



External agencies and RSE

Schools are receiving many offers of help with RSE delivery from a range of organisations and individuals. Some of these may be familiar but others will be new. How is a school to know what would be suitable for its pupils and whether the input offered will be in line with its approach to RSE?

This guide aims to help schools consider how external agencies can best contribute to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). It is also relevant to RSHE and broader PSHE education.

Who are external agencies in RSE?

External agencies offering input and resources for RSE include voluntary, statutory and commercial agencies as well as individuals.

Offers may come from parents, local or

national charities, faith groups, local authority advisors and health professionals.

Why work with external agencies?

Pupils will benefit most from external input in RSE if the school states why they have identified a need for it. It should add value to RSE by providing something different from that which the teacher and school can do alone.

Statutory RSHE guidance (2019) states that the contribution of external agencies should be to enhance and not replace the teaching of the subjects by an appropriate member of staff.

A school is responsible for what is taught in its classrooms and so must be clear about the content, methods and approach to be taken by any external contributor.

External input must therefore adhere to high standards of quality and integrity.

Asking the external agency the questions set out in Checklist A – Checking Credibility, and Checklist B – Quality Assuring Contribution to RSE, will help a school to understand why the contributor wants to provide input into

its RSE programme and to ensure that they meet the required standards.

Why do external agencies want to provide input into RSE?

Some organisations and individuals will have clear goals in relation to children and young people's health and well-being e.g. increasing their knowledge based on evidence about specific issues such as contraceptive choices or HIV transmission, or to raise awareness of and confidence in local support services provided for young people.

In other organisations the purposes may be less clear or hidden e.g. whilst appearing to offer straightforward RSE they may be covertly promoting particular values such as limiting pregnancy choices or promoting a commercial product. It is helpful to know the source of funding of external agencies especially when the input is offered free of charge. Whilst local authorities sometimes buy in resources and offer them to schools at no charge, other organisations will see schools as a market to be exploited for commercial gain. It's worth taking the time to explore these before allowing any external visitor access to pupils.

When organisations apply to become partners of the Sex Education Forum, they are asked to provide evidence of their commitment to a transparent set of values that underpin our work in promoting quality RSE for all pupils in all schools. How far are a school's values underpinning its RSE curriculum such as inclusion, respect, empathy and honesty shared and supported by the external visitor?

When private individuals offer to contribute to RSE there may be very compelling motives, such as sharing personal life experiences. Sharing of personal stories needs to be carefully managed, for example such stories can inadvertently glamorise aspects of life experience, be triggering or frightening for pupils and can drift towards entertainment. Some organisations, such as Diversity Role Models, provide a framework and training for individual speakers.

How can external agencies add value to RSE?



Schools want to provide the best possible RSE for their pupils but, as yet, many teachers lack sufficient training. A visitor can enrich RSE by bringing particular knowledge, perspectives and expertise directly into the classroom and also contributing to the wider development of RSE in a school. But teachers and schools have expertise in teaching and learning and responsibility for it. Schools should be in control of their RSE curriculum design and delivery; they can then identify suitable points at which external visitor input can improve provision.

Schools may invite external agencies to support RSE:

To enrich pupils' learning through direct classroom input:

- Learning about local health and advice services first-hand from service staff – this can help build trust in using a service.
- Learning about a faith, cultural or social perspective.
- Accessing specialised knowledge on a topic, for example, from a sexual health professional, can provide up-to-date, evidence-based input not readily available to the teacher and can increase impact.
- Developing personal and social skills through the process of hosting and interacting with a visitor.

- Experiencing a different learning style or medium, such as the creative arts.
- Learning about other people's lives from someone with a particular life experience, such as a teenage parent or HIV-positive speaker.
- Providing good quality and accurate resources for [particular aspects of RSE](#).

To build the capacity of schools to deliver good quality RSE:

- Providing the extra capacity to run small-group or one-to-one RSE with pupils needing personalised support or because of their particular skills in meeting specific needs, for example, of pupils with SEND.
- Playing a key role in the professional development of teachers through on-the-job training, staff meetings, INSET or webinars.
- Supporting senior managers and governors in their leadership role with RSE, for example, carrying out consultation with pupils, staff, governors, parents and carers to inform a review and in turn the RSE policy.
- Sharing knowledge of RSE practice in other schools, locally and nationally, to provide a wider perspective and potentially to link up schools with each other for peer support.

To engage with parents and carers

- By facilitating dialogue between the school and parents and carers about RSE, for example, by supporting a school parents' meeting or event, particularly if the school is discussing RSE with parents for the first time.
- By working directly with parents and carers to support them in their role of providing RSE for their children.

CONCLUSION AND CHECKLISTS

External agencies can make a valuable contribution to RSE in schools. Consideration of 'why' and 'how' external agencies contribute to RSE can help all partners work effectively together to provide good quality RSE for children and young people. This checklist provides a summary of key points

covered in this publication.

Answering 'why': the rationale for input from external agencies to RSE

- Does the input enhance learning and have a clear place in the curriculum?
- Is the school taking lead responsibility for teaching and learning?
- Does the input support the capacity of schools to deliver good quality RSE, for example, by contributing to the professional development of teachers?
- Are there opportunities for external agencies to work directly with parents and carers?
- Would the skills of external agencies be best used in a different way, for example, either working with small groups of children and young people or one to one?

The 'how': structures and processes that help create effective collaborations

- Is there time to discuss and plan the external agency input together in advance, including how the needs of specific pupils will be met?
- Has the visitor seen and discussed the school RSE policy including awareness of how the school defines sex education?
- Does the input from the visitor comply with the Equality Act 2010, particularly the requirement not to subject any child to discrimination in terms of the way in which the curriculum is delivered?
- Does the input from the visitor contribute to providing a balanced and broadly – based curriculum – which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life? (Education Act 2002)
- Is there mutual understanding that the school is responsible for the curriculum, with teachers recognising that they must uphold the Teachers' Standards?
- Has the visitor seen and agreed to adhere



to the school safeguarding, confidentiality and photography/recording policies?

- Is there evidence that the visitor has had the appropriate DBS check?
- Can the visitor share their own safeguarding and confidentiality policies?
- Do pupils have an opportunity to evaluate input from external visitors?
- Are there opportunities to review the input of external agencies; and for the findings to inform future plans?



Extract from Teachers' Standards Part 2

A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct.

The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct throughout a teacher's career.

Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:

- treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.

Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

References

Equality Act 2010: advice for schools

Department for Education (2011) Teachers' Standards – Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies

Education Act 2002

Sex Education Forum (2015) SRE – the evidence

UNESCO (2018) International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education

Department for Education (2019) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education – statutory guidance

Checklist A: Checking credibility

If you are offered a service, resource or communication material relating to RSE it is important that you check out the credentials of the organisation or individual.

Checks will vary depending on the type of organisation and there are some general guidelines relevant to all.

Are they a charity?

- Check they have a [Charity Commission listing](#)
- What are their charitable objectives? Are these relevant to RSE? Are they aligned with your school ethos?

Are they a company, social enterprise or community interest company?

- Check registration with [Companies House](#)
- How is the company described on their Companies House listing and website?
- Check the organisation's objectives – either displayed on their website, Companies House information or elsewhere. Are they aligned with your school ethos?
- What is the nature of the business and source of income for the organisation? Are there any conflicts of interest with the educational purpose and responsibilities of the school?

Are they operating as an individual?

- Check if the individual has published information about their work, for example on a website. Is the description of their work aligned with your school ethos?
- Is the visitor affiliated with particular organisations? Are these affiliations credible and do they align with your school ethos?

- Request a CV with examples of recent work in other schools. Does this demonstrate relevant expertise and experience?

Applies to all

- If the service is offered free of charge how is it funded? What information does this give about the overall purpose of the individual or organisation?
- What is the source of income for the charity or organisation? Does this pose any conflicts of interest with the educational purpose and responsibilities of the school?



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Checklist B: Quality Assuring Contribution to RSE

For external agencies to add value to the curriculum their input must be of high quality and integrity.

This checklist, used in combination with checking the agencies' credibility, provides a guide.

- Are the values and aims of the agency clear?
- Are they clear about the difference between medical and legal facts and opinions or beliefs?
- Do they refer to medically accurate information about sexual and reproductive health and children's health?
- Do they use research evidence to underpin their work? Is the research in a field directly relevant to RSE? Is their research basis from credible sources such as those quoted in the Sex Education Forum briefing: 'RSE the evidence' and UNESCO's International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education?
- Is the visitor adequately qualified, experienced and trained?
- Are pupils actively involved in learning that involves external input?
- Is there evidence that the organisation actively supports a comprehensive RSE curriculum including accurate information about contraception and pregnancy choices?
- Is there evidence that the organisation takes an inclusive approach to RSE and will comply with equalities legislation and Government RSHE guidance
- What resources does the visitor use, for example, images or videos? Are they used to educate and inform or to trigger emotional reactions from pupils?
- Will the visitor refer to their website or a service they (or others run) and

do these also meet the criteria above?

- Is there any quality assurance in place, for example PSHE Association kite-mark on resources, partnership with the Sex Education Forum or recommendation from the local authority?

In selecting an external visitor or contributor to RSE it may also be helpful to look at the Sex Education Forum's [10 principles and values](#) for good RSE, with which all our [partner organisations](#) are in agreement.

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