

School

Special School
(age 3-19).

Creative audit participants

29 young people
(age 7-19),
20 teachers,
80 teaching
assistants.

Creative audit activities

CRUSH cards;
What Jars Us?;
Multi-Media
Pupil Voice.

Making RSE Matter

UNCRC Canvases;
Relationship Rocks;
RSE Mondays.

Starting out

We are a special school for young people aged 3-19 and have around 200 children and young people on roll. Two years ago two senior members of staff at our school attended the RSE professional learning programme. At that time we were delivering RSE (or SRE as we used to call it) using materials from the local health board, embedded within our PSE curriculum. As senior leaders we had responsibility for wellbeing and overseeing RSE at our school, but delivered very little RSE ourselves.



Our creative audit

Staff Jars and Crush Cards

We started our creative audit by working with our whole staff team to complete a staff audit. We are a large staff team of 100 people so we worked in small groups using the CRUSH cards to get people talking about different RSE themes. Next we asked them to think about what 'jars' them about RSE.

We gathered all the 'jar' responses on post-its and found that the main themes were:

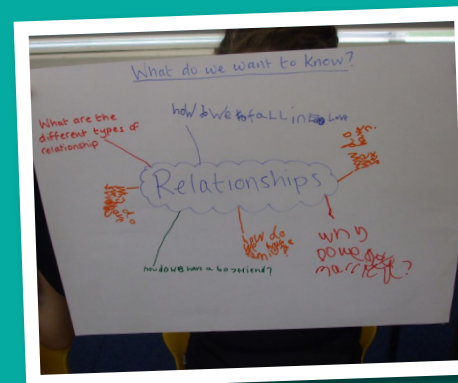
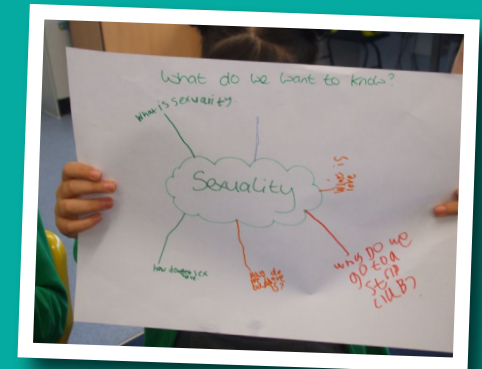


Capturing Pupil Voice: sound, pictures, mind-maps and an e-book

Initially three different age groups (KS2/3, KS3, KS4/post 16) of young people participated in the creative audit with the support of their class teachers and teaching assistants.

In each class we used questions about relationships and sexuality to open up a discussion and to find out what young people already know and what they are curious about.

With each group we used different questions and different methods to capture young people's responses, depending on the age and ability of the group. In the KS2/3 class, we asked young people questions about friendships and audio recorded their responses. The group then worked together to choose pictures and create an e-book that showcases the questions and their responses.



For the KS3 class young people created mindmaps about Relationships and Sexuality to find out what they already know about relationships and sexuality and what they would like to know. In the KS4 and Post 16 class we asked questions about what Relationships and Sexuality mean to young people, what they know and would like to know and how they would like to learn in RSE. Young people wrote their responses on post-it notes.

RSE questions from our S4 / post 16 learners

WHAT

What do relationships and sexuality mean?

'Sexuality means your sexual preference. If you are attracted to the same sex as you or a different sex'

'You can have lots of different relationships with different people like friends, family, co-workers, teachers, boyfriends and husbands. Most are not sexual relationships but some are'

What do you find difficult when learning about relationships and sexuality in class?

'I don't find it difficult; I help other people in class'

'I find it difficult to understand some words'

'I sometimes find it hard because of finding my own sexuality'

What do you already know about relationships and sexuality?

'I know that sexuality can be described as fixed or fluid'

'I know lots about internalised homophobia- this is when a gay man is homophobic to hide his own gay sexuality'



HOW

How can we improve the teaching of relationships and sexuality in our class?

'I think it needs to be spoken about more'

'Give advice on how to stay safe'

IF

What do you want to find out about relationships and sexuality?

'What percentage of the world know their sexuality from a young age, maybe before 10?'

'Why was being gay a problem in the past?'

Towards a needs-led, developmentally appropriate RSE

From doing this exercise we learnt that there is a wide variation in young people's knowledge and understanding about RSE.

At KS2/3 we found that young people have a basic level of understanding about friendships and that they require a high level of support to explore this and articulate their views. In the KS4 and Post 16 class however we found that there was already lots of good RSE practice going on. This was reflected in the fact that the group were able to give mature answers to the questions they explored about relationships and sexuality. Their responses - recorded anonymously on post-it notes - showed a clear understanding of terminology and a high level of skill within our school context.

From doing the creative audit we realised that whilst many areas of the relationships curriculum are currently included through PSE, sexuality is not well covered.

In the KS3 class for example we found that young people had lots of questions about relationships and sexuality, in particular about reproduction, bodies and sex, but not much knowledge.

In this group in particular we noticed there was a high level of variation in young people's level of understanding, need and ability when it comes to doing RSE.

This degree of variation has led us to question whether it is appropriate for us to be grouping young people by age when delivering RSE.

Starting small

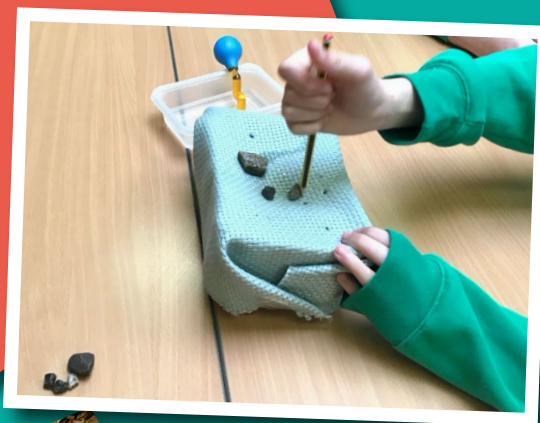
After the initial creative audit we decided to continue working with a small number of individual teachers and their class groups.

We tried out new activities and lesson plans, whilst at the same time continuing to create 'darta' and listen to young people to inform future changes.

Relationship rocks

Each person had a box with a piece of material stretched over. They were asked to place rocks on the material to show the pressures on relationships and take them away to show how positive actions can relieve pressures.

They also poked holes in the material using pencils to symbolise permanent damage and used water to wet the material as an example of an action that could weaken a relationship (make it wet) but that could be repaired (the material will dry).



UNCRC RSE Canvases

We wanted to embed the UN Rights of the Child across the RSE curriculum. To do this we worked with a group of 12 young people from key stage 3 and 4 and introduced them to the UNCRC. We had a discussion about our rights and talked about the meanings of each right.

Next we asked each young person to create a UNCRC canvas about one of the rights that they felt was important to them and that they would like to learn more about.

We used this to plan future lessons, and continue to introduce key 'hot spots' for young people through visual activities, using their rights as the vehicle to drive this. We are also using the UNCRC to structure school assemblies. Based on what young people said they wanted to learn more about in the UNCRC canvas project we decided to focus on the theme of 'safe and healthy'. We planned three lessons covering healthy and unhealthy relationships (see Relationship Rocks), safe sex (see Health Gloves) and online safety.



Health gloves

Young people looked at different types of contraception and were shown how to put on a condom. Next the group created 'health gloves' by drawing round their hands and writing the five main aspects of personal health: emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual on each finger and 'physical' on the thumb. They then looked at which aspect of their personal health a condom could protect against and cut off those that the condom couldn't protect against. They were left with only the thumb. They tried doing this with a latex glove and wearing the glove with all but one of the digits cut off.

As a class this prompted a discussion about the emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual consequences and outcomes of sex and helped us to explore more holistically what makes sex safe or unsafe.

Building our RSE provision

Affirmative, trauma informed RSE

Several of the young people at our school have experienced sexual abuse. Some are non-verbal and autistic. Whilst doing the creative audit we realised that we need to further understand what strategies and resources to use to include these young people in RSE in a way that is safe and affirmative for all those involved. We recognised that there was a gap in terms of resources and expertise here and that we would need to get further specialist training. Two members of staff have attended specialist training and have been taking a lead on working with small groups of young people.

Working with stage not age

We have since set up an RSE Monday group where young people are taken out of class to do targeted RSE work. This has allowed us to experiment with grouping young people by ability and need, rather than by age, and allowing us to use methods and content that is developmentally appropriate to all those in the group. Increasingly we are building a bank of good resources and teaching materials for delivering RSE.

What's next?

Towards a whole-school approach

Throughout this process we have learnt a lot about how RSE is delivered in our school and where the gaps are. Our approach so far has been to work with a small number of around 6 teachers in the school who have particular skills or interest in delivering RSE. This has enabled us to develop capacity within the staff team and learn about special skills and expertise that staff members have.

We are currently moving towards a whole school approach to RSE and recognise that we need to train all teachers and teaching assistants so that they have the confidence and capacity to facilitate RSE in class time.

We are learning that a high level skill is required when teaching RSE to young people with ASD and complex ALN. Through the work with young people in the creative audit we also realised that some staff need further training around terminology and inclusivity as we noticed that when staff were helping young people to record their responses they were not always understanding and recording their responses in an inclusive way.

It is difficult to find time for whole staff RSE training as we - like all special schools - have packed training calendars and RSE has to compete with other priorities. Moving forwards RSE will need to be planned for in the School Improvement Plan and events will need to be entered into the calendar in advance.

Updating our RSE policy

Our RSE policy is long out of date and needs updating. We are going to use this as an opportunity to talk about RSE and the forthcoming changes across the school community. First we have a twilight session with staff to go through the work that we have been doing so far and draft a new policy. Next we will involve children and parents in a similar process. We see this as an opportunity to involve people across our school community and share the work we have been doing.

