

Dear parents,

As you may already be aware, the Department for Education has announced changes to relationships and sex education following nationwide consultation. These changes require us as part of our PSHE curriculum to provide some relationships and health education to our pupils in the academic year 2020/2021 (based on the needs of pupils as they return to school) and develop a fully comprehensive Relationships and Sex Education policy and Relationships, Sex and Health curriculum (to be used from Autumn term next year).

You can read about these changes in this DfE guide for parents: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-sex-and-health-education-guides-for-schools>

Most schools are already delivering very effective Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and the new guidance is simply about ensuring that **all** children get the information they need and want. The lessons will help children to learn about their bodies including the changes that take place at puberty, and will help keep them safe, so they can form healthy relationships (friendships) with others, now and in the future.

As a part of your child's educational experience at St. Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School, we aim to promote personal wellbeing and development through a comprehensive taught programme of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education that gives children the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and practical skills to live healthy, safe, productive and fulfilled lives, both now and in the future. We have been using the leading children's health and wellbeing charity, Coram Life Education (CLE) to support us in meeting these requirements since 2017. We do this in two ways:

- A visit from a trained educator who delivers aspects of the Relationships Education and Health Education programme
- We use Coram Life Education's online SCARF teaching resources.

More information about Coram Life Education and SCARF can be found on their website:

www.coramlifeeducation.org.uk

The focus in primary schools is on the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships and relationships with other children and with adults. A growing ability to form strong and positive relationships with others depends on the cultivation of character traits and positive personal attributes. In our school this work is based upon our Christian values.

The principles of positive relationships also apply online as many pupils will be using the internet.

As well as managing relationships, relationships and sex education also equips children to deal with social and cultural pressures, to know the facts about puberty, to understand and respect that families are different, to know how and where to get support if they need it and to know what healthy relationships look like.

Research shows that not delivering this vital education puts our children at greater risk of poor mental health. We know this because every year, around 25% of girls start their periods before learning about them. This can result in them agonising over why they are bleeding and how serious the cause might be. Similarly, 38% of boys experience wet dreams before having learnt about them, leaving them feeling confused over a natural bodily function. Current government Sex and Relationships Education guidance states that children should learn about puberty before they experience it, but this doesn't always happen – one of the reasons why making this subject statutory in all schools is so important.

We also know that RSE has a protective factor when it comes to safeguarding children. 1 in 20 children are sexually abused and 1 in 3 of these do not report this to an adult. Sexual abuse can happen to any child; the best way to safeguard children is to ensure that they receive information on naming parts of their body, knowing the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch, and having the skills and confidence to find and talk to a trusted adult to report any abuse.

There is sometimes concern that RSE in school might promote sexual experimentation or cause confusion about an individual's sexuality. Research on quality Relationships and Sex education in the UK by the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles team consistently shows that men and women who reported that *lessons at school were their main source of information about sex* were more likely to have started having sex at a **later age** than those for whom parents or other sources were their main source.

This is what the government say that pupils should know by the end of primary school:

<p>Families and people who care for me:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That families are important for children growing up • The characteristics of healthy family life • That others' families sometimes look different from their family, but they should respect those differences • That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up • That marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong • How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help if needed
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Caring friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure • The characteristics of friendships • That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others • That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through • How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy, managing conflict and how to seek advice if needed
Respectful relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them • The conventions of courtesy and manners • The importance of self-respect • That in school and wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others • About different types of bullying • What a stereotype is • The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults
Online relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People sometimes behave differently online • The same rules apply to online relationships as face-to-face relationships • The rules for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks and harmful content and contact and how to report them • How to critically consider online friendships and sources of information • How information and data is shared online
Being safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others • Concept of privacy (including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe) • Each person's body belongs to them and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate contact • How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (including online) whom they do not know • How to report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult • How to ask for help or advice for themselves or others and to keep trying until they are heard • How to report concerns or abuse • Where to get advice

Sex education

Primary schools should teach about relationships and health, including puberty. The science curriculum also includes the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals.

It is important that the transition phase before moving to secondary school supports pupils' ongoing physical development effectively. It should ensure that both boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings and – drawing on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the national curriculum for science – explain the journey from pregnancy to birth.

The element of sex education which we may cover in Year 6 would cover conception - Know how most babies are made - that the sperm fertilises the egg to create a baby.

This is non statutory at primary school and parents would have the right to withdraw their child from this lesson.

Physical health and mental wellbeing

The aim is to give pupils the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing. It should help them to recognise what is normal and what is an issue in themselves and others and, when issues arise, know how to seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.

The focus in primary schools should be on teaching the characteristics of good physical health and mental wellbeing. Teachers should be clear that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health is.

Menstruation

Puberty including menstruation should be covered in Health education and, should, as far as possible, be addressed before onset.

Pupils should be taught key facts about the menstrual cycle including what is an average period, range of menstrual products and the implications for emotional and physical health.

By the end of primary school pupils should know:

Mental wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life• There is a normal range of emotions and scale of emotions that all humans experience in relation to different experiences• How to recognise and talk about their emotions• How to judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate• The benefits of physical exercise, time outdoors and community participation on mental wellbeing and happiness
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple self-care techniques • Isolation and loneliness can affect children and it is important to discuss feelings with an adult • That bullying has a negative and often lasting impact • Where and how to seek support • It is common for people to experience mental ill health. For many who do, the problems can be resolved if the right support is made available
Internet safety and harms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For most people the internet is an integral part of life and has many benefits • The benefits of rationing time spent online • How to consider the effect of their online actions on others and know how to recognise and display respectful behaviour online and the importance of keeping personal information private • Why social media and some computer games are age restricted • That the internet can also be a negative place where online abuse can take place • How to be a discerning consumer of information online • Where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online
Physical health and fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The characteristics and benefits of an active lifestyle • The importance of building regular exercise into daily and weekly routines and how to achieve this • The risks associated with an inactive lifestyle • How and when to seek support
Healthy eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What constitutes a healthy diet • The principles of planning and preparing a range of healthy meals • The characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating
Drugs, alcohol and tobacco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks
Health and prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to recognise early signs of physical illness • Safe and unsafe exposure to the sun • The importance of sufficient and good quality sleep • Dental health • Personal hygiene and germs including bacteria, viruses, how they are spread and treated and the importance of handwashing • The facts and science relating to allergies, immunisation and vaccination
Basic first aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to make a clear and efficient call to emergency services • Concepts of basic first aid

Changing adolescent body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key facts about puberty and the changing body, particularly from 9 through to age 11• About menstrual wellbeing including the key facts about the menstrual cycle.
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We have been reviewing our RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) curriculum and policy in line with what the government says pupils should know by the end of primary school so we can be sure our RSE provision is appropriate for our pupils based on their:

- Age
- Physical and emotional maturity
- Religious and cultural backgrounds
- Special educational needs and disabilities

I am currently consulting staff and governors about the content of our policy and curriculum (what we teach and when) before I consult you. I acknowledge that the role of parents in the development of their children's understanding about relationships is vital. You are the prime educators in this area. The school can complement and reinforce your teaching. I have written you this letter so that you understand what the government is requiring the school to do. Later this term, I will send you our proposed policy and curriculum and ask for your views on our proposal. I will then consider your feedback before setting how our school approaches the different topics with pupils.

In the meantime if you have any views you wish to share about the school's teaching of relationships and sex education please email me head@stbarts.herts.sch.uk

Kind regards,

Sally Roycroft