



MORLEY
VICTORIA
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Talking to my child about relationships, growing up and sex.

An RSE guide for parents/carers.



At Morley Victoria we strive for our children to be confident, resilient, strong, well rounded individuals who are able to make good decisions about their futures and lifestyle choices. Our RSE curriculum is a vital component in this mission.

Why is RSE needed?

- Now more than ever before, children are exposed to representations of sex and sexuality through the media/ social media and the social culture around them, so we need to present a balanced view of RSE and help them to be discerning and stay safe.
- Following interviews with our own pupils, we found they valued learning about RSE in a safe and familiar environment.
- Research shows that most parents say they want the support of schools in providing RSE for their children.
- Surveys of children and young people, as well as Ofsted, have repeatedly told us that RSE tends to be “too little, too late and too biological”.
- Rates of sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancy in the UK are relatively high – as is the regret felt by young people after early sexual experiences.
- Research consistently shows that effective RSE delays first sexual experience and reduces risk- taking.

What are the aims of RSE?

- There are four main aims for teaching RSE within the context of Primary School PSHE (Personal, Social, Health Education):
- To enable young people to understand and respect their bodies, and be able to cope with the changes puberty brings, without fear or confusion.
- To help young people develop positive and healthy relationships appropriate to their age, development etc. (respect for self and others).
- To support young people to have positive self-esteem and body image, and to understand the influences and pressures around them.
- To empower them to be safe and safeguarded.

Why should I talk to my child about relationships, growing up and sex?

The family is the place where children first learn to love and care for themselves and others. Children absorb spoken and unspoken messages from birth about relationships, growing up and sex. These influence the kind of adolescents and adults they become and the choices they later make.

Just as you help your child's healthy growth and development in all other ways, consciously supporting the development as they grow and their bodies change will help them achieve the attitudes, values and skills they need in order to have healthy relationships with themselves and others and keep themselves safe.

What if my child doesn't want to talk to me?

For some children, it is uncomfortable to have these conversations at home. You should never force your child to engage but you could advise your child that you are willing to talk if and when they are ready. In the meantime, you should remind your child of their Helping Hand (this is a school initiative which guides children to seek support from an adult in school, an adult at home, a friend, someone in the community (police, fire service, doctor) or an organisation (NSPCC, Childline). You could also offer your child safe and accurate resources that they could look at and discuss with you at a time that they feel comfortable.

Over the years staff at school have done this talk many times before and speak in a very 'matter of fact' and factual way to the children. If you can find a quiet, appropriate time to sit together, walk out together, spend some quality time together to talk – that might help too. Be calm, open and honest. If you talk, they might just join in. If they don't – try again later!

Don't school teach my children about this?

At Morley Victoria, we work in line with the Relationships and Sex Education Guidance and provide a safe space for whole-class work and discussions around many aspects of relationships and sex. However, you are the most important educator of your child in this regard. It is sometimes best if children get their first explanation of matters to do with relationships and sex at home.

You can do this through:

- Talking to your child at home about relationships and sex.
- Making yourself aware of what topics your child will be covering in school and providing opportunities to discuss them at home. Details regarding each year groups objectives can be found on the website in the RSE area under Letters to parents.
- Finding out about the school's RSE policy and getting involved if the school is updating it.

Where do I start?

Young children's main needs in terms of development are to be loved and nurtured, both physically and emotionally. In this way children will be helped to love and accept themselves and to form healthy, connected relationships with those around them. The values and skills they develop in these early years will help them form supportive relationships throughout their lives.

When do I start?

The good news is that you've already started; your child has been getting spoken and unspoken messages about relationships, growing up and sex since birth. Now that you are even more aware of how you want your child to develop, you can make conscious choices about those messages. As your child matures, take opportunities to have many small conversations about physical and emotional development and about relationships.

How can I talk to my child about relationships, growing up and sex?

What children learn at school is part of the puzzle, and children can continue to learn from you at home. For some parents/carers, it can feel totally natural to discuss relationships, growing up and sex with their child, while for others it can seem awkward and difficult. Either way, it is important to remember these key points:

- We all want children to feel safe and to be happy and healthy.
- We need to consider their needs.
- We need to normalise talking about relationships, puberty and human reproduction so taboos don't need to exist and children don't seek information elsewhere.
- We might need to challenge our own ways of thinking.
- We have choices: we can avoid it or we can communicate openly and honestly with children – they need us!

Here are some tips for talking to your child:

- **ALWAYS use correct terminology, be scientific and factual:** it helps that children aren't confused by hints, euphemisms and innuendo; use correct terminology whenever you can, especially for body parts. This is hugely important for safeguarding too. Please note: in school we refer to the female gender parts inside her body as vagina and or between her legs vulva.
- **Ensure your child is aware of the 4 parts of their body no one should touch unless for a medical reason and/or is asked permission:** the genital area (penis, vagina/vulva), bottom, chest and mouth.
- **Reassure your child that they can come to you if ANYONE touches them or asks them to keep a secret (surprises are ok, secrets are not).** This is taught in school through PANTS assemblies, in RSE lessons, through our Keeping Secrets, Speaking Up and Helping Hands initiatives.

- **Be honest:** if you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and say so. Tell your child that you will need to find out and that you will get back to them with more soon.
- **Remember that children are curious and want to know and understand.** We tend to place our adult perspective on children's questions and comments, allowing our brains to fill up with all the possible horrors that an innocent question could be about, when actually a child just wants (and needs) a very simple, matter-of-fact answer. This answer will not involve an 'adult' understanding of a topic – it needs to be at a child's level, with opportunity given for the child to be able to ask further questions if needed. Give yourself time to respond by asking something like, "What do you think that means?" or "Why do you ask?"
- **Keep lines of communication open:** having an open and honest relationship with your child can really help make conversations easier, so make sure that you are always willing to talk when your child needs you; if you can't, explain why and find another time when it is more mutually convenient.
- **Respond to what children say they need:** bear in mind that children's lives today are very different from even five years ago. Therefore, the education they receive needs to reflect this. Research shows us time and time again that children want and need RSE that is age- and stage-appropriate, that teaches them about relationships and emotions, and that is returned to consistently throughout their education. We may feel that they know too much, when actually ignorance is the enemy of innocence: research shows that effective RSE delays sexual activity, ensures children are safer and empowers them to make their own healthy choices.
- **Answer questions and don't be afraid to say:** 'I really don't know – let's work it out or look it up together'. Have a phrase for awkward moments, such as: 'That's a good question, and let's talk about it once we get home' (then make sure you do!).
- **Always respond:** if you don't, she or he may think it is wrong to talk to you about relationships, puberty or human reproduction and as a result you may find your child clams up when you raise the subject.
- **If it all feels too personal, try talking about people in books, films and favourite television programmes.**
- **Listen rather than judge.** Try asking them what they think.
- **Enjoy it.** Laugh with each other.
- **Use resources brought home from school.** In year 6, following our 'How a baby is made' lesson, children are given resources. These should be discussed at home together?
- **Work in partnership with the school.** We understand that you want your children to be healthy and happy, we do too... and high quality RSE is part of this.



Further Support

Books

- All about Friends and All about Families (age 3+).
- Usborne's Where do babies come from (age 3+).
- Bodies, Babies and Belly Buttons.
- The Boys' Guide to Growing Up.
- The Boy Files: Growing Up and All That Stuff.
- The Girl Files: All About Puberty and Growing Up.
- Where Did I Come From? – Peter Mayle.
- Asking About Sex and Growing Up – A question and answer guide for kids.
- Ask First, Monkey!: A Playful Introduction to Consent and Boundaries.
- The Every Body Book: The LGBTQ+ Inclusive Guide for Kids about Sex, Gender, Bodies, and Families.

Websites

- NSPCC – PANTS www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lL07JOGU5o
- www.bigtalkeducation.co.uk/parents/how-to-talk-about-sex/
- www.charterhouse.org.uk/uploaded/School_Life/Pastoral_Care/Talking-to-Your-Children-about-SRE.pdf

Organisations

The following organisations offer information, helplines, leaflets, and books and in some cases a mail order service.

- **Brook** Telephone: 0800 0185023 (for local information).
- **FFLAG** (Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Helpline: 01454 852 418. Website: www.fflag.org.uk
- **fpa** (formally Family Planning Association) Helpline: 0845 310 1334. Website: www.fpa.org.uk
- **Parenting Education and Support Forum Information Service**: 020 7284 8388. Website: www.parentingforum.org.uk
- **Parentline Plus** Helpline: 0808 800 2222. Website: www.parentlineplus.org.uk