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SEX EDUCATION IN JIGSAW 11-16 AND THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

January 2026



SEX EDUCATION IN JIGSAW 11-16 AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW STUDENTS

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Jigsaw guarantees that its 11-16 PSHE Programme for secondary meets the statutory requirements for RSE and Health Education at secondary in England. This work sits within the Jigsaw whole-school approach to PSHE which has an emphasis on emotional literacy and mental health.

DfE guidance pages 6 and 7 states:

'Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.'

Before granting any request for withdrawal of a child from sex education, it is good practice for the head teacher to discuss the request with parents, and the child if appropriate, to understand the request and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. This is likely to include discussing the benefits of sex education, and any detrimental effects of withdrawal, including social and emotional impacts on the child, and the likelihood that the child will hear their peers' version of what was said in class, which may not be accurate. Schools will want to document this process to ensure a record is kept.

Where primary schools provide sex education, head teachers must automatically grant a request to withdraw a pupil from it, other than content that is taught as part of the science curriculum. In secondary, head teachers can refuse a request in exceptional circumstances, for example because of safeguarding concerns or a pupil's specific vulnerability.

From three terms before the pupil turns 16, a pupil can choose to opt back into sex education even if their parent has requested withdrawal. For example, if a pupil turns 16 during the autumn term, the pupil can opt back into sex education at any time after the start of the previous autumn term. Schools should ensure that pupils know they have this option.

If a pupil is withdrawn from sex education, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their pupils from relationships and health education, nor can they be withdrawn from topics taught as part of the science curriculum, including science topics related to puberty or sexual reproduction.



Everyone has relationships with others, and most pupils will develop sexual relationships at some point in their lives. Relationships education should equip pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to act with kindness and respect in all their relationships as they grow into adulthood, to enjoy their relationships, and to keep themselves and others safe.

Relationships education will focus on how to form and sustain positive relationships but will also help children identify risks and harms. Relationships education may therefore include topics related to preventing sexual abuse, for example, or avoiding sharing inappropriate material online. This can be done without describing the detail of any sexual activity involved. Similarly, good safeguarding practice requires young people to understand the correct terms for different parts of the body and to be able to confidently use these terms. This can be provided as part of health education in primary, without describing any detail of sexual activity.'

What does this mean for schools?

This means schools need to define 'Sex Education' in their school policy and identify which lessons this content appears in.

If a parent's request to withdraw their child is granted, teachers then know which lessons these students will NOT be allowed to attend.

Jigsaw PSHE has developed lessons and resources that encourage Relationships Education and Sex Education to be delivered together so that sex education is always taught in the context of a healthy, supportive relationship. As we aim to deliver holistic learning, we would prefer all students to receive all of the RSHE programme. Before granting a request for a student to be removed from the lessons including sex education it is good practice to discuss this request with parents to clarify the context, nature and purpose of the RSE lessons and to listen to their concerns about any of the content and their child's learning for this topic.

If a parent or carer confirms that a student should be removed from lessons including sex education, please use the definition and table below to help you to identify which lesson this would impact in line with your school definition.

DEFINING 'SEX EDUCATION'

The DfE guidance (2025) leaves schools free to define sex education within RSHE and we understand that trying to identify content that is sex education can be subjective at times. If using a definition that differs from the Jigsaw PSHE definition (below) it is advised that the content of RSE lessons is reviewed in order to identify any other lessons that include sex education content so they can be added to the suggested list, or adaptations can be made on the school account to change any lesson content so that it is suitable for children who may be withdrawn from sex education within RSHE.

At Jigsaw PSHE 11-16, we interpret Sex Education as 'Human reproduction, sexual intercourse and sexual behaviour' including:

- How human reproduction can happen (e.g. childbirth, sexual intercourse, IVF, surrogacy)
- Anatomy and biology (when linked to sexual intercourse and behaviour)
- Sexual behaviours*, risks, rights and responsibilities in a sexual relationship
- Sexual health and safer sex (e.g. contraception, sexually transmitted infections)

What falls outside this definition (and therefore has no withdrawal right):

- The biological aspects of puberty, reproduction, and the human body as covered in the **National Curriculum for Science** — these are compulsory
- Content in the **Relationships Education** curriculum (primary) and **Relationships and Health Education** portions of RSHE (secondary), which cover topics like healthy relationships, consent, online safety, different family structures, and recognising abuse

*There are several topics within the Jigsaw PSHE 11-16 programme that could be considered as sexual behaviour, link to sexual behaviour or invite questions from students that may require an answer that explores themes within sex education. The lessons that include these topics have not been identified as sex education as it is Jigsaw's belief that this learning is integral for young people to keep themselves safe, and to ensure that they are safeguarded. These topics are:

- Sexting and sextortion



- Pornography – when discussing the receiving of unwanted images and online safety
- Consent (when mentioned outside of lessons that are explicitly about sexual relationships)
- Protecting the health of reproductive organs by screening (breast and testicular checking related to cancer).
- FGM

A table identifying these lessons can be found at the bottom of this document.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED AS SEX EDUCATION UNDER JIGSAW'S DEFINITION

At Jigsaw, we feel that the lessons indicated in the table below include sex education as defined above.

Year Group	Being Me in My World	Celebrating Difference	Dreams and Goals	Healthy Me	Relationships	Changing Me
11+						2 – Having a baby 6 – Assessment (lesson itself contains no sex education content but the assessment booklet does)

12+						4 – Pornography and understanding relationships <i>(This lesson could be deemed not to be Sex Education, but Jigsaw have listed this lesson for schools to review against their own policy)</i> 5 – Alcohol 6 – Assessment (lesson itself contains no sex education content but the assessment booklet does)
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13+	2- Expectations and perceptions of relationships 5 – Consent				2 – Assertiveness and saying no 3 – Pornography and its impact 4 – Contraception 5 – Consequences of unprotected sex 6 – Assessment	
14+				4 – STIs 5 – Safer sex 6 – Assessment – <i>(lesson itself contains no sex education content but the assessment booklet does)</i>	1-Healthy long- term relationships <i>(The majority of the lesson is not sex education but slide 28 scenario makes reference to it.)</i> 4 – Can you always believe what you see? 6- Assessment <i>(lesson itself contains no sex education content but the assessment booklet does)</i>	5-Virginity testing and hymenoplasty <i>(This lesson is an essential safeguarding lesson but as the lesson discusses virginity we have included this within the sex education list as it could lead to questions regarding sex.)</i>

15+	1 – Becoming an adult 2 – Relationships and the law 6 – Assessment (lesson itself contains no sex education content but the assessment booklet does)			1 – Staying safe in sexual relationships 2 – Contraception and sexual health 3 – Reproductive health and fertility 4 – Pregnancy and health 6 – Assessment	1 – Intimate romantic relationships 6 – Assessment (lesson itself contains no sex education content but the assessment booklet does)	
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FURTHER LESSONS TO CONSIDER DEPENDING ON YOUR SCHOOL'S DEFINITION OF SEX EDUCATION

If using your own definition for Sex Education, we advise that you carefully review the following lessons. These lessons do not contain Sex Education under the Jigsaw definition but include content that some schools might consider to be related to sexual behaviour under your own agreed approach. We recommend that these lessons should be reviewed against your own definition and policy if you are not adopting the Jigsaw definition. There are none identified in Celebrating Difference or Healthy Me, hence they are not included in the table below.

Year group	Being Me in My World	Dreams and Goals	Relationships	Changing Me
11+	5 – What are the consequences of what I do and say online? <i>Jigsaw does not deem this to be sex education- but there are elements of sexualised behaviour discussed.</i>			1 – Puberty <i>This lesson is a compulsory Health Education topic. It does not explicitly discuss sex education, but questions may arise from the content which could move towards sex education content. The signposts also may contain materials relating to sex education.</i>
12+		6- Sextortion is discussed in this lesson. <i>We do not deem this to be Sex Education but schools may wish to review.</i>	3- Assertiveness and staying safe in relationships. <i>This lesson has a focus on sextortion and sexting. We do not deem this as sex education.</i>	1 – Different types of relationship <i>This lesson is on intimacy but does not have a focus on sexual intimacy. It also discusses sexual attraction. Schools may wish to review whether they deem this as</i>



				<i>sex education against their own school's policy.</i>
13+	6-Assessment			
14+			5 – Better together? <i>A couple of slides refer to sexual behaviours and sex, however, this is within the context of sexual harassment, abuse and safeguarding, hence we do not deem this as sex education. However, schools may wish to review.</i>	
15+			5 – Harmful and illegal cultural and social practices <i>This lesson is not Sex Education but does reference marital sex on two slides.</i>	