



Department for Education

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education

15th July 2024

Sarah Owen MP
Chair of the Women and Equalities Education Select Committee
By email: womeqcom@parliament.uk

PUBLICATION OF THE REVISED RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) AND HEALTH EDUCATION STATUTORY GUIDANCE AND THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION.

Dear Sarah,

I am writing to inform you that today we published updated statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), and the government's response to the consultation which informed the guidance.

The consultation, which was published in May 2024, sought views on revisions to the RSHE statutory guidance.

This updated guidance has taken into account the consultation responses and the relevant evidence. It provides a practical framework that enables schools to teach RSHE in a way which puts children and young people's wellbeing at its heart. As such, it is clear about the need to ensure that lessons are age-appropriate and that parents should be consulted on the content of the RSHE curriculum and should know what their children are being taught, while ensuring teachers are able to teach about topics preventatively, or to respond swiftly when a risk presents itself earlier than anticipated.

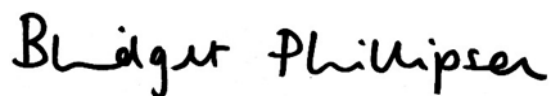
The guidance also contains updated content to reflect the issues that children are increasingly confronted by, and which we know the Women and Equalities Select Committee is very aware of, including:

- A dedicated section on addressing sexual harassment and sexual violence, with significant new content to position RSHE as key to the prevention of violence against women and girls. This includes a focus on building healthy relationships skills from the start of primary. The content on staying safe online has been comprehensively updated to cover the risks around exposure to pornography and misogynistic influencers, and a range of other related risks to which young people can be exposed.

- New content is included on teaching about suicide prevention. It makes clear that schools should have a plan for addressing suicide prevention safely with secondary school pupils including ensuring that staff have the knowledge and skills to do so.
- The section on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender content has been updated to be clear that primary schools are encouraged to include same sex parents when talking about different types of families. It is also clear upfront about the difference in rights based on sex and gender reassignment, to reflect the Supreme Court ruling on the interpretation of the Equality Act in the For Women Scotland case. It acknowledges that beyond the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment there is significant debate, and schools should be careful not to endorse any particular view or teach it as fact. The guidance is also clear about the need to avoid language and activities which repeat or enforce gender stereotypes, which is in line with the conclusions of the Cass Review (2024).

As this is a devolved matter, the Department for Education will implement these proposals in England only. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have different policies in place and my department will continue to engage with each of the Devolved Administrations to encourage a joined-up approach on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bridget Phillipson". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP

Minister for Women and Equalities and Secretary of State for Education