

A Guide for Parents and Carers

Relationships, Sexual Health & Parenthood (RSHP)

(This guide is predominantly for parents and carers of pupils attending non-denominational schools.

If you are a parent of a child at a Catholic School for example, the Scottish Catholic Education Service produces its own literature to inform parents and carers about RSHP aspects of the curriculum.)

1. Why might I need to know about RSHP?

Parents are a child's primary educator, and it is a parent/carer's responsibility to ensure their child is provided with an appropriate education. School provides part of a child's education but as parents and carers we should be the overwhelming influence on the children entrusted to our care.

There are 8 curriculum areas in total within the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence framework. RSHP is one part of the "Health and wellbeing" curriculum area.

The health and wellbeing of Scotland's children and young people matters to us as it matters to God who made them. We are grateful that the Scottish Government is concerned to give children the tools they need to develop healthy relationships. Within this part of the curriculum (as in other parts) are strong messages of respect, tolerance and understanding for others, as well as other values which would be considered to be in line with the Christian faith. (See CVE Scotland's blog [The RSHP Strand Is Seriously Affecting My Health and Wellbeing](#) for examples of this).

However, RSHP includes elements in tension with Christian belief and with the beliefs of other faith communities. It is therefore important that you, as your child's primary educator, are fully aware of what your child is being taught. Depending on the choice, skill and presentation of the content delivered by an individual teacher and a parent's personal beliefs, there could be seen to be a wide variance in how much teaching of RSHP in the classroom conflicts with the Christian faith.

Opposition to the materials chosen for delivering some parts of the RSHP curriculum is not restricted to Christian believers. Other parents, carers, faith-groups and school staff hold concerns about what is sometimes deemed inappropriate content for this controversial part of the curriculum.

Non-faith schools reflect the wide-ranging views of society and a school community. They are not permitted to place emphasis on the biblical teaching on marriage and family.¹

However, a parent could take some encouragement that, in a viewpoint with which you may not agree, a good teacher should be teaching a variety of viewpoints without promoting one above another. It is part of a parent's role to help your child understand that at school different beliefs and viewpoints will be presented, to provide support and resources to help them understand your own family's beliefs and support them in making their own decisions.

2. What is in the RSHP curriculum for my child(ren)'s stage?

To place RSHP in context with the whole of Health & wellbeing learning, here is what the Curriculum for Excellence Experiences & Outcomes document says about Health and wellbeing²; the reader will see that we can endorse many of its aims steeped as they are in Christian values of respect and community:

“Learning in health and wellbeing ensures that children and young people develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future.

Each establishment, working with partners, should take a holistic approach to promoting health and wellbeing, one that takes account of the stage of growth, development and maturity of each individual, and the social and community context.

I can expect my learning environment to support me to:

- develop my self-awareness, self-worth and respect for others
- meet challenges, manage change and build relationships
- experience personal achievement and build my resilience and confidence
- understand and develop my physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing and social skills
- understand how what I eat, how active I am and how decisions I make about my behaviour and relationships affect my physical and mental wellbeing
- participate in a wide range of activities which promote a healthy lifestyle
- understand that adults in my school community have a responsibility to look after me, listen to my concerns and involve others where necessary
- learn about where to find help and resources to inform choices
- assess and manage risk and understand the impact of risk-taking behaviour
- reflect on my strengths and skills to help me make informed choices when planning my next steps
- acknowledge diversity and understand that it is everyone's responsibility to challenge discrimination.”

There are six areas of wellbeing in the Health & wellbeing curriculum:

1. Mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing
2. Planning for choices and changes
3. Physical education, physical activity and sport
4. Food and health
5. Substance misuse
6. Relationships, sexual health and parenthood

The RSHP Curriculum

There is a set of experiences and outcomes (a set of statements about learning and progression) that teachers need to plan and deliver for pupils, linked to each area. For RSHP these can be found on pp.16-18 of this document:

<https://education.gov.scot/Documents/health-and-wellbeing-eo.pdf>

There are also benchmarks that set out what learners need to know and be able to do to progress through the levels.

What level is my child at?

Usually on a school report it would say 'working within x level' for a subject/curriculum area. There is a general guide linking school years to curriculum stages on the [education.gov.scot/parentzone](https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/learning-in-scotland/curriculum-levels/) website here:

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/learning-in-scotland/curriculum-levels/>.

3. How will my child's teacher choose which resources to use to teach this part of the Health and Wellbeing curriculum? What is the rshp.scot website and is the teacher obliged to use those resources?

Scotland does not have a national curriculum or any prescribed resources that teachers must use to deliver materials for any curriculum area. In theory they are free to choose any resource that best suits the needs of the pupils in their class, the planned learning and the context of their school community. If a headteacher or teacher makes the professional judgement that materials from a particular website or resource are not helpful in delivering the required curriculum, then the teacher is well within their rights to look somewhere else for materials that do meet their pupils' needs and cover the required experiences and outcomes. In practice an individual teacher would be expected to make decisions on RSHP lesson content in conjunction with a head of department and/or headteacher.

The rshp.scot website has many learning plans and activities linked to each Curriculum for Excellence level, experiences and outcomes. It has been funded partly by the Scottish Government and is an easy place for teachers to get ready-to-use materials for RSHP and is therefore widely used in schools. Not all teachers and parents will be aware though that the rshp.scot website is only a resource website and that any resources on that site do not need to be used. Like any other curriculum area, a teacher should pick materials that are suitable for the age and stage of the pupils and the school context.

(Please see section 7 for some alternate resources which could be used.)

4. How can I find out exactly what my child is being taught in school?

Schools are obliged to inform parents when they are embarking on RSHP topics and consultation with parents is written into the government's 'Guidance for teachers on the conduct of teaching relationships, sexual health and parenthood education within the Curriculum for Excellence'³. Schools may have a specific open night for parents so that they can see the resources and understand what will be taught. This allows the home to support the school through such things as using the same terminology and being aware that their child may have concerns or questions that they want to raise in the safety of their home. Schools may also send a parent letter home, highlighting the topics that will be taught.

If you think that you are not being informed of what your child is being taught in RSHP then contact your child's headteacher.

As schools are encouraged to work in partnership with parents⁴, it is absolutely allowable to ask your child's school about any part of the curriculum your child is being taught. A simple email or phone call in the first instance would be appropriate, asking for details (perhaps copies or links to resources) on what your child will be taught in RSHP and any information on outside agencies which may be involved. Try to be specific with your enquiry if you can, referencing the Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes you are asking about, e.g. HWB 46 & 47, rather than just the RSHP curriculum as a whole.

The Evangelical Alliance has produced a checklist for parents of pupils at English Primary and Secondary schools which includes examples of questions a parent may like to ask a school:

Primary: www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/3-Relationship-Education-Primary-Checklist-for-Parents.pdf

Secondary: www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/3-Relationship-and-Sex-Education-Secondary-Checklist-for-Parents.pdf

(The Evangelical Alliance is currently working on resources for their Scottish RSHP resource hub).

The reply from the school should give you enough knowledge to inform the conversations with your child about what is being taught in school. Having been given the resources/plan of work, if you feel there is not enough detail, would like to know more about the method of delivery or have other questions or concerns about the different views which may be expressed then get back to the headteacher/teacher and ask for further details.

5. What can I do if I don't agree with what my child is being taught in school?

If you do not agree with what is being taught to your child in school and would like to act here are some options:

- 1) Discuss with your child the resources that will be used and prepare them for what they will hear or be shown. (This could also be done retrospectively).

It may be that in discussing with your child why you do not agree with viewpoints or laws that are being taught in school (and by using other resources if necessary) you feel your child has been educated well to understand and personally respond to any differing viewpoints, with the ability to assess appropriately any information given at school on these subjects.

- 2) Suggest to the school alternative resources which can be used (see point 7 for some options). Schools are more likely to adapt or change what they are doing if there is a group of like-minded parents forming well-researched, respectful communication with the school.
- 3) Ask the school for your child to be withdrawn from certain parts of the RSHP curriculum. Discuss this with your child. Paragraphs 56-60 of the government's 'Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools' guidance outline a parent/carer/pupil's right to withdraw from all or part of a planned sexual health education programme within a RSHP education programme: [Conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools -](#)

gov.scot (www.gov.scot) This government guidance is under review and may change.

Some tips for engaging with schools in England have been written by the Christian Institute and can be helpfully applied to engaging with a school in Scotland: see p28-31, Section 9 - https://www.christian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/rse-guide-england_v2.pdf

- 4) You may want to communicate more widely than the school to raise the issue of guidance and/or content of the RSHP curriculum being unsatisfactory to you. See point 6 for further ideas on this.

6. What can I do if I don't agree with the content of the curriculum? What can I do if I don't agree with the government's guidance to schools on the delivery of RSHP, or the widely-used lesson materials found on the rshp.scot website (partly-funded by the government)?

It is very unlikely that the Scottish government and Education Authorities will make changes towards your desired preferences with the RSHP curriculum unless you, and others with the same opinion, make your views known to them. Do not leave it up to one or two people who may be a minority on decision-making boards.

The RSHP part of the Curriculum for Excellence's Experiences and Outcomes can be found here: www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk

The Scottish government's guidelines to schools on RSHP can be found here: www.gov.scot/publications/conduct-relationships-sexual-health-parenthood-education-schools/

The rshp.scot website: <https://rshp.scot/>

If you do not agree that what is being taught in your child's school, what is in the government's guidance to schools document, or do not agree that the rshp.scot website reflects your view (and that of a significant group of people in Scotland) on human sexuality and would like to act, below are some ways to engage with those making decisions higher up than the school.

When writing to any of the persons or bodies below here are some considerations:

- it is important to personalise communication, not just 'copy and paste' from someone else or a template, otherwise it will only be counted as one submission
- add in your own situation, where you live, family circumstances, reason for writing
- use the word 'complaint' rather than 'concern for'; it is more likely to lead to action
- be as specific as possible with the part(s) of the government guidance or resources (e.g. those on the rshp.scot website) you are supportive of and those you have grave concerns about and why. Try to be balanced and affirm the practices you agree with.
- you can include a complaint about the lack of consultation that has happened with people of religious belief in the re-writing of the government RSHP conduct paper and the lack of protection of Christian teachers, pupils and families within the non-

denominational school sector to act according to their conscience and belief with regard to RSHP

- when writing to someone representing a political party you could choose to add that their response will be important in your decision as to who to vote for in the next election. Individual letters from a 'normal voter' should be taken seriously and can be more effective than one from a lobby group.
- ask for a response

1) Communicate with your MSP.

(Your MSP and their contact details can be searched using

<https://beta.parliament.scot/msps/current-and-previous-msps>)

2) Communicate with the government and the learning directorate department responsible for the content and guidance on RSHP.

The Scottish Government's RSHP guidance, previously known as Circular 2/2001, is being re-written and is open to conversation and consultation from interested groups. You can give feedback on the current document now, including the parts that you want to see retained or strengthened. Visit

www.gov.scot/publications/conduct-relationships-sexual-health-parenthood-education-schools/

Email or write to:

your MSP AND Mr John Swinney, Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills, DFMCSE@gov.scot
Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills,
Scottish Government, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Mr Phil Alcock, Team Leader – Health & Wellbeing in Schools:

Phil.alcock@gov.scot

Team Leader – Health & Wellbeing in Schools; Learning Directorate; Area 2C-South, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

3) Write to the government about the PSE review recommendations.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-personal-social-education-preparing-scotlands-children-young-people-learning-work-life/pages/5/>

The Government recently did a review of PSE (Personal and Social Education – the area in which many non-denominational schools teach RSHP). They have stated that the recommendations should be in place by March 2021. Since then the Scottish Government attempted to convene a working group to consider "PSE Delivery and Implementation", with a specific remit of looking at how to support local authorities and schools in meeting the recommendations from the recent PSE review. Due to the pandemic the first meeting of this working group was postponed and has, as far as we are aware, not been re-convened.

Email the contact for the review, Rachel McPherson, and ask what the current status of the recommendations are and whether implementation is on course for March 2021.

If so, how has the work been taken forward and with which partner agencies?

rachel.macpherson@gov.scot

In the same letter to Mr Swinney and your MSP you can raise points regarding the PSE review recommendations and the concerns you have as a Christian parent about the teaching of RSHP within this context – often by teachers who are not specialised in any area of PSE or RSHP but have been given PSE classes.

- 4) Communicate with the Education and Learning department in your Local Education Authority.
- 5) Communicate with local councillors (this is unlikely to result in change unless you are aware this is something the councillor is concerned about, there are a large number of people communicating about the same issue or there has been seen to be a clear fault in the way the RSHP curriculum has been taught in their region).
- 6) Add your voice to other organisations who are taking action. Write to an organisation such as the Christian Coalition For Education, the Christian Institute, Christian Concern or the Evangelical Alliance. There may be existing petitions to sign.
- 7) Set up a petition. Given your opinion is much more likely to result in action if it is also shared by others, you could consider setting up your own petition and submitting to any of the above.

7. What can I do to help support my child's understanding and learning outside of school?

The following are some suggested resources:

- Resources to use alongside your child:
 - The Scottish Catholic Education Service:
 - 'God's Loving Plan' <http://sces.org.uk/gods-loving-plan-2> (for Primary age), and
 - 'Called to Love' <http://sces.org.uk/called-to-love-2> (for Secondary age) fully meet the requirements of the Scottish Government's Experience and Outcomes for RSHP
 - LoveWise resources (these are written to fit the English National Curriculum): <https://lovewise.org.uk/christian-sex-education-resources-for-parents/>:
 - 'Growing up, growing wise@home' - A resource to help parents teach their children about God's design for puberty, relationships, marriage, sexual intimacy and having children
 - 'Staying Pure Online' - This presentation has been written to help parents and church leaders warn young people about the dangers of pornographic material and to show how following God's design for relationships will bring blessing to their lives

- 'Relationships Matter' <https://lovewise.org.uk/relationships-matter.html> - Free downloadable PowerPoint slides and questions which are designed for classroom use but could be used in discussion with one child
- Resources for children to read/access on their own/with guidance
- LoveWise resources (these are written to fit the English National Curriculum): <https://lovewise.org.uk/christian-sex-education-resources-for-parents/>
 - 'Growing up God's Way for Boys' and 'Growing up God's Way for Girls', 'Marriage God's Way'
 - 'True Love'- This book, for teenagers, provides a Biblical understanding of relationships and marriage worked out with real life examples and practical applications
- Resources for schools
- The Scottish Catholic Education Service:
 - 'God's Loving Plan' <http://sces.org.uk/gods-loving-plan-2> (for Primary age), and
 - 'Called to Love' <http://sces.org.uk/called-to-love-2> (for Secondary age) fully meet the requirements of the Scottish Government's Experience and Outcomes for RSHP
- LoveWise resources (these are written to fit the English National Curriculum): <https://lovewise.org.uk/christian-sex-education-resources-for-schools>
 - 'Marriage, Sex & Living Wisely' - A free to access, web-based, modular resource for secondary schools in RE, Citizenship or for RSE within PSHE lessons. Teaches Year 8-11 pupils about marriage, benefits of saving sex for marriage and helps them make good choices
 - 'Relationships Matter' - A free to access, web-based resource for teachers of Primary Relationships Education. Lesson notes, browser-based slideshows and downloadable worksheets are included.
 - 'Growing up...Growing wise' is a resource to teach Year 5-6 pupils about puberty, growing up, marriage and family life
 - Scottish charity lovematters.org.uk could be recommended for delivering parts of the curriculum and also provide support for parents by way of training

In summary

- Read the curriculum to find out what your child will be taught in RSHP
- Talk with your child about these subjects and source resources to use at home
- Find out what will be taught to your child in school
- If you have concerns about what will be taught in school, communicate this with your school
- If you do not agree with what is being taught, the government's guidance or the rshp.scot resources then write to those concerned

"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:5-8 (NIV)

Notes

¹ *Conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools, Guidance for teachers on the conduct of teaching relationships, sexual health and parenthood education within the Curriculum for Excellence:*
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/conduct-relationships-sexual-health-parenthood-education-schools/>

"28. No school, or individual teacher, is under a duty to support, promote or endorse one type of relationship over another. Discussions about relationships should acknowledge that same sex couples can now marry as a result of the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014. Teaching should be based on facts and should enable pupils to develop an understanding of how the law applies to different relationships."

² www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk

³ *Conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools, Guidance for teachers on the conduct of teaching relationships, sexual health and parenthood education within the Curriculum for Excellence:*
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/conduct-relationships-sexual-health-parenthood-education-schools/>

"55. Parents and carers play a key role in all aspects of their children's education and the collaborative partnership between them and schools should be a key element of RSHP education delivery, especially as they can consolidate messages received in school in the home or care environment. It is good practice for schools to regularly seek the views of parents and carers about key aspects of the curriculum, such as RSHP education ^[19]. It should be standard practice for schools to consult with parents and carers when they are developing or reviewing their programme of RSHP education. All parents and carers should be given the opportunity in advance to view key teaching materials and to ask questions about any aspect of the programme as evidence suggests ^[20] that where this has happened, parents and carers feel more confident about speaking to their children at home and addressing their questions. Joint work between schools, parents and children and young people should be founded on full and frank information sharing on the curricular materials with appropriate and clear communication mechanisms."

⁴ *Conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools, Guidance for teachers on the conduct of teaching relationships, sexual health and parenthood education within the Curriculum for Excellence:*
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/conduct-relationships-sexual-health-parenthood-education-schools/>

"4. The Scottish Government believes that all education should be a partnership between schools, parents, carers and children and young people and emphasises that this

partnership is of particular relevance in areas directly relating to the personal growth of learners, such as RSHP education. Many think of parents as a child's first teacher, a role that continues for life. In 2006, the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act was passed to help parents be more involved in their children's learning. The Act recognises the vital role that parents play in children's learning and development and aims to encourage parents to develop their children's learning at home and in the community. The Act placed responsibilities on local authorities to improve parental involvement through parent councils."

Also paragraph 55 of the same document, as in footnote 3.

CVE Scotland, January 2021

cve-scotland.org.uk

The Christian Values in Education Project is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC045125)

"Supporting school staff, chaplains and families to communicate the Christian faith, so that children and young people can make informed choices about beliefs and values."