



Improving Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

Getting RSHE right for our children and young people

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In the latter half of 2023, the government commissioned an independent expert panel to advise the Education Secretary on age appropriateness within Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE). The panel was commissioned in response to claims that the current RSHE curriculum may lead to the loss of innocence of children and young people, or even be damaging for them. The Sex Education Forum challenges this, suggesting that national and international research shows that

RSHE contributes to improved physical and mental health for children and young people. So, how do we meet the curricular needs of our children and young people, whilst meeting statutory requirements and maintaining a localised view of the national approaches?

Through the research, the lived experience of children, OFSTED subject and rapid reviews, the review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, conversations with parents and working with schools, we learn that children and young people want to:

- learn how to be who they are
- learn how to learn about themselves
- learn how to develop skills and strategies to find their way through challenging times
- learn to celebrate the joy that they're experiencing in their lives.

Yet, very few teachers and educators were trained enough to fully facilitate this subject, often leaving staff to feel underconfident when leading learning that addresses these important issues. It is vital that we develop a bespoke provision that works for our children, and that has all the essential parts of a Quality First curriculum, facilitated by confident, inspired staff. A safeguarding curriculum enables pupils to be equipped to feel and stay safe.

In West Sussex, our subject networks and RSHE advisory services continue to support schools on an individual basis. In addition, Education 4 Safeguarding, or E4S, is available to all schools (www.e4swsccalpha.co.uk). Through additional funding from WSCC partners, we are delighted that E4S will be fully subsidised for all schools until April 2025. This funding will not only provide all settings with an account but will also enable further



development of key stage 3, 4 and 5 provision and support for identified vulnerable groups.

Created by subject specialists, lead teachers and schools, and continually developed over the last four years, E4S contains every tool you need to develop a bespoke, evidence-based programme for your setting. Aside from the tools to identify pupil need, which areas of the curriculum are priority for you, and access to a wide range of teaching and learning resources, it now contains 6 week overviews for the primary framework.

Parent, pupil, staff and Ofsted feedback articulates the impact of the E4S safeguarding curriculum:

'Helped me to understand more about who I am and how I can still be me even when it's tricky.'

'Helped me to easily and effectively plan and teach sessions that both I and the children love'.

'Improved pupil engagement with the lesson, and incidents on the playground are resolved quicker by the pupils using the strategies they have learnt'.

For further information on meeting standards in RSHE using E4S, please visit www.e4swsccalpha.co.uk, or email e4s@westsussex.gov.uk.