

Friday 12 March 2021

Dear Head of Secondary,

I write on behalf of the broadly based Christian Coalition for Education.

As you are aware, the introduction of new Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) was postponed from becoming mandatory last September due to the Coronavirus. As you and your school have been working so hard to handle the pressures of this time, the government recognised that the legally required parental consultation on your RSE curriculum might not occur effectively. From this summer term 2021, however, RSE does become mandatory. In light of this, we are sure you are aware of the following:

1) The updated September guidance from the DfE states that when planning the school's curriculum, respect for the right of parents to ensure that education and teaching is 'in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions' is required.

2) Parents have the right to request their children are withdrawn from Sex Education as part of RSE. The enabling law of 2019 makes it clear the pupil must be so excused until the request is withdrawn, unless or to the extent that the head teacher considers that the pupil should not be so excused. No proper guidance exists for Heads as to how to exercise this discretionary power. This is fraught with the possibilities for disagreement between Heads and parents.

3) In the teaching of RSE the DfE Guidance of Sept 24th 2020 prohibits the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school. It also states: You should exercise extreme caution when working with external agencies. It continues, 'Materials which suggest that non-conformity to gender stereotypes should be seen as synonymous with having a different gender identity should not be used and you should not work with external agencies or organisations that produce such materials'. Teachers should not suggest to a child that their non-compliance with gender stereotypes means that either 'their personality or their body is wrong and in need of changing.'

4) We understand that some parent groups and individuals are currently taking schools to court regarding lack of consultation and disturbance about the RSE curriculum, or the holding of 'diversity' events without prior consultation with parents and other stake-holders.

5) There are major safeguarding concerns about some of the agencies and materials used in RSE, and the critical criteria to note, as the Guidance states, are 'the age, developmental stage and background of your pupils.' The original legislation laid this down in 2019 para 80A (2) (b) the education is appropriate having regard to the age and the religious background of the pupils.

We offer this communication as a support to protect you from non-compliance with the RSE regulations and potential litigation from parents. The above 5 points are the ones where issues occur, but to keep them in mind and in practice should avert such litigation.

If you would like further information please contact any of the organisations which make up CCFE, which I chair. Thank you for your incredible work for the children of our country at this challenging time. For further advice or support from our member organisations email info@ccfe.uk or look at the [CCFE website](#).

Yours faithfully,

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali