



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

A process for addressing questions and concerns about teaching and Learning in RSE

Note to LAs/schools (not for sharing wider)

- This is a suggested process that has been developed to help schools manage questions and concerns about their school's RSE curriculum
- It is intended to give parents / carers a clear expectation of what they can expect and how their questions and concerns should be responded to
- The expectation is that parents/carers will act in good faith and are genuinely seeking answers. Where the campaigners' template and questions are used to raise issues, the template letter and question responses should be used first.

Context: Why is RSE mandatory in the Curriculum?

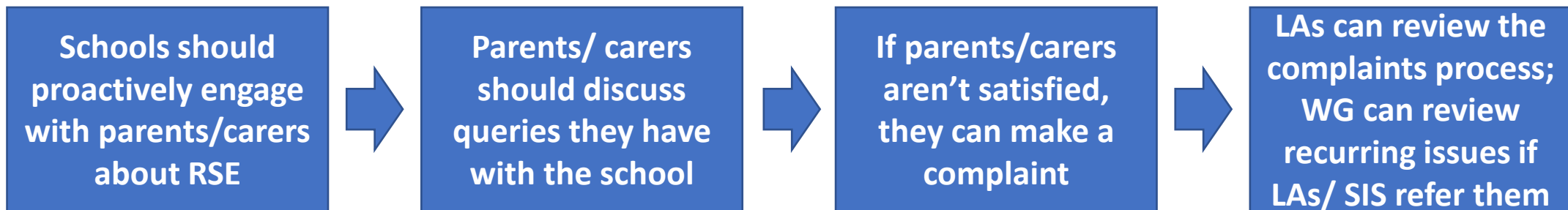
- The Curriculum for Wales aims to help learners be healthy, confident, ethical and informed. It's designed to help make learners and Wales healthier, resilient and globally responsible.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is about:
 - keeping children safe from harm
 - protecting their mental and emotional well-being.
 - Helping them to develop healthy relationships with others – including friendships and families
- Society is changing quickly. Digital media can expose children to unsafe and harmful situations and relationships, it is important they are able to keep safe
- RSE is about protecting children's rights. This includes rights to:
 - Non-discrimination
 - not be harmed and should be looked after and kept safe
 - education that prepares children to understand others
 - protection from sexual abuse and exploitation
 - Follow their own religion

Background to RSE

- RSE is legally required to be **developmentally appropriate** for each learner—meaning children must not be exposed to learning they're not ready for
 - Schools must take account of a range of factors including the learner's age; knowledge and maturity; any additional learning needs and anticipating their physiological and emotional development.
- RSE is legally required to be **pluralistic** – meaning schools must provide a range of information that is factual. Where questions of values are concerned, schools must provide a range of views on a subject.
- The national requirements for RSE have been developed with teachers and a range of groups, including: the Children's Commissioner for Wales, NSPCC, Welsh Women's aid and people of faith
- Some parents/carers are concerned about what their child will be taught
- There are also a lot of claims being made about what's included in RSE that are wrong.

What should parents/carers expect from their children's school?

- We have developed a process to help parents and carers understand what's being taught:



Step 1: Schools to engage with parents/carers

- **Proactive** and **regular** communication with parents/carers about RSE is important to avoid misconceptions and rumours
- Parents/carers should be reassured:
 - Learning is legally required to be developmentally appropriate and pluralistic
 - The requirements for RSE are set out in the Code which they can read
- Parents/carers will value understanding:
 - Broadly, what is being taught (aspects of the Code and examples of materials)
 - When it's taught (particularly where sensitive aspects are being covered)
 - Why – understanding the reasons behind learning and what it's looking to achieve
 - RSE often involves responding to learners' questions and needs – always within a safe environment and a developmentally appropriate approach
- Schools will need to be supported by local authorities and school improvement services for guidance. Schools of a religious character should of course liaise with their diocesan authority

Step 2: discussing queries with parents and carers

- Parents/carers should have opportunity to raise any specific concerns they have – It's important for schools to understand the heart of parents'/carers' concerns – this will help them feel heard and may help to reassure them
- Parents/carers should be supported to express their concerns in a clear way. Valid concerns may include:
 - I don't feel learning is appropriate for my child's stage of development or learning needs (including ALN)
 - I don't feel learning is pluralistic, providing different perspectives on an aspect
 - I don't feel I've been engaged/informed as a parent/carer
- Where valid concerns are raised, schools should consider where action should be taken and keep parents/carers informed of this. Actions may include:
 - Sharing further examples of materials used around specific aspects
 - Providing reassurance in response to concerns raised
 - Making any necessary clarifications to RSE
 - Recognising specific learners may need more time to develop before specific learning is approached
 - Making clear why specific learning is required by the RSE Code
- Of course, teachers and parents/carers are expected to enter conversations amicably and respectfully

Steps 3 and 4: what if parents/carers remain unhappy?

- Parents/carers may have issues:
 - With what the Code and guidance expects schools to do – *if so, they should write to Welsh Government*
 - With the school's decisions in applying the Code and guidance – *if so, they are able to make a formal complaint to the school*
- Should parents/carers wish to make a formal complaint, schools should refer them to the school's complaints policy.
- If parents/carers are unhappy with how their complaint is handled, they can raise this with the Local Authority. Local Authorities will ensure the complaint has been handled properly. Schools of a religious character should of course liaise with their diocesan authority.
- Where there are recurring or especially difficult issues raised, local authorities and/or school improvement services can raise these with Welsh Government. Welsh Government will consider issues in conversation with stakeholders and community representatives and will seek to clarify particular problems.