But what should be taught when?

Relationship and sex education became statutory with effect from September 2020. Whilst this gives details of what children should know by the time they leave primary and secondary education, it doesn't give further direction on what to teach when.

So, to help you we have created our guide on when SRE/RSE topics should be covered, this is based on the Guidance from DfE and Ofsted, plus continuing consultation with Parents/Carers and Schools.

These are covered in our in-school taught programmes and resources available up to KS2.

A spiral curriculum, year by year approach.

It is critical to note that the words used to describe topics will be introduced much later to children than the content of the topic. For example children will be taught that there are "programmes for adults" and "pictures of people with no clothes on", we would never introduce the word pornography.

From age three (nursery): Children should be taught the differences between boys and girls, naming body parts with the correct scientific words, what areas of the body are private, and the difference between good touches and bad touches.

Age four to six (reception – year 1): From this age children should be able to identify safe situations and those which may be risky, like other children or adults taking improper photographs of them. They should be able to identify trusted adults (both at home and school) who they can talk to if they feel worried. Within this age group they should understand about different types of families, including those with same sex parents. The emphasis being on all different types of families.

Age six to eight (year 2 – 3): Understanding the importance of boundaries within friendships and personal relationships is important, including online and through technologies such as mobile phones and games. They should know what films, programmes and online content they should and shouldn't be watching, in addition who to tell, if someone encourages them to watch inappropriate content (this can be a grooming tactic).

Age eight to nine (year 4): By this age children need to be taught about the emotional and physical changes of growing up, coping strategies for different emotions, as well as looking after their bodies and the onset of puberty. We find that some girls may even be starting their periods in year 4, so it is critical that they have this knowledge at this age. We also recommend giving a gentle introduction to reproduction, this is the point at which we find we are able to tell children before they have received a muddled version from an older sibling or peers who may have been looking online for the definition of "sex".

Whilst some parents and teachers may question this age, it is important to know that 'sex' is spoken and sung about, widely in the media including in pop music aimed at children (e.g. Little Mix). If children type this simple word into the internet to find out what it means they will be presented with graphic and often disturbing images, so it is better to educate the children in a gentle age appropriate manner, than to leave them hungry for information.

Age nine to 11 (year 5 – 6): At these ages it is important to review the previous information taught, as children tend to absorb and retain elements of the information when it is of relevance to them. So we allow children to ask more questions in these year groups, to ensure they understand what they have been taught and fill in any gaps in knowledge. They will often want more details on conception, how babies (including twins) develop and are born. Sometimes they ask how people can get germs from sex and how they can be prevented, or there may be curiosity about feelings or body image – each group is different