

CONSULTATION ON RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION



A GUIDE FOR MARRIAGE SUPPORTERS

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This is a guide for supporters of the Coalition for Marriage interested in responding to the consultation on Relationships and Sex Education in England launched by the Department for Education in July 2018.

After the call for evidence earlier this year, the Government is currently consulting on draft guidance and regulations covering its new subjects of Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education. These are to be taught in all English schools from September 2020.

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

The online consultation portal is available at this address:

www.bit.ly/rsrespond18

More background documentation is available here: www.bit.ly/2PqO3FI

You do not have to respond to every question.

All responses must be submitted by **Wednesday 7th November**.

This guide is not a substitute for your opinion or experience. This guide is intended to highlight areas where the teaching of traditional marriage may be affected.

ABOUT 'RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION' AND 'RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION'

New subjects will be required in English schools from September 2020:

- Relationships Education for children at primary school. This would be compulsory with no parental right of withdrawal and would apply to all schools: state and independent, faith and secular.
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) for children at secondary school. Parents will have a right to request withdrawal, but this is limited (see more below).

As is already the case, primary schools will continue to be able to choose to deliver sex education (from which there will be a right of withdrawal) in addition to Relationships Education (from which there will not be a right of withdrawal).

CORE CONCERNS FOR MARRIAGE SUPPORTERS

The draft guidance being consulted on sets out in more detail what the new subjects will include. Much of the guidance is good and helpful. But the Coalition for Marriage has two core concerns about the proposals:

1. **Traditional marriage is undermined** – Marriage is rarely mentioned in the guidance, despite being the 'gold standard' for committed relationships. When it is mentioned, marriage is redefined to include same-sex marriage, and it is usually placed alongside civil partnership as if the two are equivalent. Marriage is just given as one of a number of relationship options.
2. **Parents' rights are trampled** – There is no parental right of withdrawal from Relationships Education (primary). Parents' right to request their child be excused from Relationships and Sex Education (secondary) relies on the discretion of the headteacher – parents could be overruled if a head was so minded. This is particularly disturbing given point 1, as parents will not be able to prevent their child being indoctrinated with a view of marriage that is entirely contrary to their own.

KEY CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

We suggest how to respond simply to several of the key questions below. Many of the questions provide text boxes for you to explain your answer. We suggest that marriage supporters emphasise the two points above as often as possible in their responses to the consultation. **It is important to use your own words – responses that are too similar are likely to be dismissed.** Feel free to answer other questions if you wish.

The key questions to respond to about **marriage being undermined** are:

- *Do you agree that the content of Relationships Education as set out in paragraphs 50-57 of the guidance will provide primary school pupils with sufficient knowledge to help them have positive relationships?*
 - This is the second question on the page entitled 'Draft statutory guidance – Relationships Education' (covering primary schools).
 - Whether you wish to agree or disagree with the question will depend on your assessment of the overall balance of paragraphs 50-57. Some helpful comments are made. You may choose to neither agree nor disagree.
 - However you answer, explain your concerns about marriage being undermined. If pupils are not given enough information about the true nature and importance of marriage, they are less likely to have positive relationships.
- *Do you agree that the content of RSE as set out in paragraphs 65-77 of the guidance will provide secondary school pupils with sufficient knowledge to help them have positive relationships?*
 - This is the second question on the page entitled 'Draft statutory guidance – Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)'.
 - Whether you wish to agree or disagree with the question will depend on your assessment of the overall balance of paragraphs 65-77. Some helpful comments are made. You may choose to neither agree nor disagree.
 - However you answer, explain your concerns about marriage being undermined. If pupils are not given enough information about the true nature and importance of marriage, they are less likely to have positive relationships.

The key questions to respond to about the **right of withdrawal** are:

- *We are required to set out in the regulations the circumstances in which a pupil (or a pupil below a specified age) is to be excused from receiving RSE or specified elements of it. The draft regulations provide that parents have a right to request that their child be withdrawn from sex education in RSE and that this request should be granted unless, or to the extent that the headteacher considers that it should not be. Taking into account the advice to schools on how head teachers should take this decision, in paragraphs 41-46 of the guidance, do you agree that this is an appropriate and workable option?*
 - This is the second question on the page entitled 'Draft regulations'.
 - We recommend strongly disagreeing.
 - It is absolutely imperative that parents retain the final say in deciding how and when children encounter complex adult relationships. As such, headteachers should not be given the power to overrule parental decisions.
- *Do you have any other views on the draft regulations that you would like to share with the department?*
 - This is the final question on the page entitled 'Draft regulations'.
 - We recommend strongly calling, in your own words, for parents to have the right to withdraw their children from Relationships Education lessons in primary school. Foundational issues of morality and human nature and purpose are inescapable in Relationships Education and these are inherently controversial. As a result, parents must retain the right of withdrawal. Parents must also have the right to inspect Relationships Education material before it is delivered to their children.

KEEP UPDATED

To stay updated on the work of the Coalition for Marriage, please join the mailing list on our website: www.c4m.org.uk