

Relationships and Sex Education consultation

Guide to responding

INTRODUCTION

This guide does not cover all the questions in the consultation. You can respond to as many of the questions as you wish. We have selected key questions to comment on, to help you form your own answers. **PLEASE USE YOUR OWN WORDS.**

The parental right of withdrawal is a key issue. The proposals do not include any right of withdrawal from relationships education in primary schools. At secondary level, the existing right of withdrawal is being neutered. It would be reduced to a right to request withdrawal, with the ultimate decision resting with head teachers. A fundamental principle is at stake. Biblically and legally, parents are primarily responsible for their child's education.

The deadline is Wednesday 7 November 2018.

There are a number of documents related to the consultation, including draft guidance and draft regulations. These can be found here: www.bit.ly/rseconsult18

You will need to use the Government's online response form, which is here: www.bit.ly/rsespond18

GUIDE TO THE RESPONSE FORM

The headings below follow the titles of the response form pages.

'Confidentiality'

You must answer 'yes' or 'no' to the question about confidentiality before you will be able to move on to the next page.

'Introductory questions'

This page is about you. You don't have to give your name or email address. But if you have any professional connection with schools, or you are a parent, please do answer the last question on the page.

'Draft statutory guidance – Relationships Education'

This is the first of a series of pages about the draft guidance. You can read the relevant parts of the guidance by following links next to each question on the form.

Do you agree that the content of Relationships Education as set out in paragraphs 50-57 of the guidance will provide primary school pupils with sufficient knowledge to help them have positive relationships?

(NB, this is the second question on the page.)

We suggest selecting '**neither agree nor disagree**' – some good points are mixed in with more problematic comments.

You could use some of the following ideas to help you give your own explanation in the box:

- These paragraphs set out some helpful principles for relationships and respecting people. For example, paragraph 51 refers to kindness, consideration and the importance of honesty and truthfulness. Paragraph 56 says pupils should develop virtues like self-control, courage, humility and generosity. These statements should be welcomed. Pick out those that you think are particularly important for children in primary schools, explain why, and say that this approach must not be watered down in the final version of the guidance.
- Unfortunately, the first section of the table under paragraph 57 contains some phrasing of concern. It says pupils should know "that others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences". There is a distinction between being taught to respect people as people regardless of their family background and being taught that every family relationship is equally valid and must be celebrated. This wording risks falling the wrong side of this line.

Do you agree that paragraphs 61-64 clearly set out the requirements on primary schools who choose to teach sex education?

We suggest selecting '**strongly disagree**'.

- Section 403 of the Education Act 1996 requires the Secretary of State to issue guidance to primary schools teaching sex education that is designed "to secure that children learn the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and the bringing up of children". Paragraphs 61-64 do not fulfil these requirements because they do not mention marriage at all.

'Draft statutory guidance – Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)'

Do you agree that the content of RSE as set out in paragraphs 65-77 of the guidance will provide secondary school pupils with sufficient knowledge to help them have positive relationships?

(NB, this is the second question on the page.)

Because some of these paragraphs are far more helpful than others, we suggest selecting '**neither agree nor disagree**'.

- Welcome the positive parts of paragraph 70, which refer to the importance of virtues like honesty, self-control and generosity.
- Explain why it's important that teaching on positive sexual relationships is not reduced to 'consent' and 'pleasure' as some campaigners want.
- The teaching outlined in paragraph 70 is important for building strong and lasting relationships and stable, secure families which are the bedrock of society.
- Paragraph 71 assumes there is such a thing as an objective 'gender identity' distinct from the fact of biological sex. You could explain that many people don't accept this. Where there are different views on an issue, schools must adopt an

objective, balanced and critical approach (if teaching about it at all).

Do you agree that paragraphs 36-46 on the right to withdraw provide sufficient clarity and advice to schools in order for them to meet the legal requirements?

We suggest selecting **'strongly disagree'**.

- The current parental right of withdrawal is very rarely used but it discourages schools from adopting radical approaches and must be maintained.
- Giving headteachers power to overrule parents fundamentally undermines the place of parents as primary educators of their child. Although the guidance restricts this to 'exceptional circumstances', there will be a wide range of interpretations of what is meant by 'exceptional'. It is the principle that matters. Where there are genuine concerns about the safety of the child, these should be dealt with under existing safeguarding procedures.

We have no comment on the page entitled **'Draft statutory guidance – Physical Health and Wellbeing'**

'Draft statutory guidance – Engaging with parents and the wider community'

Do you agree with the approach outlined in paragraphs 36-46 on how schools should engage with parents on the subjects?

We suggest selecting **'disagree'**.

- There are positive elements to these paragraphs, including recognising the vital role of parents in developing children's understanding about relationships.
- However, a major problem is that the main purpose of engaging with parents is not made clear: to consult them on how they want the school to teach on these topics. Schools need to ascertain parents' views of what is age-appropriate and to seek to understand religious sensitivities. Guidance should insist schools consult meaningfully and regularly, allow parents to see teaching materials, take parents' concerns seriously and modify their approach in response.

We have no comments on the next two pages entitled:

- **'Draft statutory guidance - Delivery and teaching strategies'**
- **'Draft statutory guidance – Special Needs and Disabilities'**

'Draft statutory guidance'

Do you have any further views on the draft statutory guidance that you would like to share with the department? Do you think that the expectations of schools are clear?

- Paragraphs 18-19 emphasise that the religious background of pupils must be taken into account. Paragraph 20 makes it clear that schools with a religious character will be able to teach about relationships from that perspective. It is important to welcome these paragraphs and say they must not be watered down in the final guidance.

We have no comment on the page entitled **'Financial Education'**.

'School support'

Unless you have professional experience, we suggest leaving most of the page but using the box at the bottom to comment.

- The advice on page 35 of the guidance recommends the resources at sexwise.fpa.org.uk. You may choose to look at this website to inform your comments, but please be aware that it is explicit. Most parents would think this entirely unsuitable. It has plenty to say about sex, but does not refer to love. This entirely undermines the emphasis on relationships that is supposed to be given priority in the new subject of RSE.
- Similarly, the recommendation of Stonewall's "Different Families, Same Love", aimed at Primary schools, is not appropriate because it requires teachers and pupils to celebrate all types of 'family'. That ignores clear objective evidence that all family arrangements are not equally good for children, misleading them and putting children and teachers who conscientiously disagree with Stonewall's message in a difficult position.

'Draft regulations'

This page is about the proposed changes to the law, rather than the guidance covered so far.

We are required to set out in the regulations the circumstances in which a pupil (or a pupil below a specified age) is to be excused from receiving RSE or specified elements of it. The draft regulations provide that parents have a right to request that their child be withdrawn from sex education in RSE and that this request should be granted unless, or to the extent that the headteacher considers that it should not be. Taking into account the advice to schools on how head teachers should take this decision, in paragraphs 41-46 of the guidance, do you agree that this is an appropriate and workable option?

(NB, this is the second question on the page.)

We suggest selecting **'strongly disagree'**.

- The current parental right of withdrawal is very rarely used but it discourages schools from adopting radical approaches and must be maintained.
- Giving headteachers power to overrule parents fundamentally undermines the place of parents as primary educators of their child. Although the guidance restricts this to 'exceptional circumstances', there will be a wide range of interpretations of what is meant by 'exceptional'. It is the principle that matters. Where there are genuine concerns about the safety of the child, these should be dealt with under existing safeguarding procedures.

Do you have any other views on the draft regulations that you would like to share with the department?

- Relationships Education in primary schools will inevitably deal with moral issues that are grounded in religious and philosophical beliefs. It is for parents to decide on the beliefs that should shape a child's upbringing, not the Government. Parents must have a right of withdrawal from Relationships Education as well as Sex Education in primary schools. In practice, teaching of the two subjects will be integrated in primary schools that teach sex education, so schools will have to allow for withdrawal from both.

We have no comment on the page entitled **'Regulatory Impact Assessment'**.

On the page entitled 'Almost Done...' simply click [Submit Response](#).