

RESPONSE BY THE CATHOLIC UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN TO THE CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON CHANGES TO THE TEACHING OF SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION

Question 1. Thinking about relationships education in primary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for different age groups/key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.

- The importance of strong family relationships including traditional marriage, the roles of mothers and fathers, grandparents and wider family and respect and support for other children who do not have two parents at home. The mutual responsibilities of parents and children.
- The importance of friendships and how to maintain them with faithfulness, honesty, forgiveness etc. Being generous to newcomers while learning to keep safe and to cope with peer pressure. How to interact politely with others and to respect those holding different views. Being able to disagree well is crucial to our democratic society.
- Why all bullying is wrong and how to react if it happens. How to stay safe on the internet and with strangers.

Question 2. Thinking about relationships and sex education in secondary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for different age groups/key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.

- The health, well-being and financial benefits of traditional marriage for spouses and the health, well-being and educational attainment benefits of marriage for children. The advantages to society from strong marriages. Respect for people who believe that marriage is between a man and a woman as well as respect more generally.
- That all sexual relationships should have a strong moral content. How to resist peer pressure and how to resist being pressurized into sexual relationships. The risks of promiscuity for physical and mental health. How pupils can be helped to stand on their own convictions and not just go along with the crowd, while still being respectful of others. Why it is important to avoid over-sharing on social media.
- Learning broad principles of tolerance, respect for and kindness towards others. The importance of friendships and how to maintain them. Why all bullying is wrong and how to react if it happens.

Catholic schools should remain free to determine the manner in which children should be taught about issues such as same-sex marriage or transgenderism.

Question 3. We are particularly interested in understanding stakeholder views on Relationships Education and RSE which are specific to the digital context. Are there important aspects of ensuring safe online relationships that would not

otherwise be covered in wider Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education, or as part of the computing curriculum?

Principles of kindness, consideration and self-respect that apply in face-to-face relationships also apply online. Pupils should avoid over-sharing on social media and should realize that anything they put online could be made public.

The harm caused to individuals and their ability to form relationships by internet pornography. Pupils should be taught about the social and neurological dangers of pornography and its addictive properties. It should be emphasized that all people should be treated with dignity and respect and that anything which turns a human being into an object or which promotes the use of another person is morally wrong.

The prime target of schools should be to work with parents who have or ought to have most control over the technology their children access, the time spent on them, and the filters used.

Question 4. We are also interested in understanding more about how schools communicate with parents on Relationships Education and RSE and are able to make informed decisions that best meet the needs of their children. This includes the right to withdraw their child from sex education within the RSE subject but not from sex education in the national curriculum for science. How should schools effectively consult parents so they can make informed decisions that meet the needs of their child, including on the right to withdraw? For example, how often, on what issues and by what means?

Parents have the right to be the primary educators in relationships and sex education, and it is to the advantage of schools to include them and learn from them as much as possible. Therefore schools should consult with parents when drafting and reviewing their Relationships Education policy and ensure that they are acting in accordance with parents' wishes.

Parents should have the right to inspect Relationships Education and RSE material prior to it being delivered in lessons. Parental concerns may be not just about explicit sexual content but may relate to the moral framework and values being taught.

At faith schools, an explanation should be provided for parents as to how the school will adapt taught material to be consistent with the ethos of the school.

If a school strays from Relationships Education into teaching about complex adult relationships then parents should have the right to withdraw their children from those lessons.

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