

Nigel Genders, the Church of England’s Chief Education Officer, discusses the Church’s response to the Government’s call for evidence on the changes to teaching Relationships and Sex Education in schools.

Healthy relationships and sex are good gifts from God and should bring joy. That's the starting point for our response to the Government's call for evidence on the changes to teaching Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

It is a response rooted in our experience of providing education for one million children in our schools and working with children and young people in voluntary groups across the country.

In all these settings, what young people most desire from RSE is to learn about securing, developing and sustaining healthy relationships and knowing to recognise when and how relationships go wrong.

Children want to be prepared for the opportunities, joys, challenges and responsibilities of being in relationship with other people. RSE must provide the understanding, vocabulary and strategies children need to keep themselves safe and to thrive within good relationships of all kinds. It should give children accurate information to equip them for life in the modern world and make sure they are not harmed or negatively influenced by unrealistic or dangerous materials and expectations.

Our desire is for young people to flourish and to gain every opportunity to live fulfilled lives and RSE should teach about healthy relationships and lifestyle choices.

Schools will be encouraged to reflect their own ethos and values whilst being sensitive to the needs of the community, including the context of belief, faith, religion and culture.

In Church of England schools, RSE will be rooted in the teachings of the Church, including the importance of trust, loyalty, fidelity and the Christian understanding of marriage as the context for sexual relationships, as well as the understanding of abstinence and celibacy as positive life choices.

In partnership with parents, schools have a vital role to play in the formation of our children. Taking that responsibility seriously means we are not prepared to leave their development to the distorted representations of sex and relationships that are just a few clicks away on their phones and computers, but will actively promote staying safe, developing healthy relationships, and protecting self-esteem and good mental health. That's what good RSE should aim for as it contributes to an education that develops dignity and respect.

[Read the Church of England Education Office response](https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/stories-and-features/relationships-and-education) to the Department for Education's call for evidence on proposed changes to the teaching of Relationships and Sex Education and PSHE.