

A Guide for Parents and Carers on Sex and Relationship Education in all UK schools.

PSHE aims to support schools to work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure appropriate, accurate sex and relationship education.

PSHE is a comprehensive scheme of Work for the whole primary school, from Foundation to Year 6 (3-11 year olds). It integrates PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) Education, emotional literacy, social skills and spiritual development in a whole-school approach.

PSHE sex and relationship education units of work aim to give children their entitlement to information about relationships, puberty and human reproduction, appropriate to their ages and stages of development. It is treated in a matter-of-fact manner to allay embarrassment and fear. We do not believe it is controversial. It is flexible enough for a school to ensure that the material fits its ethos and values.

There is a strong safeguarding element to the SRE units of work that teaches sex and relationship education.

Most parents/carers want the best for their children.

Most parents/carers want to protect their children and to keep them safe.

Most parents/carers want their children to be healthy and happy.

Schools do too... and high quality SRE is part of this. This work at St Johns covers relationships, puberty and human reproduction, all as appropriate to primary school aged children.

What exactly is Sex and Relationship Education?

The Government's definition is this: "It is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health.

It is not about the promotion of sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching.

(Department for Education and Employment, SRE Guidance, 2000) Whilst PSHE education remains a non-statutory subject, section 2.5 of the National Curriculum framework document states that: 'All schools should make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), drawing on good practice.' Along with the National Curriculum framework, the DfE also published a guidance document on PSHE education, which states that the subject is: 'An important and necessary part of all pupils' education.' It goes on to note that: 'Schools should seek to use PSHE education to build, where appropriate, on the statutory content already outlined in the national curriculum, the basic school curriculum and in statutory guidance on: drug education, financial education, sex and relationship education (SRE) and the importance of physical activity and diet for a healthy lifestyle.'

Why is SRE taught in schools? There are many reasons why SRE is taught in schools:

- It is part of the National Science Curriculum.
- More than ever before, children are exposed to representations of sex and sexuality through the media and the social culture around them, so we need to present a balanced view of SRE.
- Rates of sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancy in the UK are relatively high – as is the regret felt by young people after early sexual experiences.
- Research shows that most parents say they want the support of schools in providing SRE for their children.
- Research consistently shows that effective SRE delays first sexual experience and reduces risk taking.
- Surveys of children and young people have repeatedly told us that SRE tends to be “too little, too late and too biological”.

At St John's, we believe that knowledge empowers children to make informed decisions that help keep them safe, healthy and happy.

. What is the purpose of SRE? There are four main aims for teaching SRE within the context of Primary School PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) Education:

- To enable young people to understand and respect their bodies, and be able to cope with the changes puberty brings, without fear or confusion
- To help young people develop positive and healthy relationships appropriate to their age, development, etc. (respect for self and others)
- To support young people to have positive self-esteem and body image, and to understand the influences and pressures around them
- To empower them to be safe and safeguarded

Won't telling my child about human reproduction take away his/her innocence?

No. The evidence suggests that high quality SRE does the opposite: it actually delays young people's first sexual experience, and it helps them become much more confident and comfortable about making informed choices. Good SRE takes away children's ignorance, not their innocence. Teaching about safety and relationships as part of PSHE Education contributes to how schools approach the safeguarding of pupils. It helps them to recognise when they and others are at risk and equips them with the skills, strategies and language they need to take appropriate action. This is crucial to fulfilling statutory duties in relation to safeguarding pupils as well as to meeting Ofsted expectations. Ofsted expressed concern in its 2013 PSHE report that a lack of high-quality, age-appropriate RSE in over a third of schools left young people vulnerable to inappropriate sexual behaviours and exploitation.

It is clear, therefore, that PSHE Education plays a vital part in helping to meet school's responsibilities to safeguard their pupils, your children.

Common questions...

I've heard that I can take my child out of PSHE lessons on SRE... Is this true? Yes, it is.

Parents/carers have the legal right to withdraw their children from the SRE included in the PSHE Education curriculum (as that is a non-statutory subject). **But** they are not permitted to withdraw their child from the Sex Education included in the National Curriculum Science Orders, as Science is a statutory subject. If you are considering taking your child out of SRE lessons within PSHE Education, please consider the following:

- All the other children in your child's class will have been taught this information and may well talk to your child about it, perhaps in the playground... and potentially mislead them or confuse them as a result. It may prove far better to allow experienced and sensitive teaching staff to teach your child in a progressive, developmental way that is grounded in research.
- They will be learning about reproduction in Science lessons. The RSE in PSHE Education will echo this and will concentrate on building self-esteem and teaching children how to enjoy healthy, appropriate relationships, improve self-esteem and self-confidence, and make healthy, informed choices. When viewed this way, it is hoped that SRE won't be seen as contentious or a cause for concern, but rather as helpful.
- Talk to staff at school to fully understand the rationale behind and the content of this work.
- Talk to your child's teacher, the head teacher, or the teacher in charge of PSHE Education. Often, when parents and carers find out what is in the PSHE Education curriculum, their fears are allayed as they can appreciate it is in the best interests of their child's lifelong learning.

What do you teach about Sex and Relationships?

This work is in the context of the whole PSHE curriculum and underpinned by the value system of our school, that is, valuing loving, stable relationships, respect for each other, and so on. The emphasis is on changes that children will experience as they grow up: what those changes look and feel like, and why they happen.

These are overarching areas we cover containing the units of work:

LONG-TERM OVERVIEW

Autumn: **Relationships** - Families and friendships

Safe relationships

Respecting ourselves and others

Spring: **Living in the wider world** - Families and friendships

Safe relationships

Respecting ourselves and others

Belonging to a community

Media literacy and digital resilience

Money and work

Summer: **Health and Wellbeing**

Physical health and Mental wellbeing

Growing and changing

Keeping safe

St John's Academy aims, by the end of Year 6, to have helped children understand puberty and human reproduction.

Units covered include,

- Life cycles
- How babies are made
- My changing body
- Puberty
- How babies grow
- Growing from young to old
- Becoming a teenager
- Assertiveness
- Self-respect
- Safeguarding
- Family stereotypes
- Self and body image
- Attraction
- Change
- Accepting change
- Looking ahead
- Moving/transition to secondary

What will my child actually be taught?

The SRE unit is taught over a period of 6/8 weeks in the second half of the summer term. Each year group will be taught appropriate to their age and development stage. Please note: at no point will a child be taught something that is inappropriate; and if a question from a child arises and the teacher feels it would be inappropriate to answer, (for example, because of its mature or explicit nature), the child will be encouraged to ask his/her parents or carers at home, and the question will not be answered to the child or class if it is outside the remit of that year group's programme.

How we have changed since we were babies.

Boys' and girls' bodies; body parts Boys' and girls' bodies; body parts and respecting privacy (which parts of the body are private and why this is).

How babies grow and how boys' and girls' bodies change as they grow older Internal and external reproductive body parts, body changes in girls and menstruation.

Puberty for boys and girls, and conception.

Puberty for boys and girls and understanding conception to birth of a baby.

All lessons are taught using simple, child-friendly language and pictures, which help children understand changes more effectively. The key concepts that children learn in are inner strength, self-esteem and resilience. These are really important as they help keep children safe and it helps children to make healthy decisions later in life. Accurate information is important but only part of the picture: help them now by building their inner resilience, so they become mindful children, mindful teenagers, and mindful adults.

Why are girls taught about boys' development and vice versa?

We believe it is very important for children to understand each other's development. It helps to ensure that children are mindful of their peers' needs and allows them to develop into sensitive, caring, compassionate individuals who understand the changes that boys and girls experience. At St Johns, we teach primarily, in single gender groups.

How can I talk to my child about relationships, puberty and human reproduction?

What children learn at school is part of the puzzle, and children can continue to learn from you at home. For some parents/carers, it can feel totally natural to discuss relationships, puberty and human reproduction with their child, while for others it can seem awkward and difficult. Either way, it is important to remember these key points:

- We all want children to feel safe and to be happy and healthy
- We need to consider their needs
- We need to normalise talking about relationships, puberty and human reproduction so taboos don't need to exist

- We might need to challenge our own ways of thinking
- We have choices: we can avoid it or we can communicate openly and honestly with children – they need us!

Here are some tips for talking to your child:

- Be honest: if you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and say so. Tell your child that you will need to find out and that you will get back to them with more soon.
- Remember that children are curious and want to know and understand. We tend to place our adult perspective on children's questions and comments, allowing our brains to fill up with all the possible horrors that an innocent question could be about, when actually a child just wants (and needs) a very simple, matter-of-fact answer. This answer will not involve an 'adult' understanding of a topic – it needs to be at a child's level, with opportunity given for the child to be able to ask further questions if needed. Give yourself time to respond by asking something like, "What do you think that means?" or "Why do you ask?"
- Keep lines of communication open: having an open and honest relationship with your child can really help make conversations easier, so make sure that you are always willing to talk when your child needs you; if you can't, explain why and find another time when it is more mutually convenient.
- Use correct terminology: it helps that children aren't confused by hints, euphemisms and innuendo; use correct terminology whenever you can, especially for body parts.
- Respond to what children say they need: bear in mind that children's lives today are very different from even five years ago. Therefore, the education they receive needs to reflect this. Research shows us time and time again that children want and need RSE that is age- and stage-appropriate, that teaches them about relationships and emotions, and that is returned to consistently throughout their education. We may feel that they know too much, when actually ignorance is the enemy of innocence: we believe effective RSE delays sexual activity, ensures children are safer and empowers them to make their own healthier choices.
- Keep it simple and short – If they want more information, children will ask for it.
- Read books, leaflets or watch an educational video with your child.
- It may be easier to talk while you're doing something else – washing up, driving in the car or walking.
- Answer questions and don't be afraid to say: 'I really don't know – let's work it out or look it up together'. Have a phrase for awkward moments, such as: 'That's a good question, and let's talk about it once we get home' (then make sure you do!).
- Always respond: if you don't, she or he may think it is wrong to talk to you about relationships, puberty or human reproduction and as a result you may find your child clams up when you raise the subject.

- If it all feels too personal, try talking about people in books, films and favourite television programmes.
- Listen rather than judge. Try asking them what they think.
- Enjoy it. Laugh with each other.
- Work in partnership with the school.

During the process of teaching these units, we actively encourage pupil voice.

Here are some of the answers that children from Early Years through to Year 6 have given us this week, as we develop our curriculum to ensure children are protected and taught everything they need to know in primary education for lifelong learning.

(Don't forget Secondary RSE changes to the curriculum will be discussed with you as your child enters KS3.)

Please remember that staff use their expertise to navigate issues that arise throughout the year and teachers use their experience and knowledge of each child to adapt the content so that it's used when it's needed most.

By the end of each academic year, the curriculum will have been fully successfully covered.

Feedback from St John's Pupil – June 2026

EYFS	"I would talk to my Mummy and Daddy or Mrs Bee."
EYFS	"We learn to say no, and tell someone who we trust."
EYFS	"You tell a grown up if someone is not kind."
Year 1	"PSHE teaches our brain to be strong."
Year 1	"We learn to be safe near water and hold our grown up's hand."
Year 1	"Gerald the Giraffe tells us how to believe in ourselves."
Year 2	"Mr Rizzo hires people who are safe to trust."
Year 2	"If the teacher is busy, we tell the 'Tiny Teacher' (TA) and they help."
Year 2	"If we want to express our feelings, we write a note and put it in the worry monster."
Year 2	"You can talk to anyone here. Absolutely anyone!"
Year 3	"PSHE is for our mental wellbeing."
Year 3	"We learn to feel important ourselves and help others."
Year 3	"I have lots of people I trust inside and outside of school."
Year 3	"PSHE expands our knowledge."
Year 4	"If I had to teach a PSHE lesson to my class, I'd teach about right and wrong laws, like not to steal."
Year 4	"A risk is dangerous. It means it can get you in big trouble. There will be a bad consequence."
Year 4	"Consent means you have to ask permission, like if you want to hug someone, you have to ask."
Year 4	"In Year 4 we were separated into boys and girls."
Year 4	"We take part in Friendship groups during Collective Worship and also Super boys about controlling our emotions."

Year 5	"We have learned about road safety all through school."
Year 5	"We can use the skills we've learned in every day life."
Year 5	"Gender stereotypes mean we are all treat the same."
Year 6	"We learn about hormones, how they can make you feel weird and to give people space."
Year 6	"PSHE is for our mental wellbeing. Its teaches us what's going on in the world."
Year 6	"There's lots of science involved with PSHE."
Year 6	"PSHE works well because there's lots of chatting. Its interactive."
Year 6	"In PSHE we learn, mental wellbeing, how to help each other, face scenarios, healthy foods, drugs, human rights, money and savings, and about sex."
Year 6	"We learn about sex which is 'awkward' but year 4 prepared us for it."
Year 6	"If I was to teach a PSHE lesson today, I'd teach about sleep and why it's important. Group chats are texting till 2am and friends are playing video games."
Year 6	"I'd teach my class about disabilities and diversity and how to help them."
Year 6	"Risk means it's dangerous and get you into big trouble."
Year 6	"We need to learn about sex to keep us safe. I know some from my parents and it's abit embarrassing, but we can talk to our friends about it after the lesson."

We hope you have found this information useful and helpful.

Moving forward, pupils told us they would like more lessons on sleep, eating healthier, bike safety, disabilities, diversity and the rights and wrongs in law and further inspirational visits for career choices.

They have also discussed how they would like extra time to feedback to teachers following lessons taught, so we are looking at ways to implement this as soon as possible, to show our children that we value their opinions and ideas.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

You can talk to your child's class teacher, Mr Rizzo the Principal, Mrs Godley, our Vice Principal or Mrs Bee, our PSHE Lead. We hope by sharing this information with you and you understand what is in the PSHE Education curriculum, your fears are allayed and you can appreciate it is in the best interests of your child's lifelong learning that we work and support your children, together as a family.

Kind regards.