature of male and female sexuality in relation to natural marriage
- The uniqueness and complementary nature of the sexes
- The benefits of saving sex for the right person in marriage
- The importance of natural marriage for raising and nurturing children
- How to resist being pressured into sexual relationships
- That a person’s gender is determined by biology
- How relationships impact families and go beyond the individuals involved
- Learning broad principles of tolerance, respect for and kindness towards others
- The importance of friendships and how to maintain them
- Why all bullying is wrong and how to react if it happens
- The dangers of abusing sexuality
- The importance of understanding how to interact safely online
- The long-term consequences of relationship decisions
- The health, wellbeing and financial benefits of natural marriage for spouses
- The positive impact of natural marriages on society

You may also wish to consider what would not be appropriate at this age. As children become more sexually aware, you may wish to consider to what extent, if any, that they should be taught about same-sex marriage or transgenderism by their schools.
QUESTION THREE:

We are particularly interested in understanding stakeholder views on Relationships Education and RSE which are specific to the digital context. Are there important aspects of ensuring safe online relationships that would not otherwise be covered in wider Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education, or as part of the computing curriculum?

**Context:** The emergence of new digital sexual threats has been one of the main justifications for making RSE compulsory in all schools. Whilst it is right that we are all concerned about online dangers, a major concern is that parents are not seen as at all relevant to the safeguarding process.

Many schools are tackling issues such as pornography, but many parents will not be aware of exactly how this topic is presented. Pupils do not necessarily get strong messages that pornography is dangerous and damaging. Instead, the widely accepted approach is to be non-judgmental and simply to encourage children to be more critically discerning and self-aware consumers of pornography. In other words, school children are told pornography is fine as long as you don't confuse it with real life. For example, a resource for a lesson on pornography is the card game "Planet Porn" where pupils decide whether images come from planet porn or the real world. Playing a game is not an appropriate way to protect children from the scourge of pornography.

**Consideration:** Regarding safety aspects, consider which of these you believe would be appropriate approaches to allowing children to be taught online safety:

- Schools working with parents to safeguard children from online threats
- Schools working with parents on strategies to keep internet use safe and to an acceptable level, for example via workshops and other initiatives
- Parents running workshops to help other parents tackle these issues
- Setting digital sexual threats within the context of the true meaning of human sexuality
- Teach principles of kindness, consideration and self-respect which are important online as well as off
- Teach the harm caused to individuals and their ability to form relationships by internet pornography
- Teach why it is important to avoid over-sharing on social media.
- Teaching that online pornography is not harmless and will have an impact on self-esteem. It will corrupt notions of what constitutes intimacy and appropriate behaviour between friends and towards members of the opposite sex as well as leading to an inability to form meaningful relationships.
- Helping children understand the potential physical and mental impact of social media usage
QUESTION FOUR:

We are also interested in understanding more about how schools communicate with parents on Relationships Education and RSE and are able to make informed decisions that best meet the needs of their children. This includes a right to withdraw their child from sex education within the RSE subject but not from sex education in the national curriculum for science. How should schools effectively consult parents so they can make informed decisions that meet the needs of their child, including on the right to withdraw? For example, how often, on what issues and by what means?

Context: This question asks how schools should involve parents in deciding what and how to teach both at primary and secondary school.

Please note: the question omits to mention that at present it is planned that the parents of primary school age children will have no right of withdrawal from lessons, irrespective of the content.

Considerations: We believe it is absolutely imperative that parents retain the final say in deciding how and when children encounter complex adult relationships. In thinking about your response, you may wish to consider:

- A parental right of withdrawal for primary school age children from Relationships Education
- A parental right to determine what is age-appropriate regarding teaching material
- Schools should consult with parents when drafting and reviewing their Relationships Education policy and ensure they are acting in accordance with parents’ wishes
- Parents should have the right to inspect Relationships Education and RSE material prior to it being delivered in lessons
- Parents should also be consulted about the way in which human relationships are presented in the classroom
- A briefing should take place at the start of each school year for parents to allow them to understand what will be taught and raise any objections
- Explanations should be provided for parents of children at faith schools on how the school will adapt taught material to be consistent with the faith ethos of the school
- A core part of Ofsted inspection of school provision in this area should be an assessment of how well parents have been consulted and this should have an impact on the final Ofsted judgement
**Context:** PSHE stands for Personal, Social, Health and Economic education. Until now, topics have typically included, for instance: alcohol, smoking and drugs, personal health, bullying, citizenship, democracy and human rights, careers and the world of work, personal finance, family and relationships, sex education. The last two topics now constitute the new compulsory subjects.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 did not automatically make PSHE a compulsory subject, but instead gives the decision on whether or not it should be compulsory to the Secretary of State for Education, stipulating only that this will be after consultation with 'such persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate'.

The concern about the topics included in PSHE is that seemingly sensible subjects like citizenship or combatting bullying have been hijacked to promote homosexuality and transgenderism. This is particularly the case because of the obligation on schools to promote so-called Fundamental British Values, which include a distorted notion of 'tolerance' with regard to homosexual behaviour. This is exacerbated by the 2010 Equality Act, in which schools and other public institutions must take 'positive action' on 'discrimination' against people with 'protected characteristics' which include 'sexual orientation', 'gender reassignment' and 'marriage and civil partnership' (which now includes same-sex marriages).

**Consideration:** We suggest you offer your own ideas about what kind of topics you think would best prepare children for life in the adult world eg. practical advice on financial planning, health and safety, etc. In particular, we suggest that you propose topics which do not subject young people to ideological indoctrination. Examples would include:

- Health and safety
- Financial Skills
- Career Skills
- Financial management
- Caring for their environment

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**QUESTION FIVE:**

Thinking about PSHE in primary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught and why? Please include your reasons for choosing each subject area or evidence to support your suggestions.

**QUESTION SIX:**

Thinking about PSHE in secondary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught and why?
Context: This question is really about encouraging schools to promote the LGBT agenda within PSHE lessons. A typical situation would be the presence of one pupil questioning his or her 'gender' or declaring his or her 'sexual orientation' giving rise to the promotion of these issues to the whole class. While it is important that any young person facing difficulties with such personal matters should be properly cared for, we should question whether the correct pastoral care for such a person is to affirm and encourage harmful lifestyle choices. This can be troubling and potentially harmful for other young people in the class.

Consideration: In answering this question, consider the following:

Schools should not be able to use PSHE lessons to:
- Undermine the faith values of students and their families
- Promote diverse sexual orientations
- Denigrate natural marriage
- Encourage children and teenagers to question their sexuality or gender
- Present sexually provocative materials in the classroom

Additionally, schools should have the flexibility and scope to teach PSHE is line with their ethos and, in the case of faith schools, according to the tenets of their religion. Headteachers should not be put under pressure to deliver content at odds with the school's values and which many parents would find objectionable.

QUESTION SEVEN:

How much flexibility do you think schools should have to meet the needs of individual pupils and to reflect the diversity of local communities and wider society in the content of PSHE lessons in schools?
Thank you!

We, The Redeemed Christian Church of God thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your time and willingness to let your voice be known to our Government regarding this vital matter. This is such an important matter that will drastically impact our children and it is imperative that we take an active stance on what we believe. While we are thankful for willingness to fill out the survey, we also ask that you be in prayer for this matter. Pray that God will move in a mighty way throughout our land and guide the decisions of our governmental leaders. Thank you all, and God Bless!

RESOURCES: