Wavell Community Primary School

Sex Education and the Right to Withdraw

Understanding the Right to Withdraw

Parents and carers have the legal right to withdraw their child from sex education in primary schools. However, this right does not extend to statutory **health education** or **relationships education**.

Health education includes essential teaching about the changing adolescent body, including puberty. These topics must be taught to all children and **cannot** be withdrawn from. The revised statutory guidance published in 2025 also emphasises that schools should teach this content before most pupils experience these changes.

Similarly, safeguarding topics such as the correct names for private body parts form part of **relationships education** and **cannot** be withdrawn from.

Defining 'Sex Education' in Primary Schools

We have a clear, published policy that outlines what 'sex education' entails in our setting. This will help parents to understand exactly what they may choose to withdraw their child from.

In most primary schools, sex education refers specifically to teaching about sexual intercourse and birth - topics that go beyond what is covered in the statutory science curriculum.

In Year 5 science, for example, children learn about reproduction in mammals, which may include humans. This includes the roles of male and female sex cells (sperm and egg) and how they combine to form new life. However, how the sperm and egg meet (sexual intercourse) is not part of the science curriculum. Similarly, topics such as sexual consent within intimate relationships form the basis of non-statutory sex education.

What Does 'Sex Education' Look Like in Our Curriculum?

The EC Primary scheme (our curriculum) approaches this sensitive topic with care, clarity, and age-appropriate content. The overview below identifies which lessons are statutory and which fall within our defined sex education provision.

Years 4 and 5: Puberty and Preparation (Statutory)

Children begin to learn about puberty and the changes that occur in their bodies. These lessons are statutory and **cannot** be withdrawn from.

Year 6:

- **Lesson: Girls' Puberty – Periods and the Human Life Cycle (Statutory)**

Children revisit the topic of puberty, including why periods happen and their role in the human life cycle. They are also reminded of the role of gametes (sperm and egg) in reproduction. This content falls under the **science** and **health education** curriculum.

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• **Lesson: Sex Education – Part 1: Conception (Optional)**

This lesson builds on pupils' understanding of reproduction. It includes a recap of asexual and sexual reproduction in animals, with reference to humans. While sexual intercourse may be referenced briefly, it is not taught as part of this lesson. The focus remains on scientific understanding within statutory guidelines.

Schools may choose whether or not to allow parents to withdraw from this lesson based on how it is described in their sex education policy.

• **Lesson: Sex Education – Part 2: Starting a Family (Optional)**

This lesson is taught in the context of loving, respectful relationships and builds on previous topics such as consent, bodily autonomy, and family diversity. Children learn about sexual intercourse in the context of conception and starting a family. This is taught using scientific language and illustrations in an age-appropriate manner.

Within our current curriculum structure, this is the main lesson that falls within the school's defined sex education provision and from which parents may exercise their statutory right to withdraw their child.

In Summary

Parents **cannot** withdraw their child from:

- Health education (including puberty)
- Relationships education (including safeguarding topics)
- Science curriculum content on reproduction

Parents **can** withdraw their child from:

- Content that falls under the school's defined sex education programme, namely the 2 'sex education' lesson in Year 6 (Sex-Ed– Starting a Family) as described above.