



5<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

At present the excitement is building around the Trust regarding the children's return to school on Monday of next week. The Prime Minister's announcement last week has got all the staff now considering the possibilities of what can be achieved as we progress through 2021. Could we finally be getting back to the times of sports days, school trips, community events and celebration assemblies? Let's hope so! With this in mind, as a group we have been reflecting on our vision of 'Life, Love and Learning to the Full' and considering how our drivers help us to achieve our aims. These are listed below:

- Building Learning Power
- Building Community
- Building Futures
- Building Self-Esteem and Wellbeing

The impact that Covid-19 has had on the young people of today should not be underestimated and it is clear moving forwards that schools will have a large part to play in addressing the issues created by the pandemic. The importance of ensuring the children have access to a high quality Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education which includes Relationship, Sex and Health Education is more relevant now than ever before.

Back in September 2020 the Department of Education introduced compulsory Relationships and Health Education for primary aged pupils (Sex Education is not compulsory in primary schools). Like all schools around the country our plans have been significantly disrupted by Covid-19. Despite these interruptions it has been lovely to see how our teachers have continued to ensure the children's mental health and wellbeing has been supported and that the remote learning curriculum has continued to address topics linked to Relationships and Health Education. As a result of the disruptions the Department of Education recently published an update that recognises the challenges schools have faced in delivering a full Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum during the existing school year and have therefore made allowances. The update goes on to highlight that schools will now be given more time to review their existing curriculum taking into consideration the impact Covid-19 has had on the children.

*'In all teaching, we expect schools to comply with relevant legislation. We are aware however that for many schools, development of a fully comprehensive relationships education/RSE policy and RSHE curriculum will be an iterative process, which will need to continue into next year. Detailed curriculum planning will be required to consider how the RSHE subjects relate to and are supported by other subjects within the curriculum, including science and citizenship, and it is important that schools take the time to get this right.'* (DfE, RSHE update, February 2021)



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### **Relationships, Sex and Health Education**

At TEAM Multi Academy Trust we feel it is important that, as they grow up, children come to an understanding of their own bodies, instincts and feelings. In this way they will be prepared for the opportunities, joys and responsibilities of permanent relationships. Children from all backgrounds and circumstances need to glimpse something of the wonder and security of family life as the proper context for sexual expression, and to grasp the values of acceptance, forgiveness and loving another “as yourself”.

We recognise that Relationships and Sex Education is a sensitive subject but we firmly believe that effective RSE can make a significant contribution to the development of the personal skills needed by pupils if they are to establish and maintain relationships. It also enables children and young people to make responsible and informed decisions about their health and well-being.

As we progress through the year we will be continuing to use the Jigsaw scheme and planning from the PSHE Association to ensure that there is excellent coverage of the fundamental building blocks highlighted by the DfE. These are listed below:

- Families and people who care for me
- Caring friendships
- Respectful relationships
- Online relationships
- Being safe

These areas of learning will be taught within the context of family life taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBT+ parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures) along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example: looked after children or young carers).

Through a planned programme of learning, we aim to provide our pupils with the knowledge, understanding and skills that they need in order to manage their lives both now and in the future. As part of a Trust wide approach, we aim to develop the attributes our pupils need to thrive as individuals, as part of a family and as a confident member of the wider community.

We want our children to learn to understand and respect our common humanity, diversity and differences so that they can go on to form the effective, fulfilling relationships that are an essential part of life and learning.

### **Withdrawal from RSE Lessons**

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the Relationships and Sex Education provided at school **except for those parts included in statutory National Curriculum Science**. Those parents wishing to exercise this right are invited in to see the Head of School and/or PSHE lead who will explore any concerns and discuss any impact that withdrawal may have on the child. Once a child has been withdrawn they cannot take part in the RSE programme until the request for withdrawal has been removed. Materials will be made available to parents/carers who wish to supplement the school RSE programme or who wish to deliver RSE to their children at home.



If you are considering withdrawing your child out of RSE lessons within PSHE, please consider the following:

- All the other children in your child's class will have been taught this information and may well talk to your child about it, perhaps in the playground... and potentially mislead them or confuse them as a result. It may prove far better to allow experienced and sensitive teaching staff to teach your child in a progressive, developmental way that is grounded in research.
- They will be learning about reproduction in Science lessons. The RSE in PSHE will echo this and will concentrate on teaching children how to enjoy healthy, appropriate relationships, improve self-esteem and self-confidence, and make healthy, informed choices. When viewed this way, it is hoped that RSE won't be seen as contentious or a cause for concern, but rather as helpful.

The author of the Jigsaw scheme, Jan Lever, highlights the importance of ensuring children obtain a high quality PSHE/RSE curriculum by stating that:

*'The Relationship, Sex and Health Education units of work aim to give children their entitlement to information about relationships, puberty and human reproduction, appropriate to their ages and stages of development. This work is treated in a matter-of-fact and sensitive manner to allay embarrassment and fear and helps children to cope with change, including puberty and to learn about families, friendships and healthy relationships.'*

Your child's Head of School will be writing to you before Easter with more details related to the approach being taken with PSHE/RSE, the content being covered and when it will be taught. In addition to this, we would like you to take a look at our draft PSHE & RSE policy that will be displayed on the school website before Easter and share your thoughts with us about the content. Due to Covid-19 restrictions our current line of thinking is that we will create a questionnaire so that we can gather your feedback. We believe RSE should be a partnership between the school and the parents/carers, working for every child's safety and benefit.

Best wishes,

Ian Thomas  
Executive Headteacher