



Our Lady of Pity RC Primary School – A Voluntary Academy

Some questions you may have about relationships (and sex) education:

What is the difference between relationships education and sex education?

Relationships education is teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults. This starts with children being taught about what a relationship is, what friendship is, what family means and who the people are who can support them. From the beginning of primary school, building on early education, children are taught how to take turns; how to treat each other with kindness, consideration and respect; the importance of honesty and truthfulness; permission seeking and giving; and the concept of personal privacy. Establishing personal space and boundaries, showing respect and understanding the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical contact – these are the forerunners of teaching about consent. The principles of positive relationships also apply online especially as, by the end of primary school, many children will already be using the internet.

Sex education ensures that both boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings and – drawing on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the National Curriculum for Science – how a baby is conceived and born

We have always informed parents about the content children will learn in Year 6 in advance of such lessons and we will continue to do so.

Do I have a right to withdraw my child from Relationships and Sex Education?

In a Primary School, you have the right to withdraw from any sex education lessons ***that go beyond that of the science national curriculum.***

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education at Primary or Secondary school as the contents of these subjects – such as family, friendship, safety (including online safety) – are important for all children to be taught.

Is school the best place for discussions about sex and relationships?

We know from surveys of children, that if they do not get the correct and accurate information about sex and relationships from a reliable source, they **will** find the information from other sources (friends, older siblings, website, TV) which may not be true or age appropriate. The information gathered during the Government consultation found that most children wanted this information and discussion to be provided in school with their teachers so that they could ask their questions in a safe space, and have them answered in an age-appropriate way.

Does the Life to the Full programme contain Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) content?



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Many parents are keen to know what LGBT content is in the programme, Life to the Full. The following notes should help you to understand and articulate the position that the programme takes on this subject:

- Life to the Full is inclusive of all children, families and teaching staff;
- From the very start, the programme acknowledges that families are made up differently (including single-parent families, blended families, step-parents, carers, etc) and it celebrates the family unit in whatever form it takes;
- Individual schools can build on this teaching, depending on the cohort, to ensure that every child is assured, and their family background is affirmed;
- In Upper Key Stage Two, the presenters on film say that some children have “two mums and two dads” as part of a list of different family set-ups – this is the only explicit reference to same-sex relationships in the programme.
- The programme does not explicitly refer to transgenderism;
- The programme emphasises very strongly the dignity of every person as being created and loved by God – it examines difference and bullying, but does not explicitly highlight LGBT people within this context, which is a decision for the local school to make;
- The only reference to sexual intimacy is in the optional UKS2 session ‘Making Babies: Part 2’. In this session, sexual intimacy is discussed within the context of a heterosexual marriage, and the Catholic-Christian point of view is clearly stated.

The teaching in the programme is in line with the statutory guidance from the Department of Education.

Ofsted guidance states that schools “are at liberty to teach the tenets of any faith on the protected characteristics”, but “must also explain the legal rights LGBT people have under UK law, and that this and LGBT people must be respected”. Teaching must reflect the law as it applies to relationships and pupils must understand the importance of equality and respect.

We must acknowledge different families and relationships and all pupils must understand the importance of equality and respect.

I believe that a family should be a man and a woman. How does this match up with what is taught in schools?

In schools we teach that families are made up in many different forms and can include, for example: single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, and foster parents/carers amongst other structures. The most important element of any family group is that it provides a nurturing environment for children.

We are teaching about equality. We are respectful of everyone. We value ourselves and all others.

Pupils should be taught about the society in which they are growing up. These subjects are designed to foster respect for others and for difference, and educate pupils about healthy relationships.

Are primary children too young to be taught about gay or lesbian people?

Some children grow up in families with gay or lesbian parents. We can’t say to a child who has two dads, ‘You can’t talk about your family!’ We want all of our children to know that their family is normal and



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accepted in school. Our children will interact with people from different backgrounds we want them to treat all members of the community with the same respect. Just like racism, school has a duty of care to challenge any language that may cause offence to others, whether used intentionally or not. Phrases such as “that’s so gay” or “that’s a girls/boys toy” when used in a negative manner may unintentionally cause offence to a child or adult.

What if my child comes home and asks difficult questions that I don’t know how to answer?

As a parent, you already have all the skills at your disposal to respond to curve-ball questions! However, when the subject content is sensitive it can feel more difficult, or even at times uncomfortable. Of course, our job is not to tell you how to parent your child, but here are some pointers that other parents have found helpful:

Be honest. Information based on an untruth can lead to confusion and a sense of embarrassment when children realise they haven’t been told the truth.

Never feel pressured to answer something immediately. You can always say, “Let me come back to you on that” and check in with your partner, or another parent or friend for advice.

“You’ll learn about that when you’re a bit older” can be an acceptable response. Children will know there is more to learn, just as they know there is more to learn about Maths beyond Year 1. Most children are happy with a response which acknowledges there is more to learn, but that they will learn about it at a later date.

Never shame or embarrass children for the questions they ask. Most often, children are genuinely curious about topics such as puberty, and the chance to air their queries and exploratory thoughts should be pressure and judgment-free. Shame and embarrassment has too often been associated with education around sex and relationships – you might even have experienced this yourself – and this is the opposite of what we are trying to achieve

My child has asked what it means to be gay. How do I answer?

‘Gay’ is when a man loves a man. ‘Lesbian’ is when two women love each other. ‘Bi sexual’ is when a person can love both men and women. ‘Transgender’ is when a person feels different about the body they were born into; we are all assigned a gender at birth and sometimes when we get older we may feel differently about this. Some people say there are ‘boy’ things or ‘girl things’ but we say this is not the case and boys and girls can do the same sort of things if they want. Some of us will live as a different gender from the one other people chose for us; others may like to do things that some people think are ‘just for boys’ or ‘just for girls’. *(Taken from a book by Andrew Moffat: No Outsiders In Our School : Teaching the Equality Act in Primary Schools)*