

Why teach SRE?

What is SRE in primary schools?

Sex and relationships education (SRE) is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It should equip children and young people with the information, skills and values to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships, and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being (SEF 2010).

In primary schools SRE specifically focuses on learning about our bodies, reproduction and puberty within the context of emotions, relationships, healthy choices and equality. It also includes family, friendships and feelings. This early learning lays the foundations for future work on sexual and reproductive health and so helps to prepare children for adulthood. It contributes to the emotional and social development of children, helps them to develop a secure sense of identity and to function well in the world.

SRE is an integral element of the planned programme of study for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. In an integrated programme, the PSHE education curriculum also covers emotional health and well-being, drugs, healthy eating and physical activity, citizenship and safety. The self-esteem, skills and emotional intelligence required to make healthy choices underpin all these topics, and it is therefore essential and good practice that teaching and learning about sex and relationships is planned and implemented within this broader framework rather than as a stand-alone subject.

SRE terminology

My son was in Year 2 at the time. It was such a shock that they was gonna be teaching my six-year-old son sex education. I think other parents were all the same to start with because it's the word 'sex' and six-year-old kids – it doesn't go together does it? But when I got a chance to see the video I realised the way they were doing it was so constructive ... realised it wasn't about the actual sex side of it, it was about giving the children an insight into what the future holds sort of thing.

(Parent)

Many primary schools, particularly at Key Stage 1, use different terminology to describe the sex and relationships elements of PSHE education – such as growing up, our bodies, my family, my body, caring for others, keeping clean, and keeping safe. Whatever it is called, primary schools certainly recognise the vital role they play in building on the learning established within the home and early years settings, and in laying the foundations for more detailed SRE at Key Stage 2 and later on in secondary school. For example, learning about washing hands and sneezing into a tissue lays the foundation for much later work on protecting ourselves and others from infections, including sexually transmitted infections.

I'm glad that someone had the idea of sex education because now I properly understand internal and external changes in our bodies. Now I can keep this information to help me cope when I get older and explain it to my children.
Year 5 girl