

## Talking with your child about Relationships, Growing Up and Sex Top Tips for Parents and Carers

Many children prefer their first conversation about RSE to be with their parents and carers. National surveys have shown that children want to talk to their parents about relationships, growing up and sex.

Children are curious and want to learn about how their bodies work and develop and to learn about relationships. Primary schools will teach about relationships and sex education but it's also important for parents and carers to talk to their children about these subjects and be able to reflect on their values. It is also best they learn from school and their parents and carers, rather than looking for information on the internet.

Talking to your child can help their emotional development, help them stay safe and develop healthy relationships and confidence.

*From September 2020 all primary schools will be required to teach Relationships Education. Sex Education is not being made compulsory but the Government recommend that all primary schools teach sex education, although parents can choose to withdraw their child from sex education.*

You know your child best and at what age it is best to talk to them about these subjects and also what helps when talking with them about personal or sensitive subjects.

This short guide provides some tips for parents and carers.

### **Relationships, growing up and sex**

Learning in an age-appropriate way about

- Making and maintaining healthy, respectful and caring relationships, (family, friendships, romantic/intimate relationships)
- What makes a friendship or relationship unhealthy, managing friendship problems
- Bullying and how to prevent it
- Being safe from abuse
- Being safe online
- Puberty-physical, social and emotional changes
- Reproduction and how a baby is made

### **Why talk with your child?**

- It can be more informal and spontaneous
- There is a unique relationship between a parent/carer and child
- They will be better prepared for puberty
- They will have a better understanding of the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship
- They will feel more able to talk to you about other subjects and worries
- It will support the Relationships and Sex Education that is taught at school
- It helps children develop positive attitudes about themselves and others

### **Tips for talking with your child**

- Let them know you are happy to talk to them when they are ready
- Listen to your child's questions and concerns-try not to jump to conclusions or judge
- Make sure you understand what the question or concern really is (might be simpler than it first sounds). Ask what they know/think. Find out why they are asking it
- Give answers that match their level of understanding. It's ok to say you don't know and can look up the answer together
- See this as a two-way conversation, talking with them rather than to or at them
- If it's an awkward or inappropriate time-say you'll answer at a better time-but remember to do that!
- Be interested-enjoy talking about it. Show them it's ok to talk about it
- It's Ok to say you're embarrassed-you're being honest. Laughing together can reduce embarrassment
- Always respond-you want your child to feel ok about talking about relationships, growing up and sex.
- If it feels too difficult or personal, talk about people or situations in films, books, internet, social media, music videos, gaming, soaps, pregnant friends or family
- Talk while doing something else, driving, walking, cooking. This can make the subject normal to talk about.
- Say what you think and why. Share your values. Talk about different opinions
- Talk about it gradually over time, rather than a one-off talk so you can build on the information gradually and when your child is ready