

How Challenge Team supports Ofsted recommendations and Government guidelines for Sex and Relationships Education in Secondary Schools

Reference document: Sex and Relationships Education in Schools, Government Briefing Paper No 0613, 16th July 2015

Relationships:

Young people, when asked about their experience of sex education at school, often complain about the focus on the physical aspects of reproduction and the lack of any meaningful discussion about feelings, relationships and values. Sex and relationships education set within the framework for PSHE across the four key stages will significantly redress that balance. (p5)

The Challenge Team presentation focuses on relationships, feelings and values and not on the physical aspects of reproduction.

Sex and relationships education will help young people to respect themselves and others, and understand difference. Within the context of talking about relationships, children should be taught about the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and for bringing up children. The Government recognises that there are strong and mutually supportive relationships outside marriage. Therefore, children should learn the significance of marriage and stable relationships as key building blocks of community and society. Teaching in this area needs to be sensitive so as not to stigmatise children on the basis of their home circumstances ... (p5)

The Challenge Team presentation explains why it is important for young people to respect themselves and their sexuality. It explains the meaning of marriage and its value to individuals in a sensitive way by using Team members whose own home circumstances have involved divorce or growing up without an intact married family. All surveys conducted amongst young people from all family backgrounds consistently include marriage in their top four aspirations.

Abortion:

The key task for schools is, through appropriate information and effective advice on contraception and on delaying sexual activity, to reduce the incidence of unwanted pregnancies. (p7)

The Challenge Team presentation does not give contraceptive advice. It focuses on delaying sexual activity, reducing the incidence of unwanted pregnancies.

Academies and Free Schools:

The Model Funding Agreement for Free schools provides an example of the arrangements set up by Academies and Free Schools regarding SRE. It states that:

The Academy Trust shall have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State, further to section 403 of the Education Act 1966, on sex and relationships education to ensure that children at the Academy are protected from inappropriate teaching materials and they learn the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and the bringing up of children. (p8)

The Challenge Team presentation focuses on the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and the bringing up of children without stigmatising children from families where parents are not married.

DFE Review of Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education: The PSHE Association has recently updated its guidance for schools on developing and improving their SRE policies. The Sex Education Forum also has a range of useful resources to help schools improve their SRE programmes, as do other organisations which seek to raise standards in SRE education. (p9)

Challenge Team UK aims to raise standards in SRE education and has been visiting schools since 2004. During that time Challenge Team has spoken to 135,000 young people in schools up and down the country.

Ofsted report on PSHE and the teaching of SRE 2013:

Sex and relationships education required improvement in over a third of schools. In secondary schools it was because too much emphasis was placed on 'the mechanics' of reproduction and too little on relationships, sexuality, the influences of pornography on students' understanding of healthy sexual relationships, dealing with emotions and staying safe.' (p12)

The Challenge Team presentation does not cover 'the mechanics' of sex, but covers relationships, sexuality, the harmful influence of pornography, dealing with emotions and staying safe.

Reforms to Independent School Standards; teaching about same-sex marriage:

Teaching about marriage must be done in a sensitive, reasonable, respectful and balanced way. Teachers are subject to professional requirements, the school curriculum, school policies and anti-discrimination duties towards colleagues and pupils. No school or individual teacher is under a duty to support, promote or endorse marriage of same sex couples ... Subject to the above, nothing in the Act affects the rights of schools with a religious character to continue to teach about marriage according to their religious doctrines or ethos. Any views expressed about marriage of same sex couples, by governors, teachers, other school staff, parents and pupils, may reflect the religious ethos of the school. (p17)

Challenge Team teaching about marriage is done in a sensitive, reasonable, respectful and balanced way. Challenge Team material contains no religious references. No views about same-sex marriage are expressed, but rather these are left to the discretion of the school. The presentation applies to everybody. It is entirely consistent with Christian teaching and so is appropriate for both faith and non-faith schools, state maintained schools and free schools and academies.