

Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)

What is SRE?

Sex and relationships education (SRE) is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up; relationships; sex; human sexuality; and sexual health.

What does SRE aim to achieve?

SRE aims to equip children and young people with the information, skills and values they need to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.

SRE aims to *contribute* to behaviour change, including reducing unprotected and unwanted sex, and reducing harmful behaviour, including sexual offences such as assault and abuse.

Why does SRE matter?

- Our children learn about sex and relationships from the very youngest age, even if we don't talk with them. Some of the things they learn are incorrect, confusing and frightening. In a world where sex is used to sell things from food to fast cars, and celebrities' lives become everyone's business, we should talk to our children to help them make sense of it all.
- As well as this, in the UK (and Croydon) we have the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe. We also have high rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- Effective SRE does not encourage early sexual experimentation - but it does enable children and young people to mature, to build up their confidence and self esteem and to understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity until they are ready.

Does SRE work?

- The message that young people should wait until they are ready to have sex forms the basis of all good quality, comprehensive SRE programmes.
- There is good evidence that a 'just say no' or 'abstinence only' approach combined with no information (or incorrect information) about SRE is not effective in changing behaviour in the long term (Guttmacher Institute 2007).
 - Teaching young people about contraception does not contradict messages about delaying the first experience of sex (Kirby 2008).

Your rights as parents

- Where schools work within the SRE guidelines and consult effectively with parents/carers, you should feel re-assured about the content of the lessons.
- Parents/carers have the right to withdraw their child from some, or all SRE lessons, but not statutory science lessons.
- Should you be considering pulling your child out of SRE lessons talk it through with your child and then with either the head teacher or another senior teacher at the school.

If you decide this step is necessary, then the school should provide information about the lessons being missed and ideas for other sources of support for you to fulfil the task of educating your child. Parents need to be aware that SRE can occur at any time if it arises naturally from class discussion, and that the right to exempt will not inhibit such discussion.

Aims and objectives

- To provide a secure, sensitive and caring framework where learning and discussion can take place.
- To provide information which is easy to understand, relevant and appropriate for the needs, age and maturity of the pupils.
- Encourage the use of correct vocabulary.
- To foster self worth and awareness, together with a sense of moral responsibility.
- To help the children to acquire and practice important life skills such as critical thinking, decision making, communication and assertiveness.
- To ensure that SRE is available to all children regardless of gender, ability, cultural or religious background in line with the schools policy on equal opportunities.

Why should parents and carers talk to their children about Sex and Relationships?

Children tell us they want their parents to be the first ones to talk to them about puberty, sex and relationships. If families start talking to their children about puberty, sex and relationships they are less likely to get ideas that worry or confuse them and they learn that it's alright to talk about these things at home and to ask questions.

Children learn most about values and relationships from family experiences. Close, loving relationships are the best way of showing a young person how your family 'does things' based on your values, culture, faith and beliefs.

If families talk about sex and relationships openly and honestly, young people are:

- more prepared for puberty and the changes they experience
 - more likely to resist pressure to have unwanted sex
 - more likely to delay having sex for the first time
 - more likely to use contraception if they do have sex
- less likely to have an unplanned pregnancy or to get a sexually transmitted infection

What do children and young people think?

Children and young people want to talk to their parents about sex and relationships, but that can be daunting for a parent. One group of 10-16 year olds came up with these helpful pieces of advice for parents:

- Take responsibility for talking to us.
- Don't just wait for us to ask.
- If we ask you things, always tell the truth. Don't put it off or say 'I'll tell you when you're older.'
- Don't be angry and try not to be embarrassed.
- Don't save it all up for a one-off 'birds and bees' lecture. We'd rather you talked naturally, little and often.
- Wait until we're at home and on our own together to avoid embarrassment.
- Make sure we know what you're talking about and let us ask you questions.
- If we ask what a word means, ask us what we think the word means first.
- Don't laugh at us or spread gossip about what we have been talking about.
- If you don't know something, be honest and say that you don't know.
- Give us books or leaflets, but talk to us too.
- Don't expect school to tell us everything – we want to hear from our parents too.

Curriculum Overview

- Reception – Our lives.

Our Day, Keeping ourselves clean, Families, Healthy Eating

- Year 1 – Growing and caring for ourselves

Keeping Clean, Growing and Changing, Families and Care

- Year 2 – Differences

Differences Boys and Girls, Differences Male and Female, Naming the Body Parts

- Year 3 – Valuing Difference and Keeping Safe

Differences Male and Female, Personal Space, Family Differences

- Year 4 – Growing Up

Growing and Changing, What is Puberty? , Puberty Changes and Reproduction

- Year 5 – Puberty

Talking about Puberty, Male and Female Changes, Puberty and Hygiene, Keeping Safe

- Year 6 – Puberty, Relationships and Reproduction

Puberty and Reproduction, Understanding Relationships, Conception and Pregnancy, Communicating in Relationships , FGM Awareness

Useful resources

NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

CEOP

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/>

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Familylives

<http://www.familylives.org.uk/>

Childline

<http://www.childline.org.uk/pages/home.aspx>