

## **RSHE and what it stands for....the no-nonsense info pack for parents of students at Fort Royal School (FAQ's)**

From September 2020, the Relationships, Health and Sex education (RSHE) aspects of PSHE education are compulsory in all schools.

### **What does RSHE stand for?**

RSHE stands for Relationships, Health, and Sex Education. But it is not just about teaching facts about sex and body matters, as these alone will have limited impact on the decisions young people at Fort Royal may make. An effective RSHE programme aims to:

- Help children to develop skills such as resisting peer pressure, being assertive, being resilient, making informed decisions, negotiating skills, learning to respect others, and helping with personal development, e.g. emotional intelligence;
- Give pupils lots of opportunities to explore and develop their own and others' attitudes, values, views, and opinions, for example, what makes something 'wrong', how to deal with 'fears'?

All the above will subsequently help to contribute to each pupil developing their individual moral framework.

### **Will the information scare the children?**

There is a lot of anxiety about RSHE. Much of the anxiety usually comes from our own less than favourable experiences of learning about sex and body parts, and this can be addressed.

RSHE is embedded in the PSHECC (Personal, Social, Health, and Economic Education and Citizenship Curriculum) and the non-biological aspects are far more likely to have an impact on the decisions children and young people at Fort Royal make than the factual knowledge about sex. A significant part of RSHE is about equipping children and young people to protect themselves. The information they gain from Relationship education does not 'damage' them if taught sensitively (please see PSHECC map overview). If it is taught well, it should not scare the children.

### **Why do we need RSHE at Primary School?**

Our children and pupils live in a world where the media and other sources bombard them with often 'unhealthy' information about sex, body image, gender, and relationships. One of the aims of Fort Royal's RSHE curriculum is to give our pupils a more balanced and realistic view of the world in terms of self-image and sex and relationships.

Research shows that nearly every adult who shows some level of resistance to their children being taught RSHE can be made to feel completely comfortable with this issue when the right information is disseminated.

### **Why is RSHE so important?**

We teach our children and pupils to cross the road safely when they are very young because to do it dangerously could end up in injury or death. The consequences of decisions to do with self-image and relationships can have a significant impact on a young person's life. RSHE aims to help pupils make informed choices. If a child has received effective RSHE within PSHECC, it could ultimately impact positively upon the first independent decision he/she makes.

## **What children learn anyway?**

Children receive images of suggested sex at a very early age from a variety of sources (e.g. television, shop posters, adverts, magazines, graffiti, peers, internet etc.). The messages children accept from these sources are often unrealistic, inaccurate and/or can cause prejudice. In addition, children can also pick up the message that talking about relationship-related topics is forbidden. This can often mean that the children have nobody reliable with which to discuss the information they receive and are often left feeling confused. Our sensitively planned RSHE programme at Key Stage 2 acts as a catch-all for those pupils whose parents/carers are uncomfortable talking about relationship-related topics, emotions, fears etc., and will hopefully challenge the unhealthy and inaccurate messages children receive.

## **The need to prevent undesirable outcomes**

Children who feel good about themselves and are knowledgeable and confident about their own bodies are more likely to take care with their behaviour linked to relationships and to have fulfilling relationships when they enter into them later in life. If a child has always received the message that talking about body parts is in some ways 'rude' or 'naughty', when they are older they are unlikely to feel that they can turn to the adults in their lives for information, help, and support to do with relationships and body image. The taboo around these issues can leave children feeling isolated and unsure of where to seek advice and support. This, in turn, can have a significant impact on the decisions young people do or don't make about relationships in the future.

## **Ignorance is not the same as innocence**

Some very young children ask questions about body parts (e.g. what is the difference between girls and boys?). Parents/carers who have spoken openly about sexual matters to their children from an early age would argue that their children are no less innocent than those who have not received the information. Children receive the information at their own level and make sense of it in their own way. Their innocence is not destroyed by receiving this information if spoken about sensitively. Here, at Fort Royal we always assess Y6 children before we plan our RSHE lessons. Simply because not all the pupils are ready to move on to the next stage within Relationship and Sex education. We also purely talk about sex from a scientific point of view. Girls, who already menstruate or may start, will take part in sensitively prepared sessions, joining in other girls only, and that would be discussed with parents before even planned if needed. The same procedure will occur in case boys or girls will masturbate in school. Years ago, it was felt that masturbating would cause a person to go blind or insane or cause pimples. This is not true. Others believed that if one ate graham crackers and Kellogg's Corn Flakes (Strong, et al., 2005), a person could be "cured" of masturbating. This is a myth as well. Masturbation is not physically harmful unless abusive means are used. If we feel a child will need additional knowledge around how to behave at school and not masturbate in public, we would speak to parents individually and address it.

## **When does RSHE start for pupils with SEND?**

As with all pupils, RSHE for pupils with SEND should be part of life-long learning and begin at reception/school entry and continue throughout formal education and beyond. Start with core concepts such as public and private, using correct terms for private parts of the body, an understanding of rights relating to our bodies, rules relating to touch, positive friendships, respect, and consent. Appropriate RSHE is provided for pupils at all levels of development.

## **What is the most effective model of delivery for RSHE with pupils with SEND?**

RSHE is most effective when delivered through a whole school approach. Our RSHE curriculum at Fort Royal is part of the PSHECC programme and considers individual progression of each child by giving teachers the opportunity to deliver it at three different levels.

For pupils with SEND, this means working continuously through informal opportunities as well as the formal RSHE curriculum. For example, when pupils are queuing for lunch, there is an opportunity to reinforce learning about personal boundaries. All staff should be actively involved in offering consistent messages around RSHE, e.g. teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors, drivers, travel escorts. Pupils will learn from the way staff react in everyday situations and interactions such as those concerned with consent or privacy e.g. a matter of fact tone of voice and calm reaction to a situation can be helpful, for example where a pupil is touching or rubbing their own genitalia directly or through clothes in public. It is also helpful that the response from staff at Fort Royal is linked to RSHE learning and school behaviour policy.

There are many ways we link RSHE with other parts of the curriculum and school day too, for example, through playground rules, Anti-Bullying Week, displays about puberty, e-safety initiatives, and other Hullabaloo projects.

## **What is different about RSHE for pupils with SEND?**

In essence, the curriculum and topics covered are similar to RSHE with mainstream pupils. However, the pace and detail of topics are different as our pupils may need lots of support to generalise their learning outside of RSHE lessons and support to personalise the learning to their own relationships, behaviours, and maturation. It is appropriate to revisit topics more frequently with pupils at Fort Royal to support 'overlearning' (i.e. practising and embedding the new skills, so the learners retain the learning beyond the initial success and develop mastery) for new and abstract topics.

### **What is statutory in RSHE? Key stage 1 (5-7 year olds):**

Pupils should be taught:

- That animals, including humans, move, feed, grow, use their senses and reproduce
- To recognise and compare the main external parts of the bodies of humans
- That humans and animals can produce offspring and that these grow into adults
- To recognise similarities and differences between themselves and others, and to treat others with sensitivity

### **Key stage 2 (7-11 year olds):**

Pupils should be taught:

- That the life processes common to humans and other animals include nutrition, growth, and reproduction
- About the main stages of the human life cycle

### **Good manners, respect, and inclusivity?**

Yes, all these good manners, respect, and inclusivity are important parts of class rules when teaching RSHE. To effectively do this, it needs to acknowledge (or even celebrate) the full spectrum of diversity found in humankind and avoid making

assumptions, generalisations, or stereotypes about people's race, religion, sex, family set-ups, culture, social background, etc. Efforts need to be made not to promote any one group as 'norm' and RSHE resources will ideally portray the diversity found in society.