

SCHOOL GUIDE TO PREVENTING RSHE AVOIDANCE ABSENCES

This tool has been designed for use by schools to support constructive approaches to engaging with families where statutory RSHE is contentious, risking RSHE avoidance related absence.

The depth and breadth of views around RSHE topics are broad and there are understandable and legitimate areas of contention. RSHE 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. Schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.

FAQ'S

WHAT CAN PARENTS HAVE THEIR CHILD EXCUSED FROM?

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. Except in exceptional circumstances, the school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

Topic	Primary	Secondary
Relationships Education	✗	✓
Sex Education	✓ Unless taught in science	✗ Until 3 terms before 16 yrs
Health Education	✗	✓



NOTE: Puberty is taught within health education. LGBT relevant content is fully integrated throughout the curriculum. All pupils must be taught LGBT content at a timely point. Schools must comply with the provisions of the Equality Act, 2010.

WHAT AND HOW CAN WE CONSULT WITH PARENTS?

Schools should:	
Policy	Consult parents in developing and reviewing their policy, ensuring the policy meets the needs of pupils and parents and reflects the community they serve.
	Have an up-to-date policy, which is made available to parents free of charge.
Curriculum	Work closely with parents when planning, delivering and reviewing these subjects.
	Ensure parents know what will be taught and when.
	Provide examples of the resources that they plan to use, reassuring parents and enabling them to continue the conversations started in class at home.
	Give parents every opportunity to understand the purpose and content of RSHE through good communication and opportunities for parents to understand and ask questions about the school's approach help increase confidence in the curriculum.
Withdrawal	Clearly communicate the fact that parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

	<p>It is good practice for the Head Teacher to discuss with parents who want to withdraw:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wishes of the child, as appropriate ▪ The benefits of receiving this important education ▪ Any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child (social and emotional effects of being excluded) ▪ Likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes ▪ That detrimental effects may be mitigated if parents deliver sex education to their child at home instead <p>The school should document this process to ensure a record is kept.</p>
	<p>Except in exceptional circumstances, respect the parents request to withdraw their child. <i>This process is the same for pupils with SEND. However there may be exceptional circumstances where the head teacher may want to take a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision.</i></p>
Inclusion	<p>Take into account the religious background of all pupils when planning teaching, so that the topics are appropriately handled.</p>
	<p>Comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.</p>
	<p>Reach out to <u>all</u> parents, recognising that a range of approaches may be needed for doing so.</p>

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF A PARENTS REMOVES THEIR CHILD FROM EDUCATION TO AVOID RSHE?

Parents must ensure children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs (Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act). The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. A parent is guilty of an offence if their child has not attended school regularly and/or if they know their child is failing to attend school regularly, and they failed to ensure the child to do so. Whilst there are legal defences to these including additional defence for GRT, there are no defences for avoiding RSHE.

WHAT EXPERT/BESPOKE GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE TO ME?

Inclusion Adviser: Primary	hilary.heath@educatorsolutions.org.uk
Inclusion Adviser: Secondary	caroline.henderson@educatorsolutions.org.uk
RSHE Adviser	josie.rayner-wells@educatorsolutions.org.uk
Attendance Team	katie.griffiths@norfolk.gov.uk

TOP TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT: BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS

- ✓ Provide safe spaces for families to discuss concerns relevant to faith or culture
- ✓ Use an interpreter where required
- ✓ Listen to suggestions for bridging practice with parental requests, retaining compliance with guidance requirements inc. RSHE Guidance and Equalities Act, 2010
- ✓ Be honest about school/national approaches, including consequences for poor attendance

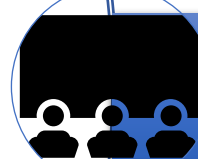
OPPORTUNITIES TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE WITH PARENTS



Initial parent consultation to share evidence-based rationale of RSHE, school vision, curriculum content and pupil voice responses. Use a menu of informal approaches inc. small groups and safe spaces for face to face work alongside accessible information/letters.



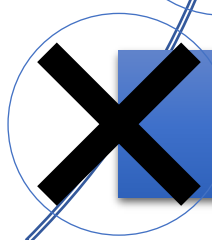
Make RSHE policy and curriculum freely available to all parents in accessible formats. These may require translation and support to interpret.



Invite parents to a RSHE evening providing an opportunity to view resources, understand how to continue learning at home and be reassured through an opportunity to ask questions. It may be helpful to offer a personalised, culturally safe approach for some families.



Managing requests for withdrawal. Arrange for parents to meet with a trusted member of staff providing an opportunity to discuss concerns and identify constructive approaches to overcoming where possible. Document conversation and agreed outcomes. Provide feedback.



If RSHE avoidance occurs work with the family to establish approaches that will encourage regular attendance and avoid legal action as far as possible. Retaining a focus on statutory responsibilities and supportive relationships.