



**Sex and
Relationship
Education**

DRAFT

This guidance replaces Hertfordshire's Sex Education in Schools policy published in 1996. It reflects the DfEE Sex and Relationship Education Guidance, which was published in 2000 and takes account of the revised National Curriculum Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship Frameworks and Programmes of Study, National Healthy Schools Standard (NHSS) and the Social Exclusion Unit Report on Teenage Pregnancy.

It is important that Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) is supported by the school's broad PSHE curriculum and is inclusive of all pupils to ensure that they:

- receive their sex education in the wider context of relationships
- are prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life
- develop positive attitudes to sexuality.

Pupils should be taught about the nature and importance of marriage and about the mutually supportive relationships outside marriage which form key building blocks of community and society. Pupils should feel that SRE is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs, whatever their developing sexuality is. There must be no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances. The needs of both sexes should be met. Staff may wish to consider appropriate groupings for lessons such as single sex ones for certain issues. The National Healthy School Standard will provide a useful and supportive framework for delivering SRE.

Research has demonstrated that:

- Sound SRE does not make young people more likely to enter into sexual activity, but can help them learn the reasons for, and benefits to be gained from, delaying such activity.
- Information alone is insufficient. It needs to be a part of an integrated school cross-curricular programme helping pupils to develop their skills and shape their values and attitudes.
- Discussion and interactive tasks encourage learning and are enjoyed by pupils.

The word 'parents' is used throughout to include carers who are acting as parents, in the best interests of the children in their care. This includes children and young people in public care.



A definition of Sex and Relationship Education

SRE is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development, embedded in a context that enhances the self-worth and confidence of each individual and encourages mutually respectful relationships and empathy for others.

It has three main elements:

Attitudes and values

Recognition of the understanding of the value of family life, marriage and stable and loving relationships for the nurture of both children and adults.

Respect for oneself and others, loving and being loved and caring for oneself and others.

Exploring, considering and understanding moral dilemmas.

Development of critical thinking skills as part of decision making.

Personal and social skills

Strengthening self-esteem and self-confidence through learning to understand and manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively and how to make choices based on an understanding of difference and without prejudice.

Development of skills of choice and an understanding of the consequences of such choices are fundamental to decision making, assertiveness, managing conflict and communication. All of these enable pupils to exercise personal responsibility to help avoid exploitation and abuse. Sensitivity is important as there may be pupils in the group who have been abused, or are carrying out abuse and do not recognise it as such.

Knowledge and understanding

Learning and understanding about physical development at appropriate stages and dealing with issues of gender and stereotyping.

Transmission of knowledge about sexuality, reproduction, disability, inherited disorders, sexual health, emotions and relationships.

Not one sexual orientation or type of sexual activity to be promoted.

Acquisition of information about local and national services including sexual health advice, sexuality, contraception and how to access them.

Learning about the reasons for delaying sexual activity, the benefits to be gained from such delay and avoidance of unplanned pregnancy/parenthood.

Developing a Sex and Relationship Education Policy

When developing a policy, the needs of all pupils should be considered.

Governing bodies and head teachers should consult parents, staff and pupils when developing and reviewing their SRE policies to ensure the policies reflect the wishes of parents and of their wider culture of the community. Young people and children cannot always rely on their parents to talk to them about puberty and sex and for these pupils schools may be their main, or only, source of sex education. All schools must have an up-to-date policy, which should be available for inspection. The policy must:

- define sex and relationships education
- describe how it is provided in the school, who will provide it and how sensitive issues are covered such as those listed in Appendix 4

- show in secondary schools how National Curriculum Science topics will provide a programme as part of the PSHE Framework in addition to the National Curriculum Science topics
- state how it will be monitored and evaluated
- include information about parents' right to withdraw their children.

Schools of a particular religious ethos or schools with pupils from a range of religious backgrounds may choose to reflect that in their SRE policy.

Primary Schools should have clear parameters on what children will be taught in the transition year before moving to secondary school.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) recommends that: SRE is delivered through the PSHE and Citizenship framework and that schools will want to have an overall policy on PSHE and Citizenship including SRE.

Ethnicity

Teachers need to have some information about the religious traditions, marriage rules and other kinds of relationship arrangements established in different cultures and must also be able to refer to them verbally as well as making reference to multi-cultural resources. Schools will need to ensure that parents of minority ethnic backgrounds are involved in consultation on SRE policies.

Support may be obtained from the Minority Ethnic Curriculum Support Service (MECSS) centres to do this. School SRE policies can be translated

where appropriate into community languages. Core funding is available for this.

Special Educational Needs

All pupils including those who have SEN, need to follow an appropriate sex and relationships programme of study.

Some children and young people with SEN are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation than their peers. Others may be confused about what is acceptable social behaviour, thus lessons need to be differentiated accordingly. The DfES has stated clearly that "It is important that students with special educational needs are not withdrawn from health education so that they can catch up on National Curriculum subjects".

Materials used for SRE need to be chosen so that they are accessible, i.e. they may have to be very straightforward and explicit for children with learning difficulties.

All staff should follow the school's policies on SRE and management of personal care when working with pupils who have SEN. It is recommended they should be involved in policy development and receive specific training.

Some parents of pupils with SEN who may find it difficult to accept their children's developing sexuality should be encouraged to seek further information. Opportunities for participation in discussion and development of the school's SRE programme may also be appropriate.

Sexual identity and sexual orientation

Pupils should be made aware of the diversity of human sexuality and taught to develop respect for diversity. All pupils need to feel the SRE they receive is relevant and sensitive to their needs. Teachers should respond in a straightforward and sensitive manner to issues of sexual orientation, answer questions and offer support. Answers to questions should be equally relevant to all pupils irrespective of their sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation and what is taught in schools is an area of concern for some parents and schools that involve parents closely in developing and reviewing their SRE programmes should be able to provide them with satisfactory reassurance.

School staff need to know how to deal with homophobic bullying. Guidance issued by the DfEE (Social Inclusion: Pupil Support Circular 10/99) dealt with the unacceptability of and the emotional distress and harm caused by bullying in whatever form.

Role of OfSTED

OfSTED is statutorily required under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 to evaluate and report on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at any school they inspect. This includes evaluating and commenting on a school's SRE policy.

The OfSTED inspection framework that came into place in January 2000 reinforces that inspectors must

evaluate and report on how well the school cares and provides effective support and advice for all its pupils and works in partnership with its parents.

Use of materials

Materials used must be determined by the needs of the pupils, reflect the school's values and be in accordance with the PSHE framework, Science orders and the law. Information needs to be age appropriate and take into account the pupils' cultural backgrounds. Parents should be informed about the materials offered by schools and be encouraged to comment on any sensitive material to be used in the classroom. Schools should ensure that pupils are protected from accessing unsuitable materials on the Internet which may leave them vulnerable to exploitation by offering personal information including supplying email addresses over the Internet.

Videos can be excellent teaching and learning tools and may be used as a part of a planned programme but should *not* be viewed as substitutes for such a scheme. The use of stories and, picture books can enrich pupils' understanding of SRE. Factual material should be provided in written form for young people to keep for future reference.

SRE is expected to include activities which will encourage exploration of values and attitudes, respect for and acceptance of responsibility for self and others and development of other personal and social skills.

Teaching methods

Pupils need to have planned activities where they can draw on previous knowledge and develop more understanding, practise their personal and social skills, consider their beliefs and attitudes about different topics, reflect on their new learning and plan and shape future action. Teaching in single sex groups may be appropriate at times. Active learning is generally most effective when pupils are working in groups e.g.

whole class discussions, use of circle time, in small groups or on one-to-one basis.

At secondary school young people can be peer educators and support groups or pairs of pupils.

Support for teachers

Teachers may require training and extra support to teach about sensitive issues and answer questions that are sensitive and or controversial.

Training locally is provided by the School Improvement and Advisory Service (SIAS) Advisers, school nurses and other agencies including the Health Authority, GUM clinics and family planning outreach service, that provide consultancy and tuition services to schools. Team teaching can be a valuable way of raising confidence and building up skills.

The child protection teams in each area of the county can also provide valuable training.

Appendix 1 Primary Schools

1a. The DfES recommends that all primary schools should have a SRE programme, appropriate to the age and physical and emotional maturity of the pupils and which ensures the children know about puberty and how a baby is born according to the National Science Curriculum. The Government's National Curriculum for Science and combined non-statutory PSHE and Citizenship framework for KS 1 and 2 clarify what should be taught. It is the Government's recommendation that this is delivered through the following four broad themes within the context of the National Healthy School Standard:

- developing confidence and responsibility for making the most of pupil's abilities
- preparing to play an active role as citizens
- developing healthier and safer lifestyles
- developing good relationships and respecting differences between people.

SRE should contribute to the foundation of PSHE and Citizenship by ensuring that children will be able to:

- develop confidence in talking and listening about feelings and relationships
- name parts of the body and describe how their bodies work
- protect themselves and ask for help and support and
- be prepared for puberty.

National Curriculum Science

for KS 1/2

Key Stage 1 Pupils should be taught

1. b) that animals including humans, move, feed, grow, use their senses and reproduce
2. a) to recognise and compare the main external parts of the bodies of humans
 - f) that humans and animals can produce offspring and these grow into adults
4. a) to recognise similarities and differences between themselves and others and treat others with sensitivity

Key Stage 2 Pupils should be taught

1. a) that the life processes common to humans and other animals include nutrition, growth and reproduction
2. f) about the main stages of the human life cycle

Appendix 2 Secondary Schools

1a. Secondary schools should include in their policy details of the provision of a SRE programme as part of their non-statutory PSHE framework in addition to the National Science Curriculum. Again they should be set within the context of the NHSS. At KS 3 and 4 Citizenship is delivered under a statutory order and PSHE is non-statutory. Despite these differences some aspects of the main broad themes can still be related to each other and delivered through them.

1b. SRE should be embedded in a wider context of supporting pupils to

build up their self-esteem, enhance their relationship skills and extend their abilities to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Classroom debates can provide excellent opportunities for SRE in preparing pupils for the responsibilities and challenges of adult life when they are purposefully planned.

1c. A framework needs to be agreed for establishing what is appropriate for the age, maturity and cultural backgrounds of the pupils and how to deal with questions that may raise sensitive or controversial issues.

1d. Teachers of SRE need to be aware of the Social Exclusion Report on Teenage Pregnancy and the contribution of effective SRE in reducing the incidence of teenage conceptions. Appropriate information and effective advice on contraception and on delaying sexual activity can help reduce the incidence of unwanted pregnancies. In its Guidance the DfES states that the key task for schools is to provide information and advice on contraception and on delaying sexual activity to reduce the incidence of unwanted pregnancies.

1e. Specific topics to be covered include:

- loving, caring, relationships acknowledging the consequences of individual actions regarding sexual activity and parenthood as well as related responsibilities
- awareness of pupils' own sexuality and understanding human sexuality
- developing confidence and self-esteem to value themselves and others, respect individual conscience, extend their skills to judge what kind of relationship they want and to be able to

- communicate effectively
- understanding consequences of actions, behaving responsibly within sexual and pastoral relationships and avoiding exploitation or exploiting others
- different types of contraception and how to access local sources of advice and treatment
- the reasons for and benefits of delaying sexual activity and resisting pressure
- links with other issues of peer pressure and risk taking behaviour such as misuse of illegal drugs, cigarettes and alcohol
- the legal situation regarding sexual relationships, access to confidential services and contraceptive advice.

1f. SRE may be timetabled as a specific element of planned PSHE lessons, part of a structured tutorial programme, as a co-ordinated approach through subjects such as Science, PE, RE and English, or as a combination of all three.



National Science Curriculum for KS 3/4

Key Stage 3 Pupils should be taught

1. d) that fertilisation in humans is the fusion of a male and a female cell
2. f) about the physical and emotional changes that take place during adolescence
- g) about the human

reproductive system, including the menstrual cycle and fertilisation

- h) how the foetus develops in the uterus.
- n) how the growth and reproduction of bacteria and the replication of the viruses can affect health.

Key Stage 4 Pupils should be taught

2. f) The way in which hormonal control occurs, including the effects of the sex hormones
- g) some medical uses of hormones, including the control and promotion of fertility
- l) the defence mechanisms of the body
3. d) how sex is determined in humans.

Appendix 3 The National Healthy School Standard

The National Healthy School Standard (NHSS) was introduced in 1999 to support and complement the new PSHE framework. SRE is one of a number of specific themes, which make up the Standard. The principle underlying the NHSS is that SRE is best achieved through a whole school approach which ensures the age and maturity appropriateness of its SRE policy, which encompasses:

- involving parents and carers
- giving staff training and support and
- ensuring attention is paid to the views of pupils.

Hertfordshire schools are expected to

work within the nationally accredited local programme, which is co-ordinated by the local NHSS co-ordinator and supported by the PHSE Advisers.

Appendix 4

Teaching sensitive issues

Schools need to clarify how they will cover teaching sensitive issues.

- Teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes should not influence the teaching of SRE within the PSHE framework.
- It is a criminal offence to have sexual relationships with children or young persons under 16. Teachers are in a particular position of trust and have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of their pupils. The Sexual Offences Act 2000 which came into effect in January 2001 makes it an offence for a teacher to have a sexual relationship with a full time pupil who is under 18 and is in the same school, residential school or further educational establishment. The new law will apply to teachers and others in a position of trust.

Puberty

Schools need to plan the appropriate age when they will provide guidance on puberty to boys and girls in consultation with parents. Primary schools should set clear parameters as to what will be taught in whole class settings and what will be dealt with on an individual basis.

Menstruation

Schools should provide education about menstruation that dispels any

misinformation and myths. They should make adequate and sensitive arrangements to prepare girls for menstruation before it starts. Schools should be able to respond to requests for sanitary protection. Research shows that about a third of girls are not told about periods by their parents and 10% receive no preparation at all before their first period.

Contraception

Effective SRE in secondary schools should provide pupils with information about different types of contraception, their availability and how to access them. This is a major part of the Government's strategy to reduce unplanned teenage pregnancies.

Trained staff in secondary schools should have clear knowledge about pupils' rights to access services and consent to treatment. They should provide pupils with up to date information about different types of contraception. Additional information and guidance on where they can obtain confidential advice, counselling and where necessary, treatment should also be included.

On rare occasions a primary school staff member might be approached by a pupil who is sexually active or contemplating sexual activity. This will always raise child protection issues and sensitive handling will be required to ensure that a proper balance is struck between the need to observe the law and the need for sensitive counselling and treatment including protection from disclosure to inappropriate adults. Such actions must not be undertaken without reference to the school's head teacher. The school policy should clearly state procedures to be followed, for the

protection of the pupil and the teacher concerned.

Abortion

When abortion is covered pupils need to have the opportunities to learn and understand it, explore the moral and personal dilemmas including alternatives such as adoption, and develop the communication skills to discuss issues with parents and health professionals. Young people need to know how to access relevant advice from health professionals.

Some schools will apply a particular religious ethos through their SRE policy to the issues enabling pupils to consider the moral and personal dilemmas involved. The religious convictions of pupils and their parents should be respected.

HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Teaching about safer sex remains one of the Government's key strategies for reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS and STIs and should encompass:

- helping pupils clarify their knowledge of HIV/AIDS and STIs
- imparting information about prevention,
- diagnosis including awareness of asymptomatic infection and treatment
- teaching them assertiveness skills for negotiating relationships and
- enabling them to become effective users of services that help prevent or treat STIs and HIV.

Key messages for all sex

educators from the DfES:

- It is necessary to nurture all pupils' robust self-esteem.
- Acquisition of information and knowledge about HIV/AIDS is vital.
- Young people need to understand what constitutes risky language and behaviour and what does not, as inappropriate behaviour can cause offence and in extreme cases lead to criminal prosecution.
- Young people need factual information about safer sex as well as about attitudes to safer sex.
- SRE should inform young people about condom use and safer sex generally.
- Young people need to acquire the skills to withstand being pressurised into unwanted or unprotected sex or other risk taking behaviour such as that regarding drugs including alcohol and be able to negotiate safer sex.



Pupils participate in a card game about contraceptives

SRE Teaching strategies

In order for teachers to overcome embarrassment and anxieties it is important to:

- have a clear lesson plan with specific learning objectives
- establish ground rules with their pupils
- use 'distancing' techniques
- provide a variety of structured interactive tasks - short ones are often very successful
- know how to respond to unexpected or unwelcome questions or comments from pupil
- utilise discussion and project learning methods and appropriate materials
- encourage reflection
- make explicit the need to respect differences.

Suggested ground rules

- No one will have to answer a personal question.
- Personal questions specifically aimed at embarrassing another will be discouraged.
- No one will be forced to participate in a discussion.
- Only the correct names for body parts will be used and if slang words are mentioned they will be explained.
- Meanings of words will be explained clearly and factually.
- Respect for differences between pupils will be maintained.

Distancing techniques

- By depersonalising discussions embarrassment can be avoided and privacy protected.

Suggested techniques:

- role play
- structured, pre-planned debates
- games and quizzes
- case studies with invented characters
- video material
- theatrical performances by outside companies or pupils' own productions.

Responding to unexpected or unwelcome questions or comments
 Teachers need to establish clear parameters of appropriate conduct at all times. The following suggestions may help teachers cope with embarrassing situations:

- If a question is too personal, the teacher can offer to respond privately, remind the pupil of the ground rules or refer the pupil to an appropriate colleague e.g. the school nurse or counsellor.

If the teacher does not know the answer to a question, this should be acknowledged and the correct answer provided in a later lesson.

- If a question is too explicit, not appropriate for a pupil's age and understanding, inappropriate for the whole class, or raises concerns about sexual abuse, the teacher should recognise this and promise to respond on an individual basis. This promise must be kept. When a teacher is concerned about possible sexual abuse, the school's child protection procedures need to be followed.
- Pupils needs to be quite clear in advance about the procedures that will follow and the consequences of disclosure.

Appendix 5 Working with parents

Parents are the key people in teaching their children about sex and relationships. They maintain the culture and ethos of the family, help their children cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up and prepare them for the challenges and responsibilities that sexual maturity brings.

It is essential for effective SRE that schools should always seek to work in partnership with parents, consulting them regularly on their SRE programme and encouraging their involvement in the determination of it. Parents need to know that the school's SRE programme will complement and support their role as parents. Parents may need to be reassured that teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes will not influence the school's SRE programme and that all those

contributing to the school's SRE are expected to work within its values framework as described in the school policy. Reflections around parents' own experiences of sex education can lead to productive discussions.

Many parents find it difficult to talk to their children about sex and relationships. Fathers in particular, rarely take responsibility for giving SRE to their sons.

Parents *may* need support to:

- help their children learn the correct names of the body
- talk with their children about feelings and relationships and answer questions about growing up, having babies, feeling attraction, sexuality, sex, contraception, relationships and sexual health.

Parents' right to withdraw their children from lessons

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the SRE at school except for those parts included in the statutory National Curriculum. Schools should make alternative arrangements in such cases. In schools where communication with families about SRE is encouraged, incidents of withdrawal are often minimal. The DfES published information for parents who withdraw their children from SRE in October 2001. Copies are available from Prologue Distribution Centre.

Appendix 6 Working with the wider community

Elements of SRE are also provided by a range of people in the wider

community who have much to offer at all levels and who can offer different and new perspectives as well as specialised knowledge, experience and resources. All adults involved in a school's SRE programme need to be aware of the school's SRE policy and programme and should abide by them. Parents need to be informed of the involvement of the wider community. However, the assumption should be that SRE *is appropriate to all*, rather than schools assuming that families will want to withdraw their children as a result for example of religious or cultural beliefs.

Role of health professionals such as doctors, nurses

- to work closely with teachers in helping to deliver the programme
- to assist schools work in partnership with parents and make links between the school and other relevant professionals and services such as local GPs, family planning clinics, Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics
- to inform pupils about the health services available locally and help them develop the confidence and skills to make good use of them
- to give pupils confidential support and advice, perhaps through services such as drop-in sessions and
- to provide specific and up-to-date knowledge about sexual health, well being and contraception.

Health professionals are bound by their professional codes of conduct to maintain confidentiality and although they are expected to follow the head teacher's instructions, they have also to follow their own professional code of conduct for example when talking to an

individual pupil. In a one-to-one situation with pupils they are bound by their professional codes of conduct but in a classroom situation they should follow the school's confidentiality policy. This must be made clear to parents. They will seek to protect privacy and prevent inappropriate personal disclosures in a classroom setting, by negotiating ground rules and using distancing techniques. It is advisable for schools to recognise the role of health professionals in their policies.

Any competent young person, regardless of age, can independently seek medical advice and give valid consent to treatment.

Outside the teaching situation, health professionals such as school nurses can: give one to one advice or information to a pupil on a health related matter including contraception and exercise their own professional judgement as to whether a young person has the maturity to consent to medical treatment including contraceptive treatment. The criteria for making such a decision are based on the Fraser Guidelines.

Role of social workers

Social workers work in partnership with foster carers, parents, teachers and other professionals to improve the health and education of children and young people in public care.

Role of youth workers

Youth workers work in a range of informal education settings offering a social education curriculum based on the four principles of social inclusion, citizenship, acquisition of key skills and addressing inequalities. Young people enter into voluntary relationships with

youth workers. This and the participative/experiential style of learning is significant in enabling young people to develop positive relationships with them which makes it possible for youth workers to undertake effective SRE. Youth Enquiry and Information Services offer information, advice and counselling to young people aged 14-25, sexual health services including condoms and pregnancy testing/counselling are provided.

The HCC Youth Service Guidance says: "Sexual health education in the youth work curriculum draws upon DfEE Guidance to schools, the legal position and good practice. Additional guidance includes an HIV/AIDS Education Policy, Guidelines for Work with Young People who are Questioning their Sexuality, Sex Education and Young People with Learning Difficulties and Pregnancy Testing. The same emphasis upon withholding personal views and having equal regard for diversity, including sexuality applies to youth workers".

It is inappropriate for youth workers, as with any professional to promote any one sexual orientation and the information (replaces independent advice) they give to young people should not be affected by their individual views. A copy of the HCC Youth Service Sexual Health Education Guidance is available.

Role of young people and parents and peer educators

Young people can be trained to support and deliver SRE to their peers in order to provide information while allowing the young people to feel accepted and secure. This can be a very popular strategy but is best used

to complement rather than to replace the school's SRE. It is also important to provide appropriate safeguards for the young people who are to act in this role.

Educators' individual life experiences can help young people understand how sex and relationships can affect them in different ways. Examples include:

- Young teenage mothers talking about their experiences of having a child and offering advice and support to their peers.
- Young Asian women talking about their experience of learning about sex and relationships at home and within the wider community, including school.
- Young people talking about their experiences of living with HIV.
- Physically disabled young people talking to other young people who are disabled.

Groups of parents can be trained as peer parent sex educators to provide support to other parents and to help develop partnerships between parents and schools.

Role of other visitors

Visitors should complement but not substitute or replace a school's planned provision of SRE. It is the responsibility of the PSHE co-ordinator and the teachers to plan the curriculum and lessons. Occasional "Health Days" can make a positive contribution to the pupils' learning as long as they are a planned part of the curriculum and consolidate earlier teaching and/or lead to future reinforcement of information and skills.

Appendix 7 Confidentiality

School staff must be absolutely clear about the boundaries of their legal and professional roles and the responsibilities and need to be familiar with the procedures set out in the Department's Child Protection circular 10/95, Protecting Children from abuse: The Role of the Education Service.

An explicit policy on confidentiality should encourage understanding by all and ensure good practice throughout the school and should be advertised to pupils, staff, parents and visitors. Teachers cannot offer or guarantee absolute confidentiality.

Policy on confidentiality

Schools should consider setting their policy on confidentiality within their SRE policy. It should include:

- ensuring all pupils and parents are aware of the existence of such a policy
- reassuring pupils that their best interests will be maintained
- encouraging pupils to talk to their parents and giving them support to do so
- ensuring that pupils know that teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality
- reassuring pupils that, if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed first and then supported as appropriate
- if there is any possibility of abuse, the school's child protection procedures will be followed
- providing information on sources of confidential help, for example the school nurse, counsellor, GP
- agreeing ground rules that support respect for confidentiality.

Child protection

Children cannot learn effectively if they are concerned or frightened about being abused or being the victims of violence in the home and have a right to expect schools to provide a safe and secure environment. Teachers need to be aware that effective SRE, which promotes understanding of what is and what is not acceptable in a relationship can lead to disclosure of a child protection issue. Any fears or worries that pupils bring into a classroom should not go unnoticed by staff.

If a member of staff suspects that a child is a victim of abuse or they have reasons to believe that a pupil is at risk of abuse, they should be aware of the procedures and know they have to report their concerns to the head teacher or designated teacher.

The main recommendations of Circular 10/95 are:

- All staff should be alert to signs of abuse and know to whom they should report their concerns or suspicions.
- All schools and colleges should have child protection policies, which should include procedures to be followed if a member of staff is accused of abuse.
- All schools and colleges should have a senior member of staff with designated responsibility for child protection, who should receive appropriate training.

A joint DfEE and Department of Health document published in 1999, Working Together to Safeguard Children, sets out how all professionals co-operate to promote children's welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect.

Personal disclosures

Head teachers need to make it wholly clear to staff the circumstances under which they must inform the head teacher or designated teacher. If a pupil makes a disclosure at an inappropriate time or place, the teacher should talk on an individual basis to the pupil before the end of the school day. The teacher must discuss the issue with the head teacher or designated member of staff.

Effective SRE should make it clear that it is important for young people to talk to an adult if they are having sex or are contemplating doing so. It is desirable, although not always possible, that that person should be their parent. The law allows health professionals to see and in some circumstances to treat young people confidentially and part of this process includes counselling and discussion about talking to parents. To take more responsibility for their actions, young people need to be more generally aware of the law in relation to sexual activity and local confidentiality services.

There may be cases where a teacher learns from an under 16 year old that he or she is contemplating having sexual intercourse. School staff should then follow the school's agreed procedures to:

- persuade him or her to talk to their parent wherever possible
- address any child protection issues
- provide adequate counselling and
- information about contraception including precise information about contraception and advice services available to young people.

Section 28

There continues to be some misunderstanding about Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988. It does not apply directly to schools but lays down what local authorities can and cannot do.

- (1) A local authority shall not:
 - (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality
 - (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship
- (2) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease.

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