



Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Information for Parents

What is RSE?

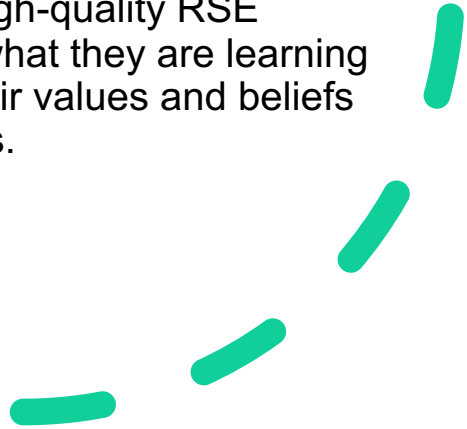
- We need to help all of our young people to excel in all aspects of life, so that they grow into adults who are happy, confident individuals. Education should encourage and support young people to respect themselves and others, to value diversity, and give them the ability to build healthy, respectful relationships.
- The new curriculum starting in September 2022 will include developmentally appropriate Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).
- RSE is designed to safeguard all our children and young people, supporting them to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that will assist in protecting them throughout their lives.
- This is critical to building a society which treats others with understanding and empathy, whatever their ethnicity, social or economic background, disability, gender or sexuality.

Why is RSE so important?

The world around us is evolving rapidly and significantly. As a society we are becoming ever more aware of:

- changing family structures and relationships
- shifting social, cultural and religious norms in relation to sex, gender and sexuality
- advances in technology including the rising influence of social media and increased use of digital communications and devices
- changing laws and rights around relationships, sex, gender and sexuality

RSE has the potential to be transformative for learners and communities, it is important in empowering learners and in developing their critical thinking. Children and young people are navigating a range of complex and contradictory messages about relationships and sexuality that will shape their sense of self and their relationships with others. High-quality RSE provision will support learners to critically engage with what they are learning and experiencing. This supports them to understand their values and beliefs and to *advocate* for respect and understanding of others.



What the Welsh Government believes..

- The Welsh Government believes all children and young people have the right to receive high-quality, holistic and *inclusive* education about relationships and sexuality. High-quality, holistic and inclusive RSE is associated with a range of positive and protective outcomes for all learners and their communities and can, for example:
- help increase learners' understanding of and participation in healthy, safe, and fulfilling relationships
- help young people recognise abusive or unhealthy relationships and seek support
- help reduce all *bullying*, including homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and increase safety and well-being for all learners
- help all learners make informed decisions about sexual intimacy and reproductive health
- help promote equality and equity of sex, gender and sexuality
- increase *awareness, knowledge and understanding* of gender-based and sexual violence



Enabling Children's Rights

- Article 3: everyone who works with children should always do what is best for each child, is relevant to RSE, as it is to the whole curriculum.



Learning in RSE should highlight the right to:

- non-discrimination (Article 2)
- be heard and involved in decision-making (Article 12)
- freedom of expression (Article 13)
- follow your own religion (Article 14)
- have privacy (Article 16)
- access information to make informed decisions (Article 17)
- not be harmed and should be looked after and kept safe (Article 19)
- experience the highest attainable health, access to health facilities, and preventative health care (Article 24)
- education that prepares children to understanding others (Article 29)
- protection from sexual abuse and exploitation (Article 34)
- get special help if they have been abused (Article 39)

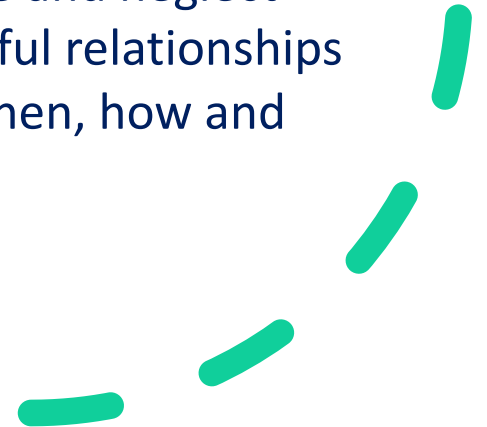


The RSE Curriculum focuses on 3 broad strands.....

Relationships and identity: helping learners develop the skills they need to develop healthy, safe, and fulfilling relationships with others and helping them to make sense of their thoughts and feelings.

Sexual health and well-being: helping learners to draw on factual sources regarding their sexual and reproductive health and well-being, allowing them to make informed decisions throughout their lives.

Empowerment, safety and respect: helping to protect learners from all forms of discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect and enabling them to recognise unsafe or harmful relationships and situations, supporting them to recognise when, how and where to seek support and advice.



Themes in RSE

The Welsh Government committed to covering the following themes in RSE:

Relationships

Rights and Equity

Sex, gender and sexuality

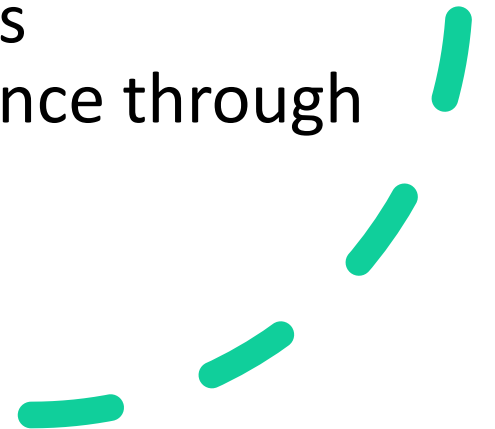
Bodies and body image

Sexual health and well being

Violence, safety and support

And through
these
themes....

- Curriculum content in RSE must be inclusive and reflect diversity. It must include learning that develops learners' awareness and understanding of different identities, views and values and a diversity of relationships, gender and sexuality, including LGBTQ+.
- Learning about rights and equity runs through all the strands, as well as embedding learning and experience through a rights based approach.



The RSE Code

- The RSE Code sets out each strand of teaching and learning in three broad developmental *phases* as follows:
 - Phase 1: from age 3
 - Phase 2: from age 7
 - Phase 3: from age 11
- Each phase represents the building blocks of progression in RSE. As learners progress, they should build on previous learning from either phase one, or phases one and two, consolidating and strengthening the same dispositions, knowledge and skills and applying them in new and relevant contexts as they develop. This is very different to simply acquiring learning about topics in isolation and then moving on to other content.

Relationships and Identity

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Practitioners should consider learners' developmental appropriateness for learning in each phase:		
From age 3	From age 7	From age 11
The learning supports:		
Ability to act with kindness, empathy and compassion in interactions with others immediate to them including family, friendship and peer relationships.	Ability to form and maintain relationships which are equitable, respectful and kind with a range of others.	Understanding the positive and negative characteristics and healthy or unhealthy aspects of a range of relationships including family, friendship, romantic and sexual. Ability to develop and understand the importance of equity, mutual respect, and affection in relationships with others.
An awareness of how to communicate wants and needs in relationships, and begin to respect those of others. Awareness of how needs relate to rights.	How understanding and use of effective communication, decision-making, managing conflict and refusal skills are part of ensuring your own and others rights and part of friendships and relationships.	Understanding and use of effective communication, decision making, managing and resolving conflict, and refusal skills in a range of different contexts and types of relationships, offline and online, including intimate relationships. Understanding how to speak out about harmful behaviours directed at them or others.
Awareness of the diversity of families and relationships, including friendship and peer relationships, and why these are important.	Recognition of the characteristics of different families, friendship and peer relationships and the diversity of these. Understanding positive behaviours in relationships and what can happen when relationships breakdown.	Understanding how the diversity of relationships including marriage, and all types of civil partnership, has changed over time, and how relationships are positively and negatively impacted by social and cultural norms and laws in different ways around the world.

	An awareness of how families, relationships and parenting are shaped by social and cultural norms and laws that have changed over time.	
Developing a sense of themselves, in the context of families, friends and communities. Recognising how people value different things and have different families, friends and communities.	Recognising how people's relationships with others shape who they are and their happiness. An awareness of how identity can be expressed in different ways.	Understanding how rights need to be balanced in a diverse society; the characteristics, benefits and challenges of living in a diverse society; and how and why attitudes have changed and are changing including towards gender and sexuality diversity.
Experiencing inclusive behaviours, language and role modelling that show respect for others, whatever their gender. Recognising learners' rights to be treated fairly, kindly and with respect.	Valuing and recognising the contributions of everyone; and the importance of sex and gender equality. Recognise and know how to safely respond to and challenge gender and sexual stereotypes and unfair behaviour. An awareness of how positive and negative social and cultural norms regarding sex, gender and sexuality influence relationships and behaviours.	An ability to advocate for and advance the rights of all and understand and respect all people in relation to sex, gender and sexuality. Understanding how the law and human rights secure freedoms around sex, gender and sexuality and how these can differ in other countries and over time. Ability to critically explore and understand how a range of social, cultural and religious norms and influences about relationships, sex, gender and sexuality can shape perceptions and our well-being and can be both positive and harmful.

Sexual Health and Well-Being

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Practitioners should consider learners' developmental appropriateness for learning in each phase:		
From age 3	From age 7	From age 11
The learning supports:		
<p>The use of accurate terminology for all body parts.</p> <p>An awareness of the human life cycle and that reproduction is a part of life.</p>	<p>Knowledge and understanding of how reproductive organs develop in a human body. This includes understanding fertility and the processes of reproduction, including what supports menstrual health and well-being.</p> <p>Recognising the process of pregnancy and birth.</p>	<p>Understanding how fertility, sexual function and menstrual health and well-being can change across the life course and how to find information and support when needed.</p> <p>The knowledge and understanding of how hormones continue to affect emotional and physical health throughout adulthood.</p> <p>Understanding how contraception can assist with reproductive choices, including awareness of abortion.</p>
<p>Awareness of how human bodies change as they grow.</p>	<p>The knowledge and understanding of how people experience significant physical, emotional, social and cognitive changes during puberty.</p>	<p>Understanding of good sexual and reproductive health, including the range of risks and outcomes from sexual experiences and the knowledge needed to support informed decisions about sexual activity and about reproductive choices.</p>

<p>An awareness of the importance of personal self-care and hygiene.</p>	<p>The knowledge and skills needed to manage personal self-care and hygiene, including the importance of menstrual well-being.</p>	<p>The knowledge and understanding of the causes, symptoms and impact of conditions connected to sexual and reproductive health and to fertility, including sexually transmitted infections, HIV and reproductive cancers.</p> <p>Understanding and skills needed to minimise risks and seek help.</p>
<p>A recognition that everyone's body is unique and special to them.</p>	<p>An awareness that there are many different sources of information offline and online that help us learn about our bodies and affect how we feel about our body and other people's bodies.</p>	<p>Critically engaging with positive and negative representations of a diversity of bodies, including through various forms of media and understanding that these can be unrealistic and harmful.</p>
<p>Awareness of the different feelings one can have, recognising other people's feelings and how these may differ to your own.</p>	<p>Awareness of how people can feel attracted to others as they mature and how this can lead to emotional and physical responses.</p>	<p>Understanding how all are entitled to safe and pleasurable relationships and recognising the role consensual sexual activity plays within healthy relationships.</p> <p>Understanding the legal age of consent.</p>
<p>Recognising trusted adults who can help them and whom they can talk to and ask questions of, especially when they feel unhappy or unsafe.</p>	<p>Be able to identify trustworthy sources of information and able to raise issues and questions with trusted adults.</p>	<p>Recognise and be able to use a range of support services to access information and support around relationships, health and well-being and safety.</p>

Empowerment, Safety and Respect

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Practitioners should consider learners' developmental appropriateness for learning in each phase:		
From age 3	From age 7	From age 11
The learning supports:		
<p>Recognising harmful behaviour including behaviours which are discriminatory and the right to be free from discrimination.</p> <p>Ability to interact with others in a way that is fair.</p>	<p>Understanding of the importance of fair treatment for all and of respect in all interpersonal interactions offline and online.</p> <p>Recognising the value of non-discriminatory behaviours and when and how to take safe action to respond to and challenge discriminatory behaviours.</p>	<p>Understanding the importance of inclusivity, including for LGBTQ+ people, non-discrimination and the value of diversity in our interpersonal behaviours and relationships.</p> <p>Developing a sense of individual and social responsibility to others, including consideration of how we respond to behaviours that are discriminatory, disrespectful and harmful, offline and online.</p>
<p>Recognising the right to be free from harmful, abusive and bullying behaviour.</p> <p>An awareness of how to recognise positive and harmful behaviours, including bullying.</p> <p>Ability to share with a trusted adult when faced with harmful behaviours.</p>	<p>Understanding of the right for everyone to be free from harm or abuse.</p> <p>An awareness of different kinds of harmful or abusive behaviour including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect, including peer on peer harassment and bullying and the role technology can play.</p> <p>How to seek support for oneself, and offer support to others.</p> <p>How to be a good friend and advocate for others.</p>	<p>Recognising harmful, abusive or coercive behaviour in personal relationships including control, violence and sexual violence and how to respond and seek help for self and others. This includes all forms of violence based on sex, gender and sexuality.</p>

<p><i>(Phases 1 and 2 include pre-requisite knowledge and skills for understanding the learning on consent at phase 3)</i></p> <p>Beginning to recognise that other people have thoughts, feelings and opinions that are different.</p> <p>An awareness of the need to seek agreement in order to share, for example toys.</p> <p>An awareness of everyone's right to privacy, personal boundaries and which parts of the body are private.</p> <p>Ability to communicate if someone is touching them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.</p>	<p>Understanding of the right to bodily privacy, personal boundaries including online.</p> <p>Understanding how behaviours may be perceived by others offline and online.</p> <p>Recognising which steps to take to keep safe from harm both in offline and online friendships.</p> <p>Understanding the social and emotional norms and pressures that lead to non-consensual behaviours, friendships and relationships, for example, gender norms.</p> <p>Developing the skills to build consensual behaviours and relationships and know how to safely respond, challenge and report non-consensual behaviours and relationships offline and online.</p>	<p>Understanding of the importance of consent for safe and healthy relationships and in particular sexual relationships.</p> <p>Understanding of how consent can be communicated in different social contexts and relationships, including online.</p> <p>A critical understanding of how consent is impacted by perception and social context and the factors that influence and impair people's ability to engage in consensual behaviour, for example, substances, violence, coercion and relationship norms.</p>
<p>Awareness of how to keep safe when using digital media, including sharing with a trusted adult when they feel uncomfortable or scared.</p>	<p>Know how and when digital media can be shared safely, with permission and when it can be a source of harm.</p> <p>Awareness of the benefits and dangers of the internet and social media in forming friendships online.</p> <p>Exploring the motives behind fabricated and digitally-altered media.</p>	<p>Understand the ethical and legal issues relating to the consensual and non-consensual sharing of self-generated imagery, and rights to safety, support well-being and protection.</p> <p>Understanding the impacts associated with sexual material and intimacy online, including the ethical and legal implications.</p>

	<p>An understanding of the need to keep safe online, an ability to take steps to protect themselves and an ability to share with trusted adults where something is seen that shouldn't have been, or is upsetting or uncomfortable.</p>	<p>An awareness of how sexual material and media often represents gender, sexual activity, bodily appearance and relationships in unrealistic and harmful ways.</p>
<p>An awareness that everyone has the right to be safe and no one is allowed to harm anyone else.</p> <p>Ability to speak up for each other.</p>	<p>Awareness of laws in place to protect from different forms of discrimination, violence, abuse, neglect and harassment.</p>	<p>An understanding of laws around RSE issues that are in place to protect us from all forms of discrimination, violence, abuse, neglect and harassment, and that laws are intended to protect not criminalise young people.</p> <p>An understanding of how to advocate for safe environments and the rights and understanding of everyone on a range of RSE issues.</p> <p>Appreciate the importance of safely speaking out against sex and gender based and sexual violence.</p>