

# Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Statutory Guidance and Code

## GUIDE TO RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION

The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act requires the Welsh Government to produce a Relationships and Sexuality Education Code setting out what RSE must cover. The code is an essential part of implementing the new RSE requirement. By law, RSE teaching must comply with the code. As part of the same consultation, the Government is also asking for feedback on draft RSE guidance, which schools must have regard to in planning the RSE curriculum.

The code identifies three stages of learning: early development (age 3-7); developing years (8-11); and adolescence (12-16). For each of these stages, it sets out general content that should be covered in RSE.

The consultation document, including the draft guidance and code, is available at <https://gov.wales/curriculum-wales-guidance-and-code-relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse>

The same webpage has a downloadable response form. When you have completed it, you can send it by email to [curriculumforwales@gov.wales](mailto:curriculumforwales@gov.wales) or by post to Curriculum Realisation Unit, Curriculum and Assessment Division, The Education Directorate, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

Alternatively, you can respond online at <https://gov.wales/node/39338/respond-online>

The consultation closes on 16 July.

## ANSWERING THE KEY QUESTIONS

You do not have to answer every question. The most relevant are **4** and **6**, while **10** allows you to make general comments. Some bullet points to inform your response are given below, but you are much more likely to be effective if you use your own words.

*Question 4: We propose that the content set out in the three broad stages of the guidance will become mandatory as part of the RSE code. Do you agree that they encompass what is important about RSE for all learners' ages and developmental stages?*

- The code should specify that children at all developmental stages should learn about the nature of marriage and its importance for families and society. The draft only explicitly mentions marriage in the section on what adolescents should cover, not younger age groups.
- The code should require that there is due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life across all ages and developmental stages.
- The early development stage includes "the use of accurate terminology for all body parts". This must not lead to the use of unnecessarily detailed resources. Younger children do not need to know what the clitoris is, for example.
- The age of consent at 16 should be explicitly mentioned as a law that adolescents are to understand.
- The code says that children in the early development stage should learn the "benefits of asking for help and who to ask". Parents should be specifically mentioned as being the most likely, though not the only, source of help.
- The code says adolescents should be taught "How and why attitudes towards diversity are changing (including gender and sexual diversity)" (page 14). This risks marginalising those with traditional views on, for example, same-sex marriage or gender ideology. Teaching should encourage respect for people holding different viewpoints.

*Question 6: Do you agree that the mandatory elements of the guidance (the RSE code) are the right ones? Is anything missing that should be included?*

- There should be much stronger emphasis in the code on the importance of protecting children from inappropriate materials, especially as the code was supposed to 'reassure parents'. Children must be allowed to have a childhood and should not be exposed to materials which are inappropriate. They already face considerable social pressure to be sexualised.
- The code must include religious background as a factor to be taken into account when schools are considering what is developmentally appropriate.
- The draft code risks exposing young children to confusing and unhelpful topics they simply are not ready for. Some older children may be able to approach learning about "different identities" and "a diversity of relationships, gender and sexuality, including LGBTQ+ lives" in an objective and critical manner. But it is inappropriate to make this kind of teaching mandatory for all pupils.

*Question 10: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.*

- The new code requires teaching to be "factual". If the Welsh Government is serious about this, it should insert safeguards into the code requiring schools not to teach radical gender ideology as if it were fact. Schools should not use resources from groups which suggest that non-conformity with gender stereotypes means a pupil may be transgender.
- The guidance recommends that schools have a written RSE policy that parents/carers can access. There should be a strong expectation in the guidance that schools have such a policy, not simply a recommendation.
- The guidance recommends that governing bodies ensure that the written RSE policy is reviewed annually and that engagement with parents/carers is "undertaken at appropriate intervals". There should be a strong expectation in the guidance, not just a recommendation, that there will be consultation with parents/carers at the point of drafting and any significant amendment of the policy.
- The code includes "sex, gender and sexuality" in a list of things that "develop and change over time". This risks inappropriately taking sides in the contemporary debate about gender ideology and would cut across many parents' beliefs. The idea that 'sex' can change over time in humans or any mammal is contrary to fact and will conflict with the teaching of Biology.
- The glossary in the annex uses the language of activists to define key terms. Sex, for example, is said to be "assigned at birth" rather than being defined by biology. This would indoctrinate learners in a particular view, the very thing the guidance prohibits elsewhere.
- The guidance states that "schools may teach about different perspectives within faiths on matters of relationships and sexuality and this can help learners engage and navigate potential tensions. However, this must not be done in a way that seeks to indoctrinate learners in a particular view." It is right that schools may teach about faith perspectives. However, the guidance must recognise that promoting a secular worldview through RSE would equally amount to indoctrination. It appears to link indoctrination to religious views only.
- Most 'faith schools' will want to fairly represent a range of views within RSE when pupils are old enough to consider them critically. However, their faith position is still relevant. They must be free to approach all subjects with the aims and priorities that follow from their religious foundation.