

RSHE Consultation Comments and School's Response

Comments from Staff, Parents and Governors

'My child learnt about marriage in yr 1 and found it confusing that only male/female marriage was mentioned as there are members of our family in long term committed LGBTQ+ relationships. I feel that when children are taught about marriage, all forms of legal marriage should be included and celebrated as equally valid as anything less leads to a sense of exclusion.

I find it disconcerting that the only mention of LGBTQ+ appears to be within the context of being tolerant of others, rather than accepting yourself how you are. It also seems to be framed as a 'lifestyle' rather than an identity which is also concerning. I worry that my child will be taught that LGBTQ people are to be tolerated rather than celebrated and are separate from them rather than a group which they could in the future belong to without shame.'

'As a parent and furthermore, a Christian parent raising my family as such, I appreciate that my rights in how I elect to do just that are considered and valued. Considering that NSJ is a christian school , I strongly feel that it is vital that the very foundation it builds on when developing policies is one of pure and unrelenting bible truths. Referring to the RSHE policy: Core values "...God created humankind in his image... Gen 2:7 -As a bible-believing school, we believe in the word of God in it's entirety and in full and correct context. Therefore, we would be amiss in quoting Gen 2:7 without including Gen 2:21-22 as well. In the NIVUK version, these verses state very clearly that God created man and woman specifically, not just vaguely "humankind." Referring to the document stating what each year group will be taught about puberty and human reproduction: Year 6 "... The meaning of sex and why it is best kept for marriage or long-term relationships." -Once again, as a christian bible-believing school , this should more accurately read as follows: " ...The meaning of sex and why it is best kept for marriage." There should be no alternative to marriage as there isn't one in the bible. Any and all alternatives such as 'long-term relationships' have come into existence over years and years of man-made rules, that have been deemed acceptable and put into place as a way of avoiding responsibility and condoning behaviour that directly contradicts the true word of God written in the bible ie. fornication and sexual immorality. It is imperative to consider that a Christian school be distinctive in character when compared to any other non-christian school, and the fact that some parents have chosen this school because they value bible teachings and principles. I believe that being 'inclusive' shouldn't favour a certain group of the population only, while completely disregarding another and making them feel victimised for having an opinion that differs from the 'popular' one. I have referred to the above two points simply because I believe that if at the very core we prioritise the bible(truth), and all decisions taken and policies written with it as the utmost foundation and guide , everything else throughout the policy should fall into place.'

'Core Values

As a Christian School we must be careful to quote the correct verse; it is Genesis 1.27 and not to quote partial verses as has occurred with this quotation. I am not sure what version of the bible you are using but the NIV continues "male and female he created them.

The issue here is that apart from a few very rare medical conditions Humans are born with a sex i.e. male or female. That individuals choose to change their gender is not disputed but the fact that God has created both male and female in his image is very important for both male and female equality. It shows how God values both girls and boys and this is vital especially if our children are living in homes where this is not the case, experiencing domestic abuse or body shaming.

Context and Principles

I welcome the document laying out these vital issues especially as Faith Schools are put in an invidious position with this guidance trying to square the circle between Christian/Jewish/Islamic/Hindu teaching and the secular agenda which appears to only allow one viewpoint.

- Be based on inclusive Christian principles and values, emphasising dignity and respect, compassion, loving care and forgiveness.
It is a historical fact that in the past the Church has not treated women, those struggling with their sexual preferences or gender with compassion. We need to repent of this but not dilute our faith by removing parts of God's word which do not fit in with the liberal viewpoint.
- Be taught in the light of the belief in the absolute worth of all people and the unconditional infinite love of God.
The principle outlined above could be misinterpreted and used to "sanctify" behaviours banned by the Bible.
The Christian God is unconditional in the general sense that He cares for everyone and wants everyone to turn to Him through His Son. However, we need to accept Jesus as our Saviour and Lord if we wish to be adopted into his family during our life "Romans 8 13-17" and to continue in His love after death "John 3.16".
- Reflect that sex is a gift from God as part of creation: a human longing for an intimate union. Again, we need to be careful the gift from God is clearly heterosexual sex within marriage. We have the same problem that it could be misinterpreted as used to justify other behaviours banned by the Bible.
- Never seek to regard another as an object or an "it" but rather as a full person.
The rise of new gender-neutral pronouns and they/them for self-identified gender fluid people could return us to this point.
- Be sensitive to the circumstances of all children and young people and be mindful of the variety of expressions of family life in our culture, yet also uphold Christian values regarding relationships and marriage.
- Address issues of human sexuality openly and sensitively in an age appropriate manner.

As the Governor with responsibility for safeguarding I am genuinely concerned that children are exposed by the media to several ideas that are expressed as facts. These have extremely limited scientific basis and recently studies have been banned and speakers not given a platform in many academic institutions. (Guardian article 20 1 20)

The recent court case "Bell verses Tavistock" shows the dangers of just accepting one viewpoint.

As governors as we care about our children, we need to make sure the RSHE is not only giving them evidence-based information but teaching critical thought about TV and social media statements that are based on narrative and feelings.

- Encourage children and young people to develop the self-esteem to be able to protect themselves from harm and possible sexual exploitation.
- Reflect that the sanctity of marriage is an important belief in Christian teaching and practice. Teach the significance of marriage, long-term committed relationships and stable family groupings as key building blocks of community and society.

Our pupils need to be aware that Christian teaching is that marriage is between man and woman.

Long term stable relationships are especially important, many children are living in households with parents practicing "serial monogamy" living as a couple for a while then changing partners, so the child has to accept multiple male or female parental figures.

In essence we are making several generations of children part of a huge social experiment which has affected their emotional or sexual safety. The impact of this is already being felt with increasing child mental health issues, children living in households with multiple or missing adult males.

- Include learning about physical and emotional development.
- Teach cultural and religious differences about matters of sexuality. The reasons for the difference need to be highlighted otherwise it can sound like God bans anything fun.
- Make children and young people aware of the spiritual dimensions and joys of intimacy. At primary school, the social, emotional should be the focus not the sexual intimacy. God gave us 5 words for love highlighting different types of love only one of which is the physical act of sexual intercourse. The others were love of friends, love of family, romantic love, and self-sacrificing love.
- Children and young people should be taught to have respect for their own and other people's bodies.
- Teach children and young people about their responsibilities to others, and be aware of the consequences of sexual activity.
- Teach that some people choose not to engage in sexual activity and that this choice should be respected and valued as a response to the gift of faith.
- Enable children and young people to learn the importance of protecting themselves and of self-control.
- Teach that people make mistakes in relationships but there is a way back through forgiveness and reconciliation.

Withdrawal from Relationships Education

This is an excellent section and highlights the parent's primary role in this matter. I wonder if the number of withdrawals will be monitored and schools with this positive policy will be pressurised to adopt a less enlightened response to parental requests to withdraw.

Appendix

Could the guidance to teachers about Jigsaw be added as an appendix as well?

My thinking is the documents is a real safeguard but could be ignored by new heads or governors (this is not a comment on our new appointment, but we need to future proof). If it is part of the policy the any change will be relayed to the governors and can be discussed.

Out of interest the new TES R(S)HE: Child friendly Explanations Document has been sourced directly from

Getting started, A toolkit for preventing and tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in primary schools, by Fransceca Hall for Stonewall Cymru, 2016.

Whilst the information from this document may be helpful. However, by using an alphabetical listing and calling heterosexual relationships "Straight" so it was nearer the bottom of this list this is a subtle reinforcement of other types of sexuality being discussed first. This again reinforces the need for careful consideration of all sources of material for RSHE.'

School Response to the Relationships Sex and Health Education Policy Consultation

Following the consultation on our Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy, we were glad to receive comments from 3 parents and 1 governor. The following is the school's response to these comments.

The Bible verse on page 1 can be changed to the full verse, Genesis Chapter 1 verse 27, 'So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.'

The absolute worth of all people is a key Biblical principle, and we seek to reflect this, valuing all people whatever their gender, race or sexuality. Whilst we seek to show compassion, loving care and inclusion, there is no intention to change the use of pronouns.

As a Church of England academy, we seek to live by Biblical values, however, there are parts of the Bible which have been interpreted in different ways, resulting in much debate amongst Christians. For instance, what one Christian believes is the right approach may not be shared by another Christian, and therefore to be truly inclusive, all views should be valued. As a diverse community, cultural differences should also be valued and handled sensitively.

Our 'Love and Sex Matters' materials place a strong emphasis on the importance of marriage. However, it is important that children who come from other models of family are not made to feel of less worth because of something they have no control over. The aim is to celebrate all families but to promote Christian marriage.

The curriculum looks at all of kinds of relationships. As children approach adolescence, it is important that they are made aware of issues around sexual intimacy. They are exposed to these issues in the media and from peers, and many parents don't feel comfortable discussing these issues with their children. For their own protection and to enable them to make informed choices, it is important that this is taught.

The specific materials used by staff to teach RSHE can be viewed on request.