

Sex and Relationships Education: Information for Parents/Carers of Year 10 Students

Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) involves learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. Some elements are taught in science, and others are taught as part of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Currently, the law states that SRE is only mandatory from the age of 11 in state schools. It is not compulsory in academies or private schools and as such parents/carers have the right to withdraw their children from the non-compulsory parts of sex and relationship education if they choose to.

Three experts in SRE (*Brook, the PSHE Association and the Sex Education Forum*) advise that SRE should begin in primary school and then be built on year-on-year to enable young people to understand the wide spectrum of issues involved. For some time now there has been a widely held view that the PSHE syllabus hasn't kept up with the challenges that young people now face following the advent of smart phones and social media, and the fact that many young people can access easily sexual imagery on the internet. It is considered that a combination of compulsory science subjects and young people exploring sexual matters via the internet does not teach them about the difference between acceptable and abusive behaviour, consent and sexual health and most importantly does not promote loving, respectful relationships.

This inconsistent approach to sex education has prompted organisations and numerous government committees to urge the government to introduce compulsory, age-appropriate sex education in all primary and secondary schools, and as you may have heard on 1st March the government announced its intention to make it a requirement that all secondary schools in England teach SRE.

Current guidance from *The Sex Education Forum*, suggests what subjects to explore with young people in KS4:

Young people aged 14-16: "By now, some will be sexually experimental or know friends who are, despite the legal age for having sex being 16. They will be interested to know what they should expect of a relationship and may want more information on contraception, sexual health and how to access services. They will want to know more about coping with strong feelings and the pressure to have sex."

At The JCB Academy we are eager to ensure that our students are informed and supported to deal with the range of life challenges they face in today's society, including those they may encounter in relationships. We have recently reviewed our SRE provision to include a workshop style event for our year 10 students which will incorporate the following topics:

- **Sex and Alcohol** - this session will look at consent, peer pressure and diminished responsibility regarding decision making and staying safe in relation to the use of alcohol
- **Sex and Health** - this session will look at relationships, the law, consent, STIs, contraception and staying safe
- **Sex and the Internet** - this session will explore sexual content available online, grooming, sharing pictures, sexting and staying safe online and when using social media