



HARRODIAN

Sex and Relationships Education Policy

Harrodian recognises the Department of Education's 2017 Policy Statement regarding SRE. This amends the 2000 guidance deeming SRE optional in independent schools and will make SRE teaching compulsory from Sept 2020 (postponed from original intention of Sept 2019).

We at Harrodian, from 2018-19, began teaching a specific RSE course as part of our PSHE provision, believing it to be a valuable and important part of a rounded education.

Definition/content:

SRE means Sex and Relationships Education. In line with government guidance, teaching of SRE should include:

- different types of relationships, including friendships, family relationships, dealing with strangers and, at secondary school, intimate relationships;
- how to recognise, understand and build healthy relationships, including self-respect and respect for others, commitment, tolerance, boundaries and consent, and how to manage conflict, and also how to recognise unhealthy relationships;
- how relationships may affect health and wellbeing, including mental health;
- healthy relationships and safety online; and
- factual knowledge, at secondary school, around sex, sexual health and sexuality, set firmly within the context of relationships.

We acknowledge the inherent links with other key areas of PSHE such as Online Safety and Mental Health provision and look to make these links clear.

Delivery:

PSHE, including SRE, is delivered in the Senior School via form times and by form tutors. It is policy that tutors will first receive training from a member of staff who, in turn, has received training from expert practitioners. Where a form tutor feels uncomfortable delivering any session, they will be offered support and the chance to team teach with their Head of Year or Section Head.

Parents:

We recognise the right of parents to withdraw their child from SRE in School. All parents are informed ahead of SRE sessions being delivered although all are encouraged to allow their children to attend.

Safeguarding:

It is recognised that the content in SRE can lend itself to revealing Safeguarding concerns. Prior to delivery, all tutors will be reminded of Safeguarding procedures and asked to be aware. Moreover they will be reminded not to share anything regarding their own private lives in this area and to use correct terms and maintain a professional tone. Confidentiality can never be promised to pupils and no encouragement will be given for them to break the law (i.e. to engage in sexual practice before the age of 16) although non-judgemental information will be given and questions honestly answered.

It has been decided that 13s and 14s will attend these sessions in single sex settings and will be taught by a teacher of their own sex. The Head of 15s will be given the option of pursuing this approach. However, it is noted that our visiting SRE speaker for many years, Alex Fryer, opts to speak to the 13s in a single sex setting, but to the 15s in a mixed setting, acknowledging their greater maturity.

SRE in the Prep school

My Body My Rules

Year group	Lesson	Action	Communication to parents
8s	Timetabled lessons 1 x per week	Gentle introduction to body changes – spring term. Boys and girls separate.	Letter to parents
9s	Timetabled lessons 1 x per week	Puberty discussion – spring term. Preparing pupils for the onset of any body changes. Boys and girls separate.	Letter to parents
10s	Timetabled lessons 1 x per week	Speaker – Amy Forbes-Robertson - spring term to talk to whole cohort together – love, lust, sex, gender, will mention body changes too. Follow up with class discussion. Children given the option to write any questions or concerns on post-it notes which will be read anonymously.	Letter to parents Class reps invited
11s	20 min session in morning form time 1 x per week but more ad hoc	Friendship, emotions, relationships, choices. Transgender talk.	Letter to parents / parents invited to evening talk

See appendices below.

Person Responsible: Pastoral Head of Senior School

Last updated: September 2019

Next update: September 2020

Teaching SRE to Teenagers – Hard Work but Worth the Hassle!

ANDY WOODWARD

We at Harrodian are always keen to improve the way we educate and develop those in our care. One way in which I would contend we have successfully achieved this in recent years is in our planning and delivery of PSHE. It is a growing personal conviction that this area of School life matters perhaps beyond any other, certainly if we are looking to equip pupils for the world around them and life ahead of them, rather than just for exams.

This term the PSHE syllabus has centred on the thorny but hugely important matter of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE). SRE will always be hotly debated and somewhat contentious to some, even at Harrodian. If queries were raised by parents, it would now be possible – if cowardly – to hide behind incoming government legislation. It is now set in stone that, from September 2019, *all* schools, including those of us in the independent sector, are required to teach SRE (to be RSE – a good piece of re-prioritisation, all told) and should do so well. Ofsted is also fully behind this, stating in an influential 2013 report entitled ‘Not Yet Good Enough’ that ‘In secondary schools the tendency was too much emphasis on ‘the mechanics’ of reproduction and too little on relationships, sexuality, the influence of pornography on students’ understanding of healthy sexual relationships, dealing with emotions and staying safe’¹. The government has endorsed that document, alongside advice from organisations such as Brook and the PSHE Association, in making its new demands. Given the existing 2000 legislation did not even mention the internet, let alone social media or image sharing, it is easy to see why it felt the need.

But, for all that, we are not merely prioritising SRE because the government now says so, and it would be disingenuous to pretend otherwise. We are doing so because it matters a great deal. In an American 2012 survey cited by Psychology Today, 45% of students admitted to receiving ‘sexted’ nude or part-nude images of their peers². And this was before the ubiquity of Snapchat, now as popular among our pupil community as anywhere else. That article goes on to state that the pressure upon young people to participate in ‘sexting’, not to mention the consequences, can be ‘unbearable’. In the meantime, the ‘#metoo’ movement has shone a light on the prevalence of sexual harassment experienced by girls and women in particular, while the cultural creep of online pornography has continued unabated. Sociologist Gail Dines has described this latter factor as ‘a massive social experiment that is having a seismic impact’ on the young³. She points out that, by 2015, pornographic websites received more visitors per month than Twitter, Netflix and Amazon combined, with half of American college males testifying that they had first accessed such material before the age of 13. Perhaps most alarmingly, in addition to pornography being a world largely devoid of depicted contraception or consent, a significant recent study found that close to 90% of scenes examined contained at least one act of verbal or physical aggression⁴.

¹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413178/Not_yet_good_enough_personal_social_health_and_economic_education_in_schools.pdf p.6-7

² <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/shame-nation/201710/the-normalcy-sexting-among-teens>

³<https://endsexualexploitation.org/freedomagenda/> **Click on:** Growing Up with Porn: The Developmental and Societal Impact of Pornography on Children – Gail Dines, Culture Reframed

⁴ <http://www.ethics.org.au/on-ethics/blog/june-2012/pornography-and-education>

In short then, it matters. All teenagers have questions about sex and, if not able to ask a trusted adult, they are increasingly likely to look for answers in the wrong places, usually online. Indeed, research cited by Brook suggests that this is currently true of 81% of young people⁵. Even our more 'innocent' children who are nowhere near wishing to pursue sexual relationships, and we are convinced there are *many* of these in our senior community (no 'all teenagers are at it' hysteria here!), will not fit that profile for very long in these fast-changing teenage years.

Indeed, I am unable to find any research to suggest that responsible SRE makes children more likely to sexually experiment, nor to make irresponsible choices. The National Children's Bureau has assessed all existing evidence and found, overwhelmingly, that good quality SRE delays the onset of sexual activity and makes more likely the use of contraception⁶. Parents⁷ and, most importantly, children⁸ are asking for good SRE in huge numbers. Wherever SRE improves, good decision making and a downturn in teenage pregnancies and STI rates would seem to follow⁹. Whether they are personally navigating these challenges now, or later, there is no good reason for teenagers not being informed about contraception or empowered regarding consent. These things must surely be known about *before* any key decision-making moment arrives.

We at Harrodian, as part of caring for our pupils, therefore *want* to be a part of this. We want to be teaching positive and relevant SRE (we'll title it RSE next year – the relational context is indeed key!) and, yes, doing it well. We're not yet the finished article but, for the first time this year, all tutors delivering these sessions have been selected from the start with this requirement in mind and have since attended after-school training. Myself and Ms Heller (our DSL and responsible for PSHE in Sixth Form) have attended additional training facilitated by the Westminster Education Forum and our SRE sessions are, for the first time, all being delivered in a single-sex environment. Our new resources have been differentiated by year group and gender, are checked by Safeguarding Leads and Senior Leaders and, excitingly, have all been entirely constructed around genuine questions (anonymously) submitted by our pupils themselves – there were 111 of them to choose from (many of them asking for help to resist societal or peer pressure and to delay sexual activity). Our key unified messages are 'No Pressure, No Hurry' and 'Respect for Self and Others', under which we are covering a great number of key topics, including Sexual Health, Consent, Issues around Pornography, Different Types of Sexuality and, above all, Healthy Relationships. All this is in addition to us continuing to receive the expert input of our annual visiting speaker, Alex Fryer. It is hard work, but it is proving productive and would seem to be being well received. Do please feel free to ask your children whether they agree!

I hope this oversight gives some insight into our reasoning and approach this term. In the end, given the hyper-sexualised culture around them, it comes down to the fact neither we nor you want to leave Harrodian children to have to figure all this out themselves via friends, guesswork, the internet and pop culture. And we know that, above and far beyond the extent to which they need 20 weekly minutes of PSHE, they need you, their parents who know them best, to give them true answers and good guidance. Good luck!

Key documents:

⁵https://www.brook.org.uk/images/brook/professionals/documents/press_releases/sreforthe21stcenturyreportfinal.pdf p.3

⁶ https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/Blog_reports/sef_doessrework_2010.pdf

⁷ <http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/policy-campaigns/beyond-biology-campaign-launch.aspx>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/sep/12/sex-education-is-not-relevant-to-pupils-lives-says-report>

⁹ Again: https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/Blog_reports/sef_doessrework_2010.pdf

New government commitment:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-to-teach-21st-century-relationships-and-sex-education>
Government-endorsed PSHE Association guidance:
<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/system/files/SRE%20for%20the%2021st%20Century%20-%20FINAL.pdf.pdf>

Appendix 2: Scheme of Work taught in the Spring Term 2018, within the Senior School

All sessions differentiated by year group and gender where seen fit. Content shaped around pupil questions received anonymously in second session.

1. Sex and the Law
2. Contraception and Sexual Health
3. Love and Healthy Relationships
4. Consent
5. Issues around Pornography
6. Different sexualities (LGTB)

Unifying statements – ‘No Pressure, No Hurry’ and ‘Respect for Self and Others’