

Review of the RSHE statutory guidance: consultation from the Department for Education July 2024

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/rshe-team/review-of-the-rshe-statutory-guidance/>

The Royal Society of Biology responded to the Department for Education's consultation on the review of RSHE statutory guidance for teaching relationship education, relationship and sex education and health education.

To inform this submission, RSB has drawn on its 2021 publication [Evolving 5-19 Biology: recommendations and framework for 5-19 biology curricula](#).

The consultation is in response to revised guidance from stakeholders and an independent expert panel appointed by the Secretary of State, advising what is appropriate to teach in relationships and sex education and health education. The review is also an opportunity to ensure that the updated guidance covers all essential curriculum content, supports high quality teaching which is inclusive and meets the need of pupils, and supports schools to develop an open and positive relationship with parents, complementing the role of parents as the primary educators of their children.

The [consultation document](#) can provide further depth as to the rationale and purpose of the reforms.

Structure of the guidance

We have heard feedback that many teachers find the guidance is too long and confusing. We have restructured the guidance to simplify the content and remove repetition.

12. Do you agree that the changes to length and style of the guide make the guidance easier to understand and follow?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

Schools' relationships and sex education policies

All primary schools are required to have a policy for relationships education, and secondary schools are required to have a policy for relationships and sex education. We have made some changes to the guidance on schools' policies for relationships and sex education, including asking schools:

- to differentiate between relationships and sex education (if they teach sex education) so that parents are clear about the content they can request withdrawal from.
- to explain how they will handle questions from pupils in relation to content that is restricted to older children, that relates to topics in primary sex education that the school doesn't cover, or relates to sex education from which the pupil has been withdrawn.
- to explain how parents can view curriculum materials.

13. Do you agree that these changes will do enough to ensure that schools are transparent with parents and that parents have sufficient control regarding what their child is learning?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

14. If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

Under the current and proposed changes to guidance, the Organisation supports differentiation between relationships and sex education to ensure that students are not unwittingly withdrawn from lessons covering important aspects of reproduction, life cycles, health and wellbeing in the National Curriculum: science programmes of study that may overlap in the primary setting with RSHE education.

Openness with parents

Parents are the first teachers of their children. It is vital that they know what their children are being taught and are reassured that the resources used are factual and appropriate. The Secretary of State has already written to schools setting out her expectations about how schools share RSHE materials with parents and the revised guidance is clear that:

- There is a strong public interest in parents being able to see all materials used to teach RSHE, if they would like to, and schools should not agree to contractual restrictions which prevent this.
- Contractual clauses which seek to prevent schools sharing resources with parents at all are void, given the public interest in parents being able to see all RSHE material.
- Schools should comply with any applicable copyright law when sharing materials with parents, and this may be through a parent portal or a presentation, but might include parents being given copies of material to take home.

15. Do you agree with our proposed approach to increased transparency on RSHE material? Yes No

RSB has not responded to this question

16. If you would like to offer any comments to explain your answer, please do so here. Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

RSB has not responded to this question

Age limits on teaching certain subjects

The age limits were developed taking into account the advice from the independent panel, and seek to ensure that, as content is presented to prepare young people to stay safe and keep others safe, children are not introduced too early to concepts that they may not have the maturity to grasp, or which may be distressing. Age limits are focused on topics which, even when presented in a careful and well-intentioned way, may inadvertently give the message to young people that they could or should be engaging in or exploring adult activities rather than enjoying childhood.

The panel focused on five areas where they felt pupils, parents and teachers would most benefit from additional clarity: the changing adolescent body, sexual harassment and sexual violence, sexual relationships and sexual health, pornography and sexual orientation. The panel considered a range of evidence to inform their advice, including conversations with parents and faith groups.

The independent panel made a series of helpful recommendations, which have been central to our considerations. As well as making recommendations on age limits, the panel recommended that schools take a mastery approach to teaching topics within RSHE, building knowledge sequentially, and offered some advice on how topics might be sequenced. For example, if you consider the topic of being safe, children start to learn about privacy and boundaries in primary school, and build on this throughout their education, but they are not taught about the explicit details of sexual violence until they are much older.

The tables in the guidance reflect this approach.

The age limits we are consulting on are summarised below for reference, but you have the opportunity to comment on them under each relevant topic in this document. They are also marked clearly in the curriculum tables in the draft guidance.

Primary

- The risks relating to online gaming, video game monetisation, scams, fraud and other financial harms, and that gaming can become addictive. Why social media, some apps, computer games and online gaming, including gambling sites, are age restricted -Not before Year 3 (First year of KS2)
- Growth, change and the changing adolescent body, This topic should include the human lifecycle. Puberty should be mentioned as a stage in this process, including the key facts about the menstrual cycle, including physical and emotional changes- Not before Year 4
- Sex education topics taught in primary, which should be in line with what pupils learn about conception and birth as part of the national curriculum for science- Not before Year 5 (Middle year of KS2)

Secondary

- What constitutes harmful sexual behaviour, including sexual harassment and the concepts and laws relating to it, including revenge porn, upskirting and taking intimate sexual photos without consent, public sexual harassment, and unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching. The concepts and laws relating to sexual exploitation and abuse, grooming, stalking, and forced marriage. Circulating images and information and how to safely report to trusted adults the non-consensual creation or distribution of an intimate image. The risks of inappropriate online content, including pornographic content, without discussing the details of sexual acts. - Not before Year 7 (First year of KS3)
- Direct references to suicide (as part of teaching about health and wellbeing) - Not before Year 8 (Middle year of KS3)
- Discussing the details of sexually explicit materials, in the context of learning about the risks of inappropriate online content, including pornographic content. Discussing the explicit details of violent abuse, including the detail of topics such as rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty. Discussing the explicit details of violent abuse when

discussing the concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse including coercive control, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour. - Not before Year 9 (Last year of KS3)

- Explicit discussion of the details of sexual acts, in the context of teaching about intimate and sexual relationships, including in relation to contraception and STIs.- Not before Year 9 (Last year of KS3)

RSB note: there is no option to comment directly on each age limited statement – questions that follow are intended to address this.

Flexibility for age limits

While setting out age restrictions on when sensitive topics should be taught, we have also allowed schools a degree of flexibility to allow schools to respond promptly to issues which pose an imminent safeguarding risk to their pupils. This means that in certain circumstances, schools may decide to teach age-limited topics earlier, provided it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard pupils and provided that teaching is limited to the essential facts, without going into unnecessary details. For example, if a primary school becomes aware that pupils are sharing pornographic materials, the guidance allows schools to address this appropriately with younger pupils without going into details of the sexual acts viewed. Note this question is not about the age limits themselves.

17. Do you think this flexibility is sufficient to ensure that pupils are adequately safeguarded?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

18. Do you think this flexibility is warranted?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

19. If you would like to explain your answer to questions 17 or 18, please do so here

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

RSB has not responded to this question

Sexual orientation

We have streamlined the section on teaching Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender topics, so that relevant content is in one place. This includes additional content on gender reassignment and gender identity, which is discussed in the section below. We have also clarified that primary schools have discretion over whether to discuss sexual orientation or families with same-sex parents.

20. Do you agree with changes to the lesbian, gay and bisexual content in the LGBT section (note that the next section provides an opportunity to comment on text about gender identity and gender reassignment)?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

21. If you have any comments to explain your answer, please do so here.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

RSB has not responded to this question

Gender reassignment

The new guidance states that pupils should know the world around them, and understand the law on equality and the protected characteristics, including gender reassignment. However, the guidance is clear that schools should not teach pupils about the contested concept of gender identity. Along with other factors, discussing such theories with pupils could prompt some pupils to start to question their gender. The new content is informed by the outcome of the Cass Review and the principles that underpin the draft guidance for schools and colleges on gender questioning pupils (gender questioning guidance), both of which advocate for a cautious approach. We consulted on the draft gender questioning guidance separately, from 19 December to 12 March, and are currently considering the outcomes, so the content of that guidance is not within the scope of this consultation.

The new guidance states that:

- Schools should teach about the protected characteristics, including gender reassignment.
- Schools should be clear that an individual must be over 18 before they can legally reassign their gender. This means that a child's legal sex will always be the same as their biological sex and that, at school, boys cannot be legally classified as girls or vice versa.
- Schools should not teach about the concept of "gender identity" which is a highly contested and complex concept.
- If asked about the topic of gender identity, schools should teach the facts about biological sex and not use any materials that present contested views as fact, including the view that gender is a spectrum.
- Schools should not use materials that use cartoons or diagrams that oversimplify this complex concept or that could be interpreted as aimed at younger children.
- Schools should consult parents on the content of external resources on this topic in advance and make all materials available to them on request.

22. Do you agree with the proposed changes related to gender identity and gender reassignment in the guidance?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

23. If you have any comments to explain your answer, please do so here:

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

RSB has not responded to this question

Addressing prejudice, harassment and sexual violence

We have included a new section in the guidance specifically on addressing prejudice, harassment and sexual violence, and harmful sexual behaviours, in light of evidence of the prevalence of sexual harassment in some schools. The section includes new content on addressing the harmful behaviours that pupils may be exposed to, including online, which may normalise harmful or violent sexual behaviours - for example, by giving pupils the opportunity to identify positive male role models. This new section also highlights the role of staff in avoiding language that might perpetuate harmful stereotypes or suggest that victims are to blame for abusive behaviour.

We have also included new content relating to sexual harassment and sexual violence in the curriculum, including by adding fixated and obsessive behaviours, such as stalking, to the secondary Respectful Relationships topic, and offering clearer guidance on teaching about image-based sexual abuse in the secondary Online and Media topic.

The secondary Being Safe topic has been strengthened to include more of the detail on communicating and recognising consent, to be clear that this is a key plank in pupils' learning to keep others safe. The Being Safe topic also now lists specific forms of sexual harassment that may otherwise be neglected, including revenge porn, upskirting, public sexual harassment, and unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching.

24. Do you agree that the revised content on addressing prejudice, harassment and sexual violence is a helpful response to evidence of the prevalence of sexual abuse in schools?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

25. If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

RSB has not responded to this question

Primary sex education

The new guidance is clear that where primary schools choose to teach sex education, its purpose is not to prepare pupils for sexual activity in later life, but to focus on giving pupils the information they need to understand human reproduction and for their own safety. Primary schools should take account of the age restrictions in the secondary RSHE curriculum tables.

The new guidance continues to recommend that primary schools have a sex education programme, but restricts this to no earlier than years 5 or 6, and is clear that if a primary school teaches sex education, it should draw on the knowledge pupils are developing about the human life cycle, as set out in the national curriculum for science.

26. Do you agree with the restriction on teaching sex education only in years 5 or 6?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

27. If you would like to make any comments to explain your answer, please do so here. It would be helpful if you could share your own views on appropriate age limits for this topic, for example if you think they are too low or too high.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

The organisation is not aware of any specific research to suggest restriction of sex education to year 5 or 6 is necessary.

In Evolving 5-19 Biology: recommendations and framework for 5-19 biology curricula, we have suggested that Key Stage 2 (years 3 - 6, ages 7 - 11) is appropriate to include reproduction, growth and development related to human reproduction, life cycles and changes such as puberty.

https://www.rsb.org.uk/images/Evolving_5-19_Biology.pdf

When developing the framework and recommendations our working groups and committee determined that it is better to have science content on reproduction and puberty at an early stage than in the current National Curriculum. Members and member organisations were consulted in production of the following exemplification:

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 7 - 11):

- describe and compare the life cycles and reproductive strategies of mammals (including humans), amphibians, insects and birds
- describe the changes as humans grow and develop from birth to old age, including puberty

Any restriction that sex education and discussion of puberty should only occur in Years 5 and 6 should not be imposed without convincing research to show a pedagogical reason for this, and should not impact the National Curriculum science programmes of study.

Secondary topics: Online and Media, Respectful Relationships, including friendships, and Being Safe

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Respectful Relationships, including Friendships topic:

28. What constitutes harmful sexual behaviour and why, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it. This should not be taught before year 7. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

29. We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Respectful Relationships, including Friendships topic: That some types of behaviour, including within relationships, are criminal, including violent behaviour and emotional abuse, such as controlling or coercive behaviour. Schools should not, however, teach about the details of violent abuse before year 9 as it is important that pupils are not introduced to distressing concepts when they are too young to understand them. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

30. We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Online and Media topic: About circulating images and information and how to safely report to trusted adults the non-consensual creation or distribution of an intimate image. Pupils should understand that making, keeping or sending naked or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime, even if the photo is of themselves or of someone who has consented, and even if the image was created by the child and/or using AI generated imagery. Pupils should understand the potentially serious consequences of asking for naked, semi-naked or sexual images, including the potential for criminal charges and severe penalties including imprisonment. This topic should not be taught before year 7. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

31. We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Online and Media topic: The impact of viewing harmful content, including pornography, that presents a distorted picture of sexual

behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others, and can negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners. This can affect pupils who see pornographic content accidentally as well as those who see it deliberately. The risks of inappropriate online content can be discussed in an age-appropriate way from year 7, however, the details of the sexual acts in question should not be discussed before year 9. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

32. We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The concepts and laws relating to harmful sexual behaviour, including sexual harassment, revenge porn, upskirting and taking/sharing intimate sexual photographs without consent, public sexual harassment, and unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching. This should not be taught before year 7. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

33. We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The concepts and laws relating to sexual exploitation, grooming, stalking, and forced marriage. This should not be taught before year 7. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

34. We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The concept and laws relating to sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault. Whilst it's important for pupils to understand the key principles around sexual offences and violence, for example the importance of understanding what consent means, schools should not teach about this in any sexually explicit way before year 9. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

35. We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The physical and emotional damage which can be caused by female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty, where to find support, and the law around these areas. This should include that it is a criminal offence to perform or assist in the performance of FGM, virginity testing or hymenoplasty, or fail to protect a person under 16 for whom someone is responsible from FGM, or to take girls who are UK nationals abroad for FGM, regardless of whether it is lawful in that country. This should not be taught before year 9, except for where schools have identified a greater risk of FGM at an earlier age or have pupils who have been affected by FGM and need support. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

36. We have placed an age limit on the following content in the secondary Being Safe topic: The concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour. Schools should not teach about the details of violent abuse before year 9 as it is important that pupils are not introduced to distressing concepts when they are too young to understand them. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

37. If you would like to offer any comments about the age restrictions in the secondary Online and Media, Respectful Relationships, including Friendships, and Being Safe topics please do so here. It would be helpful if you could share your own views on appropriate age limits for these topics, for example if you think they are too low or too high.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

RSB has not responded to this question

Secondary topic: Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

This topic includes information about choices around sex, including about when and whether to have sex, about sexual consent, reproductive health, strategies for resisting sexual pressure, facts about contraception, facts about pregnancy and choices around pregnancy, facts about STIs and reducing risks of transmission, facts about the impact of alcohol and drugs on sexual behaviour, and information about where to get help.

Explicit discussion of the details of sexual acts should only take place in so far as it is necessary to teach these topics and should not be taught before year 9.

38. Do you agree with the age restriction on the secondary intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health topic?

Yes / No

39. If you would like to offer any comments about this age restriction, please do so here. It would be helpful if you could share your own views on appropriate age limits for these topics, for example if you think they are too low or too high.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

The organisation is not aware of any specific research to suggest restriction of reproduction or sexually transmitted diseases.

In Evolving 5-19 Biology: recommendations and framework for 5-19 biology curricula, we clearly set out expectations at ages 11-14 (not only from year 9) that students cover curriculum content relates to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases. Any age restrictions imposed in RSHE should not impact the National Curriculum: programmes for Science, or impact future curriculum reform.

Our organisation is also acutely aware that the majority of schools begin teaching GCSEs for the sciences in Year 9 – leading to a compression of the Key Stage 3 curriculum that would not be compatible with an age restriction on these topics in RSHE.

When developing the framework and recommendations our working groups and committee determined that it is better to have science content on reproduction, use of contraception and sexually transmitted diseases at an earlier stage than in the current National Curriculum science programme of studies. Members and member organisations were consulted in production of the following exemplification: Building upon previous understanding from 5-11, pupils should learn more about the structures and functions of reproductive systems in humans. Sexual reproduction leads to variation in populations whilst asexual reproduction leads to populations of genetically identical individuals.

Hormones play a vital role in sexual reproduction in humans, including control of the menstrual cycle. Pupils should learn about the role, risks and benefits of hormonal and non-hormonal forms of

contraception. Human fertility is affected by factors including lifestyle choices, and infertility can be treated in a variety of ways. The lifestyle of the mother and father affect the health of the foetus.

https://www.rsb.org.uk/images/Evolving_5-19_Biology.pdf

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 11 - 14) - Reproduction:

- sexual reproduction in humans, including fertilisation, gestation and birth
- benefits and risks of different forms of contraception

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 11 - 14) - Health and infection diseases:

- how infectious diseases can be spread in animals and plants, including sexually and non-sexually transmitted diseases
- non-specific defence systems of the human body against pathogens

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 14 - 16) - Reproduction:

- the role of hormones in human reproduction, including interactions of FSH, LH, oestrogen and progesterone in the control of the menstrual cycle
- hormonal and non-hormonal methods of contraception
- the effect of female and male lifestyles on fertility and the use of hormones in modern reproductive technologies to treat infertility
- the effect of female and male lifestyles during pregnancy on the growth and development of the foetus

Health and wellbeing

We have placed an age limit on the following content in the primary Online Safety and Harms topic within health education:

40. Why social media, some apps, computer games and online gaming, including gambling sites, are age restricted. This should not be taught before year 3. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

41. We have placed an age limit on the following content in the primary Online Safety and Harms topic within health education: The risks relating to online gaming, video game monetisation, scams, fraud and other financial harms, and that gaming can become addictive. This should not be taught before year 3. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

42. We have placed an age restriction on the whole of the primary Developing Bodies topic within health education. This should not be taught before year 4. This covers; growth, change and the changing adolescent body, this topic should include the human lifecycle. Puberty should be mentioned as a stage in this process; the key facts about the menstrual cycle, including physical and emotional changes. Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / **No**

43. The secondary Health and Wellbeing topic is now clear that, given the sensitivity and complexity of content on suicide prevention, direct references to suicide should not be made before year 8. (Note that there is more detail on suicide prevention content in the curriculum provided in the 'Suicide Prevention' section shortly). Do you agree with this age limit?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

44. If you would like to offer any comments about these age restrictions, please do so here. It would be helpful if you could share your own views on appropriate age limits for these topics, for example if you think they are too low or too high.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

The organisation is not aware of any specific research to suggest restriction of sex education to year 5 or 6 is necessary. In *Evolving 5-19 Biology: recommendations and framework for 5-19 biology curricula*, we have suggested that Key Stage 2 (years 3 - 6, ages 7 - 11) is appropriate to include reproduction, growth and development related to human reproduction, life cycles and changes such as puberty.

https://www.rsb.org.uk/images/Evolving_5-19_Biology.pdf

When developing the framework and recommendations our working groups and committee determined that it is better to have science content on reproduction and puberty at an early stage than in the current National Curriculum. Members and member organisations were consulted in production of the following exemplification:

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 7 - 11):

- describe and compare the life cycles and reproductive strategies of mammals (including humans), amphibians, insects and birds
- describe the changes as humans grow and develop from birth to old age, including puberty

Any restriction that sex education and discussion of puberty should only occur in Years 5 and 6 should not be imposed without convincing research to show a pedagogical reason for this, and should not impact the National Curriculum science programmes of study.

Health and wellbeing

We have renamed Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing in the guidance, which now appears as Health and Wellbeing. We have also renamed the primary Mental Wellbeing topic, which now appears as General Wellbeing. We have also added a learning outcome in the primary General Wellbeing topic and the secondary Mental Wellbeing topic, that pupils should understand that worrying and feeling down are normal and affect everyone at different times and are not in themselves a sign of a mental health condition.

45. Do you agree with changes to the Health and Wellbeing section of the guidance?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

46. If you would like to offer any comments to explain your answer, please do so here.

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

In Evolving 5-19 Biology: recommendations and framework for 5-19 biology curricula, working groups and committees sought input from mental health experts, who recommended the use of “mental health” and “mental ill health”

The RSHE guidance should not impede or conflict with Evolving 5-19 Biology’s recommendation for future curricula:

https://www.rsb.org.uk/images/Evolving_5-19_Biology.pdf

At 5-11, pupils should learn that the physical health and the mental health of an organism can range from good to ill. A person’s environment and lifestyle can affect the functions of the human body, and therefore their physical and mental health, in positive and negative ways. Medicines can be used to treat ill health, by reducing the symptoms or eliminating the cause.

At 5-11, pupils should learn that some diseases cannot be passed from one person to another; they are caused by the person’s lifestyle and behaviour and that eating too much or too little of particular foods, lack of exercise, smoking, and drinking alcohol can lead to physical and mental ill health. Changes in lifestyle and behaviour can help to prevent ill health or reduce its effects.

At 5-11, pupils should learn that some diseases in humans, other animals and plants are caused by infection by germs, including some bacteria and viruses. Germs can be passed from one organism to another and that good personal hygiene can help to prevent ill health by removing germs. Proper refrigeration and cooking of food can help to prevent germs in food from making us ill. Vaccinations help the body to fight the germs that cause some diseases.

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 5 – 7) – Physical and mental health

- know that humans have physical health and mental health
- describe ways in which animals, including humans, stay happy and well
- instructions on how to respond in a medical emergency

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 5 – 7) - Health and human lifestyle:

- know that diet and exercise affect our physical and mental health
- identify different types of food that animals, including humans, need to stay healthy
- describe different ways in which animals, including humans, move about and why

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 5 – 7) – Health and infectious disease

- explain that ill health can be caused by germs which can be spread between living things
- know that germs are very small, so they usually can’t be seen
- describe the importance of hygiene for human health

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 7 – 11) – Physical and mental health

- know that the health of organisms can range from good to ill, including physical and mental health
- suggest ways in which diet, exercise and behaviour can affect physical and mental health in animals, including humans
- describe the role of medicines in curing or treating ill health
- instructions on how to respond when somebody collapses

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 7 – 11) – Health and human lifestyle

- describe the importance of exercise for humans
- describe the importance of a balanced diet for animals, including humans

Evolving 5-19 Biology Curriculum content (ages 7 – 11) – Health and infectious disease

- recognise the impact of smoking, alcohol and other drugs on the way human bodies function
- recognise that there are different types of germs, including bacteria and viruses
- describe how to prevent germs in food from making us ill, by refrigeration and cooking
- describe the use of vaccinations to protect us from germs that cause diseases

At 11-14, pupils should learn that the physical and mental health of an individual organism result from interactions between the organism's body, behaviour, environment and other organisms. Ill health can be caused by germs, lifestyle, environment, and information in the genome. Some factors increase or decrease the risk of ill health.

Please see Evolving 5-19 Biology page 59 - 60 for more details

At 11-16, pupils should build upon prior learning of life cycles to explore the changes that occur during puberty. Hormones play a vital role in sexual reproduction in humans, including control of the menstrual cycle. Pupils should learn about the role, risks and benefits of hormonal and non-hormonal forms of contraception. Human fertility is affected by factors including lifestyle choices, and infertility can be treated in a variety of ways. The lifestyle of the mother and father affect the health of the foetus.

Please see Evolving 5-19 Biology page 56 for more details

By 16, pupils should have learnt that health is a measure of an individual's ability to function and cope with physical, emotional, environmental and social challenges. Individual people and government organisations have responsibility for maintaining good health within populations and studying data on factors associated with good and ill health can help us to devise strategies to promote good physical and mental health. Pupils should learn that antimicrobials used to treat some diseases are becoming less effective due to the evolution of resistant microorganisms, and their use must be carefully controlled. Discovering and developing new medicines involves studying the genomes and proteins of pathogens and host cells to identify targets for new medicines. All new medicines have to be tested before they are made widely available.

Please see Evolving 5-19 Biology page 59 -60 for more details

Suicide prevention

The 2019 guidance includes many topics relevant to the prevention of suicide. While it does not ask schools to address suicide prevention directly in health education, it says that schools should be aware that children may raise topics including self-harm and suicide and advises teachers to be aware of the risks of encouraging or making suicide seem a more viable option for pupils and avoid material being instructive rather than preventative.

Whilst the suicide rate in under 20s is relatively low compared to older age groups, rates across all age groups under 25 have been increasing over the last decade in England. This includes rates in 10–14-year-olds Suicide prevention strategy for England: 2023 to 2028 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

During a Westminster Hall debate on suicide prevention in March 2023, the Minister for Schools agreed to include the area as part of the review of the RSHE statutory guidance. The Department has held a workshop with teachers and two roundtables – one with experts and the voluntary and community sector,

and the other with bereaved families - to listen to their opinions and experiences. There was agreement across the groups that suicide prevention should be discussed explicitly at the appropriate age.

The guidance now addresses suicide more explicitly (paragraphs 83-86), explaining that in teaching about mental health and wellbeing within the RSHE curriculum, schools may wish to talk to young people about the prevention of suicide, including how to identify warning signs and where and how to seek help.

The guidance says that if addressing suicide directly, teaching should focus on equipping pupils to recognise when they, or someone they know, needs support and where they can seek help if they have concerns. This should include details on which adults in school (e.g. school nurses), and externally can help. Teachers should use language and content that is accurate, straightforward and appropriate to the level of understanding of the class. They should take particular care to avoid discussing instructions or methods of self-harm or suicide and avoid using emotive language, videos or images. Given the sensitivity and complexity of content on suicide prevention, direct references to suicide should not be made before year 8.

47. Do you agree with the proposals on suicide prevention as set out above?

Yes / No

RSB has not responded to this question

48. If you would like to offer any comments to explain your answer, please do so here

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

RSB has not responded to this question

Additional topics

There are a number of additional areas that we propose adding to the statutory guidance following submissions from other government departments, stakeholders and experts. These include:

- Loneliness
- New content on gambling
- Prevalence of 'deepfakes'
- Antimicrobial resistance
- Healthy behaviours during pregnancy
- Illegal online behaviours including drug and knife supply
- Personal safety, including road, railway and water safety
- Vaping
- Menstrual and gynaecological health including endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), heavy menstrual bleeding
- Parenting and early years brain development
- Virginity testing and hymenoplasty
- Bereavement

49. Do you agree with this additional content?

Yes / No

50. If you have any comments to explain your answer, please do so here

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

Antimicrobial resistance is best covered in the science curriculum and GCSE specifications. Evolving 5-19 Biology: recommendations and framework for 5-19 biology curricula details how this should be addressed in future curricula (see pages 59 – 60)

https://www.rsb.org.uk/images/Evolving_5-19_Biology.pdf

General comments

51. Is there anything else in the draft statutory guidance that you would like to comment on?

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

RSHE guidance must not conflict with the National Curriculum science programmes of study or GCSE specifications. Furthermore, documents such as Evolving 5-19 Biology: recommendations and framework for 5-19 biology curricula contain expert informed, widely consulted on exemplifications detailing sexual, mental and physical health and ill health and reproduction for future curriculum.

https://www.rsb.org.uk/images/Evolving_5-19_Biology.pdf

The Royal Society of Biology would be happy to meet with leads at the Department for Education to discuss any aspects of the RSHE curriculum that overlap with biology and science curriculum.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

52. Do you have any comments regarding the potential impact of the guidance on those who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, whether negative or positive? How could any adverse impact be reduced and are there any other ways we could advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?

Please try to limit your response to under 250 words. Please do not add any details which may easily identify you or your organisation.

RSB has not responded to this question