



## Frequently-Asked Questions about Sex and Relationships Education A Guide for Parents and Carers

**Jigsaw PSHE** is a comprehensive and completely original Scheme of Work for the whole primary school, from Year F1 to Year 6. It integrates PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) Education, emotional literacy, social skills and spiritual development in a whole-school approach.

The Jigsaw PSHE sex and relationships education unit of work aims to give children their entitlement to information about puberty and human reproduction, appropriate to their ages and stages of development. It is treated in a matter-of-fact manner to allay embarrassment and fear. We do not believe it is controversial. It is flexible enough for a school to ensure that the material fits its ethos and values. There is a strong safeguarding element to Changing Me – the unit of work that teaches about sex and relationships education.

Please see our website for an article on parents and Jigsaw:

<http://www.jigsawpshe.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/05-What-shall-we-tell-the-parents.pdf>

### **The starting point for teaching SRE in schools**

- Most parents/carers want the best for their children.
- Most parents/carers want to protect their children and to keep them safe.
- Most parents/carers want their children to be healthy and happy.

Schools do too... and high quality SRE is part of this.

## 1. What exactly is sex and relationships education?

The Government's definition is this:

*"It is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching."*

(Department for Education and Employment, SRE Guidance, 2000)

This is what every school in the country is expected to adhere to. How they teach it is up to each individual school.

Whilst PSHE education remains a non-statutory subject, section 2.5 of the National Curriculum framework document states that:

*'All schools should make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), drawing on good practice.'*

Along with the National Curriculum framework, the DfE also published a guidance document on PSHE education, which states that the subject is:

*'An important and necessary part of all pupils' education.'*

It goes on to note that:

*'Schools should seek to use PSHE education to build, where appropriate, on the statutory content already outlined in the national curriculum, the basic school curriculum and in statutory guidance on: drug education, financial education, sex and relationship education (SRE) and the importance of physical activity and diet for a healthy lifestyle.'*

## 2. Why is SRE taught in schools?

There are many reasons why SRE is taught in schools:

- It is part of the National Curriculum.
- More than ever before, children are exposed to representations of sex and sexuality through the media and the social culture around them, so we need to present a balanced view of SRE.
- Rates of sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancy in the UK are worryingly high – as is the regret felt by young people after early sexual experiences.
- Research shows that most parents say they want the support of schools in providing SRE for their children.
- Research consistently shows that effective SRE delays first sexual experience and reduces risk-taking.
- Surveys of children and young people have repeatedly told us that SRE tends to be "too little, too late and too biological".

### 3. What is the purpose of SRE?

There are four main aims for teaching SRE within the context of PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) Education:

- To enable young people to understand and respect their bodies, and be able to cope with the changes puberty brings, without fear or confusion
- To help young people develop positive and healthy relationships appropriate to their age, development, etc. (respect for self and others)
- To support young people to have positive self-image and body image, and to understand the influences and pressures around them
- To make informed choices when they are considering starting a sexual relationship, so that they keep themselves safe and don't find themselves with an unplanned pregnancy or sexually-transmitted infection

### 4. Won't telling my child about sex take away his/her innocence?

No. The evidence suggests that high quality SRE does the opposite: it actually delays young people's first sexual experience, and it helps them become much more confident and comfortable about making informed choices. Remember: ignorance is the enemy of innocence.

Teaching about safety and relationships as part of PSHE Education contributes to how schools approach the safeguarding of pupils. It helps them to recognise when they and others are at risk and equips them with the skills, strategies and language they need to take appropriate action. This is crucial to fulfilling statutory duties in relation to safeguarding pupils as well as to meeting Ofsted expectations. Ofsted expressed concern in its 2013 PSHE report that lack of high-quality, age-appropriate SRE in over a third of schools left young people vulnerable to inappropriate sexual behaviours and exploitation. It is clear, therefore, that PSHE Education plays a vital part in helping to meet school's responsibilities to safeguard their pupils.

### 5. I've heard that I can take my child out of PSHE lessons on SRE. Is this true?

Yes, it is. Parents/carers have the legal right to withdraw their children from the SRE included in the PSHE Education curriculum (as that is a non-statutory subject). **But** they are not permitted to withdraw their child from the Sex Education included in the National Curriculum Science Orders, as this is a statutory subject.

If you are considering taking your child out of SRE lessons within PSHE Education, please consider the following:

- All the other children in your child's class will have been taught this information and may well talk to your child about it, perhaps in the playground... and potentially mislead them or confuse them as a result. It may prove far better to allow experienced and sensitive teaching staff to teach your child in a progressive, developmental way that is grounded in research.
- They will be learning about sex and reproduction in Science lessons. The SRE in PSHE Education will echo this *and* will concentrate on teaching children how to enjoy healthy relationships, improve self-esteem and self-confidence, and make healthy, informed choices.

When viewed this way, it is hoped that SRE won't be seen as so contentious to some concerned parents/carers.

- Talk to your child's teacher, the head teacher, or the teacher in charge of PSHE Education. Often, when parents and carers find out what is in the PSHE Education curriculum, their fears are allayed as they can appreciate it is in the best interests of their child's lifelong learning.

## 6. What do you teach about Sex and Relationships through Jigsaw?

It is all in the context of the whole PSHE curriculum and underpinned by the value system of the school, i.e. valuing loving, stable relationships, respect for each other, etc.

These are the key ideas within the Changing Me unit of work:

- Life cycles
- How babies are made
- My changing body
- Puberty
- How babies grow
- Growing from young to old
- Becoming a teenager
- Assertiveness
- Self-respect
- Safeguarding
- Family stereotypes
- Self and body image
- Attraction
- Change
- Accepting change
- Looking ahead
- Moving/transition to secondary

The key ideas in green are those that are also taught within the Science curriculum. As it is a developmental, progressive scheme (based on the spiral curriculum), not all key ideas are taught in every year group.

## 7. What will my child actually be taught?

The Changing Me unit is taught over a period of 6 weeks in the second half of the summer term. Each year group will be taught similar ideas in different ways, **appropriate to their age and development stage**. Please note: at no point will a child be taught something that is inappropriate; and if a question from a child arises and the teacher feels it would be inappropriate to answer (e.g. because of its mature or explicit nature), the child will be encouraged to ask his/her parents or carers at home.

**Foundation** – Growing up: how we have changed since we were babies

**Year 1** – Boys' and girls' bodies; body parts

**Year 2** – Boys' and girls' bodies; body parts and respecting privacy

**Year 3** – How babies grow and how boys' and girls' bodies change as they grow older

**Year 4** – Internal and external reproductive body parts, body changes in girls and menstruation

**Year 5** – Puberty for boys and girls, and conception

**Year 6** – Puberty for boys and girls and understanding conception to birth of a baby

**8. Why are girls taught about boys' development and vice versa?**

We believe it is very important for children to understand each other's development. The world may become rather confusing if 50% of the population was not aware of what the other 50% of the population was doing. It also helps to ensure that children are mindful of their peers' needs and allows them to develop into sensitive, caring individuals who understand the changes that boys *and* girls experience.