

# SHAKING THINGS

# UP

## Starting out

Three years ago I took on responsibility for RSE at our school. At this time RSE was delivered as 5 drop down days throughout the year plus a two week summer programme.

The curriculum needed an overhaul. It was very booklet driven and drop down days had low attendance. Young people didn't seem to think there was much point in RSE.

One year into my new role the head nominated a colleague and I to go on a professional learning programme about RSE. Our first task was to carry out a creative audit with young people at our school to find out their views on the RSE curriculum.

### School

Secondary school.

### Creative audit participants

500 young people (Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12) and 40 teachers.

### Creative audit activities

Object sort;  
What Jars You?;  
STOP/START plates;  
CRUSH cards;  
RSE tree.

### Making RSE Matter

Pride Day; LGBTQ+ group; 'Don't bottle it up'; 'Message in a Mirror'; Glitter Jars; LOVE RSE Jars.

## Doing the creative audit

We started with year 9 for one day, talking each class off timetable for half an hour. We carried out the sessions in the drama studio where we laid out a set of objects that were lit up by the studio lighting. There was a toy gun, a bra, a doll, a tampon, an iPad, a teddy, a high heeled shoe, a striped flag, a pack of condoms, a football, a boxing glove, a mask, a bottle and some handcuffs. We asked young people to sort the objects into categories, but we didn't tell them what the categories were. They had to do this three times, ensuring that they used new categories each time.



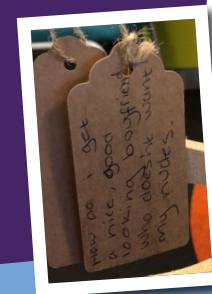
**The objects opened up conversations about the topics they were interested in - gender, relationships, body image, violence, pornography, anxiety, parenting. They could set the tone and pace of what they were comfortable talking about.**

We also did the **What jars you?** activity where we gave each young person a jar and asked them to fill it with all their thoughts about what 'jars' them about RSE at our school. This was followed by the **Stop / Start** plate activity where each young person was given a red and green plate and asked to write what they would like to STOP about RSE (on the red plate) and what they would like to START about RSE (on the green plate). We hung the plates up and took them with us when we worked with the teachers so that they could hear what young people had to say.

Next we worked with year 10 on one of our Health and Wellbeing drop-down days. This time we used the **CRUSH cards** from the professional learning programme rather than objects. On the back of each card is a story about a young person, based on research. We asked young people to sort the images into categories of their own choice, before flipping the cards over and reading the stories about other children and young people's lives and experiences.

We asked our Design and Technology department to create a tree to help 'grow' young people's knowledge about health and wellbeing. Every young person was given a label and asked to write down a question they had and tie it to the tree.

**We've used these questions to help us build the new curriculum and to spark conversation in the staff room!**



## Starting to listen: working with year 12

On the one of the Health and Wellbeing drop-down days we worked with the 6th formers and did the **What jars you?** and the **STOP / START** plates activities. Through these conversations we realised how little 6th formers knew about sexual health and safer sex. As a result we planned three RSE sessions for year 12 called **Drugs, Sex and Rock and Roll**.

We used the **DO...RSE session plan** to explore safer sex, a **British red cross session plan** to explore partying, staying safe and what to do if someone becomes unwell and a third session on drug use. Doing these sessions raised some alarms.

Young people thought the best form of contraception was withdrawal and that, anal sex was a lot safer than penis-in-vagina sex, because you can't get somebody pregnant.

We've got a lot more work to do with year twelve. We never would have realised if we hadn't had the initial conversation and started listening.

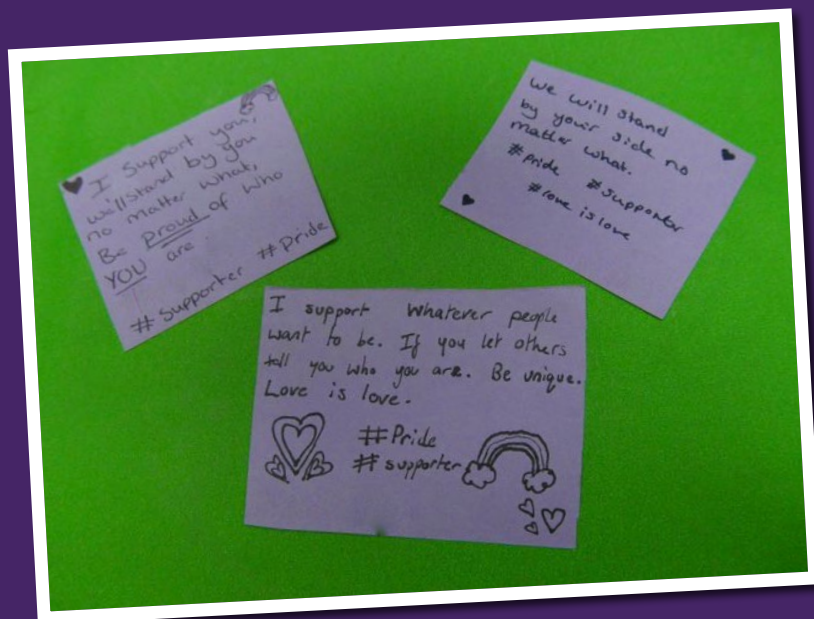


# Making it matter - with young people

In a couple of months we worked with around 500 young people as part of the creative audit, including those with additional learning needs. We were so inspired by doing the creative audits that we put everything the young people made into a film.

The film shows pictures of all the plates, jars, comments and questions from young people so that you can see for yourself what young people said and how passionate they felt about the issues that concern them.

From the creative audit we learnt that by far the largest issue that 'jarred' young people was the attitudes towards LGBTQ+ young people at our school and the lack of support, knowledge and understanding from staff.

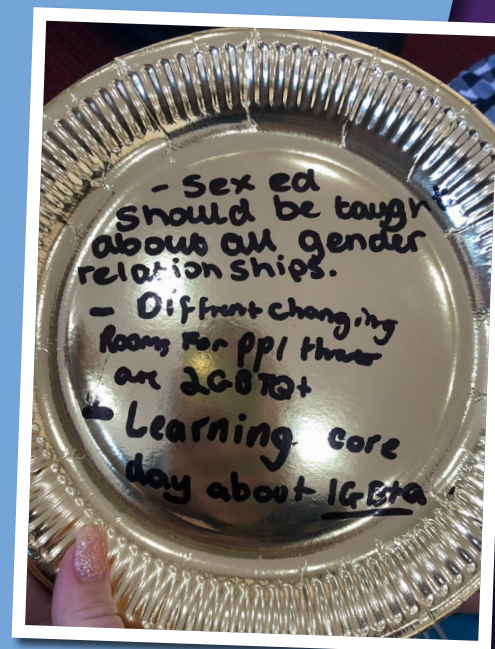


Young people felt that they were constantly judged for their looks and friendship groups, with most of the negative comments being directed at LGBTQ+ relationships. They noted that young people often made inappropriate comments and frequently used the word 'gay' in a derogatory way.

Young people also wanted more information about sexual relationships, STIs and abusive relationships. They also wanted to talk more openly and more often with staff about relationships and issues they face. They wanted these conversations to be less embarrassing and to feel like a normal part of school life.

## Young people's creative audit: key findings

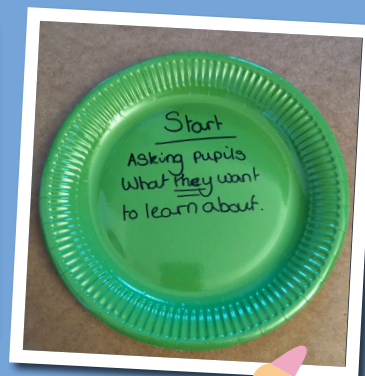
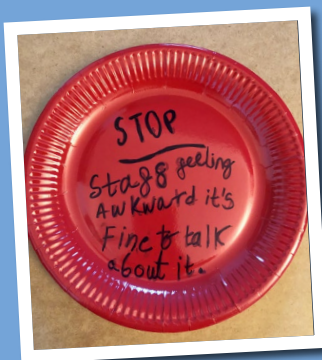
- 1 Young people wanted more information and support for LGBTQ+ young people
- 2 Young people wanted more relevant information about sexual relationships, STIs and abusive relationships
- 3 Young people wanted to talk more openly about relationships and issues they face and they wanted this to happen more often so it becomes more 'normal' and less embarrassing
- 4 Young people wanted more discussions around stereotypes and judgements for appearance and identity





## Making it matter - with teachers

Next we used the film to share young people's responses with about 40 staff at a staff inset day. We brought along all the things that young people had made - the health and wellbeing tree with young people's questions, the jars and the plates. When staff came in they started reading all the plates, which we had pinned up around the room, and were quite taken aback by some of young people's comments.



We found it much more powerful to show teachers what young people have said in their own words - rather than them hearing it from us.

We had fun with the staff. We showed a clip from **Mean girls (Don't have sex or you'll die!)** to kick things off and we did the CRUSH cards and the STOP / START plates. We were surprised at how similar teachers' plates were to those of the young people. Teachers seemed to realise that things needed to change at our school and that we need to listen to young people.

We also grouped teachers into their AOEs and asked them to map what they are currently doing on RSE using the eight **UNESCO key concepts**. This helped us find out what RSE is already happening across the curriculum as well as showing how a holistic RSE curriculum can be embedded across the school and within each AoE.

## Teacher audit: main findings

- 1 Teachers did not feel that their knowledge and understanding (age/stage) was up to date enough.
- 2 Teachers were afraid of backlash from parents and inappropriate comments / discussion from pupils.
- 3 Additional training is required to give teachers confidence in delivery.
- 4 More regular opportunities for structured discussions are needed to normalise and reduce embarrassment.
- 5 More open discussions / different teaching styles are needed.
- 6 Some teachers felt that expert professionals need to deliver sessions.



From the staff audit we realised that teachers need more training to give them the confidence to deliver RSE, but it's been too hard to get everyone together to do this.

We've had to find other ways of supporting staff and building capacity. This has included sending them the support cloud principles. We also offer drop in sessions to help with delivery during break times.





# Building the RSE curriculum

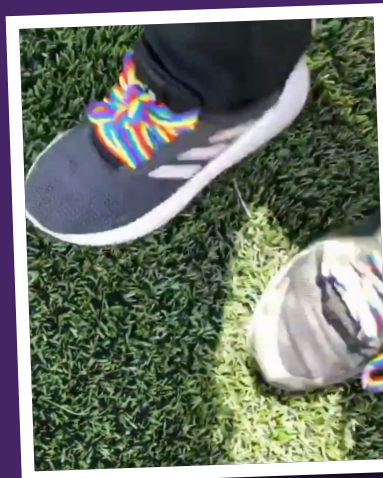
## UNDOD (Unity)

The first action we took after doing the creative audits was to start up a young person-led LGBTQ+ group.



The aim of the group was to develop the RSE curriculum specifically related to LGBTQ+ relationships and to support each other, fundraise and effect whole school change. The group gather weekly on a Friday lunchtime and we have met with a similar group at another secondary school to help them to focus their ideas and identify their priorities. They have called themselves UNDOD and we've worked with the art department to design an UNDOD logo. The logo has been graffitied onto our school wall.

In the summer we had a Pride day as part of the summer programme, which was a turning point for our school. The day was a celebration of diversity, inclusion and belonging and it felt like the moment at which teachers and young people understood what we are trying to achieve through RSE - loving who you are and being different.



We focused a whole lesson on the phrase 'that's so gay' as this was something that really came out of the creative audit as a problem at our school. We ran an activity on gender pronouns and created a timeline of LGBTQ+ rights. We had a session on rainbow hearts and Stonewall Cymru came and did their *rainbow shoelaces* activity for the day. UNDOD also made a PRIDE video, which has had over 500,000 views on twitter.

## Mixed Emotions

Mental health also emerged from the creative audit as something that young people would like more support with so we've been trying out ways of exploring mental health creatively.

At a Year 6 immersion day we did a taster session called Mindful moments. We played calm music and did mindful colouring with the children.

Then we made glitter jars and used them to talk about how you can experience and manage your emotions.

We gave each child a jar and asked them to fill it with glitter, PVA glue and water. When you shake the jars you can see the glitter swirling around and then starting to settle. We now have some of the glitter jars on our desks and we use them in our teaching to reflect what's going on in the room when emotions are running high or there's a problem with behaviour. The 6th formers have seen them and now they want to make them too.





# Building the RSE curriculum

## Don't bottle it up

Mental health came up as a theme in the creative audit so we developed a project called 'don't bottle it up'.



We asked everyone to bring in their empty plastic bottles and then gave one to each young person. With years 7 and 8 we talked about all the things that people bottle up and wrote these on coloured paper and stuffed them into the bottle.

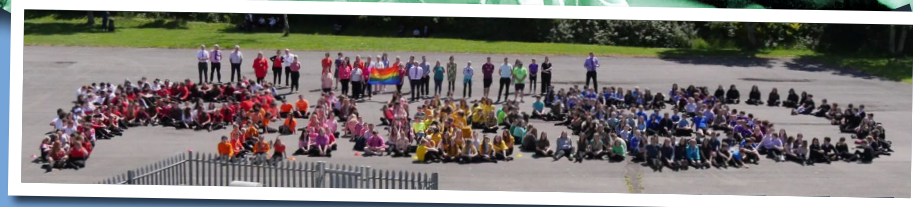


Then we decorated the bottles with positive messages that young people wanted to say - like 'Always ask twice whether someone is ok'. Young people took these home. In year 9 we asked young people to write down all the advice that they would give to help people open up and stop bottling things up. They stuffed all this advice into plastic bottles.

## Mirror mirror

We've also been doing sessions on body image where we talk about appearance ideals and that it's what's on the inside that really counts. We gave everyone a paper mirror and asked them to design their own message for what they would like people to see reflected when they look in the mirror.

We are framing the best designs and messages and hanging them around the school. We are also secretly writing some messages on the school toilet mirrors!



## Where are we now?

We've developed a new scheme of work based on the UNESCO thematic areas and the draft 'What Matters' statements from the Health and Wellbeing curriculum. We have time on the timetable every fortnight to work with year 7 and 8 around wellbeing and RSE.



We still have our drop down days but now, rather than teaching in isolation, the drop down days support what's happening in the RSE and Health and Wellbeing curriculum every fortnight.

The days are also now co-led by young people. One has been led by UNDOD - our LGBTQ+ group and one by a group of young carers.

## What's next?

Next we want to work with governors, parents and with more year 6 young people on transition days. We also need to do more work with 6th form and get some more curriculum time with years 9 and up.

We're really proud of what we have done so far. It's been the most inspiring thing. Creating new ways of capturing pupil voice. It's changed how we teach, not just to do with RSE, but how we gather data and engage young people in curriculum development.

Young people's engagement has changed radically and their attendance on drop down days has noticeably improved since we've started this work.

They can tell we are listening to them, taking their ideas seriously and working with them to change the culture at our school.