



SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION

Sex and Relationships Education in primary school has, at times, been a contentious issue. The media are quick to pounce on the word 'sex' and assume that this is what is taught in every lesson. A good SRE curriculum is *age-appropriate* and builds up a child's knowledge gradually, as with any other subject at school.

In **Key Stage 1** a child will learn about gender stereotypes as well as the correct scientific vocabulary to name parts of the body. These lessons start to build up a child's confidence so that by **Key Stage 2** they are able to talk more comfortably about what happens to the body and emotions during puberty.

Everyone knows that puberty can be a difficult and confusing time. For many, girls in particular, some of the changes begin to happen whilst at primary school. In our experience the lessons at school provide reassurance for the children and fulfil the natural curiosity they have at this stage of their lives. In some cases these lessons may give information that parents/carers have already talked about with their children at home, but we cannot assume that this is always the case. In many instances SRE in primary school deals with the awkward questions and issues that many parents/carers may not feel comfortable or confident talking about with their children.

The media constantly encourages children to be aware of their appearance and presents stylised ideals of body image for both girls and boys. Challenging sexualisation can begin with a simple discussion with **KS1** classes about gender stereotyping: what are the differences between boys and girls, what can they do, how do they look and so on.

With the onset of puberty, these body images quickly become a lot more relevant to the changes that are happening to their own bodies. Equipping **KS2** children with the skills to manage these changes and understand why they are happening – and that they will be happening to their classmates too – is a *vital* part of SRE in primary schools.

Reinforcing the message that we are all different and that this is what makes us individual and interesting, is part of the process of children learning to have confidence in who they are. This forms the basis for discussing what makes a safe and happy relationship with friends and family; children can then explore how and why an adult sexual relationship is different from their own relationships, and what personal qualities are important when forming an adult relationship. Giving children the opportunity to discuss these issues in a structured way during transition to secondary school increases their confidence to sensibly tackle more complex issues, such as pornography and sexual content, *later on the Secondary PSHE curriculum*.