

Section

6

Starting Out with Engaging Parents around RSE



RSE legislation in Wales states that all children aged 3-16 have a legal right to RSE and that parents and carers are not able to withdraw their child from RSE. This means that, from 2022 onwards, Wales is moving away from working with parents and carers to *gain consent* for RSE and moving towards working with parents and carers to *inform, engage and support* RSE.

This is a new way of working for some schools and may require new strategies for communicating and engaging with parents and carers about the changes and the ongoing curriculum work in this area.



"Schools and settings should have clear lines of communication in relation to RSE and should engage with learners, parents, carers and the wider community, offering them the opportunity to engage with learning and teaching in RSE"

RSE Guidance, Welsh Government 2022

This section spotlights some of the ways that teachers in Wales are getting started with engaging parents and carers in their communities. All of these teachers have taken part in our intensive RSE professional learning programme.

Welcome
to
RSE



'Bothering' with parents

A teacher in a special school (in a semi-rural area of south Wales) works with children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. She carried out a **creative audit** at her school and wanted to listen to the views of parents, as well as children, staff and school governors.

The school holds regular coffee mornings for parents and she asked to join one of them. She then invited parents to take part in a 'bothering box' activity. The teacher provided a box and slips of paper and pens and asked parents to anonymously share all the things that 'bother' them about RSE. This helped open up conversations about parents' questions, fears and concerns for their children. Most of these fears were not about the RSE curriculum but about parents' worries for their children's future relationships and sexual experiences.

This meant that the teacher was able to share how RSE can protect and empower their children to support them now and in the future. The teacher also brought with her the 'bothering box' that children had created so that she was able to share their questions and concerns anonymously with parents. This was a good opportunity for parents to tune into what their children were thinking, feeling and experiencing about RSE related issues.

Parents have to accept our kids will be sexual

They are so vulnerable out in public

Have healthy relationships

I worry that she doesn't know how to say no

what they hear from their friends rather than the truth

worry what others think about their sexual behaviour

How to teach them to stop masturbating in public

Staying safe online - worry about grooming



Welcome to RSE

Hosting parents

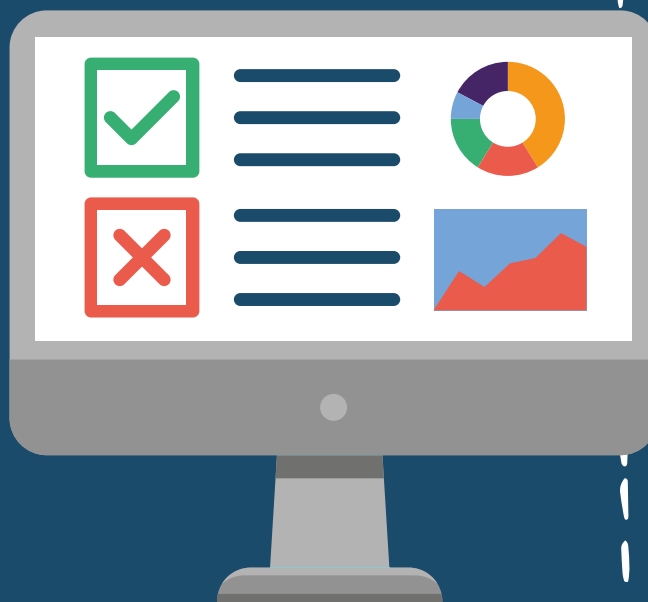
One secondary school (in a semi-rural town in south Wales) hosted an after school event for year 7 parents to introduce them to the new curriculum. RSE was introduced as part of the wider curriculum and there was a display for each of the components, including examples of work that pupils have done. The RSE lead was very prepared to answer questions on RSE and respond to any concerns that parents may have but from the cohort of 150. However, not one parent asked anything about RSE!

Surveying parents

A teacher in a primary school (in a West-Wales coastal town) conducted a **creative audit** in the year before RSE became statutory. She wanted to include parents in her audit. Working during the Covid-19 pandemic she was unable to invite parents to school for a workshop. Instead, she designed and sent out a digital survey that asked parents to share their views on what they thought their child needed to learn 'now' and what they thought they needed to learn before they left school in year 6 (age 11).

The teacher mapped their responses, alongside those from the creative audits with children and teachers to create an outline for their new RSE curriculum. Once RSE became statutory parents started to contact the school with a range of questions and concerns.

The school decided to host some informal sessions for parents and carers where they could mingle and look at examples of resources, which were set out around the room. There was no formal presentation but all members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) were present for support. The first session was well attended by 40 parents but the second by only one parent, suggesting perhaps that parents had got what they needed from session one!



Creating a parent forum

A rural village primary school (in south Wales) hosted a parent forum to share information about the new RSE curriculum. They used interactive and creative activities, including the **CRUSH cards** and the **what jars you** activity, to engage parents and introduce them to the new curriculum.

"We had a great turn out from parents and carers (a lot more than we expected) we also had governors and non-teaching staff attend. We started with a 'Big Question' - something that we do across all of our classes - 'what is RSE?'. We then guided the parents to the RSE crush cards which promoted discussion, questions and thoughts among all who attended. Following on from this we went over the RSE curriculum guidance followed by the 'What jars you' activity - again a great response made up of honest, thought-provoking answers.

We had positive feedback after the evening, so we were pleased" (RSE Lead reflections)

Another forum meeting is planned where the school will share their new whole school vision for RSE, once they have had a chance to carry out further creative audits and find out more about what children want and need from the new curriculum.

Starting out with community leaders

A primary school (in an urban area of south Wales) arranged a meeting between local Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders to discuss the new RSE curriculum and forthcoming changes. The support and collaboration of religious leaders has helped the school to feel more confident about working with parents to develop the new curriculum moving forwards.



Youth work led approach

A youth worker in a rural part of north Wales approached a local secondary school and asked to set up a school-based LGBTQ+ group. At the time she was based in the school but also ran the youth clubs in her local area.

She explains: ***'We each have our own area and so that means you build a relationship in and outside of schools. I know the community...We're a very rural area with lots of farming and before we set up the groups there was nothing for LGBTQ+ young people in any of the high schools, no LGBTQ+ clubs or anything.'***

The group started to meet at lunch time and wanted to make a 'big banner for the front of the school' which 'opened the door for conversation' with parents. The youth worker is also able to work with parents, some of whom she already knows. She explains: ***'There was one boy in year 8 that came and he said 'I think I'm Bisexual'. And he went home and told his mum and she phoned me and said 'what do I do?' and I said, 'you don't need to do anything, just go with it'. I think she just wanted reassurance.'***

CLASSROOM 1



Bonding with families

One special school (in semi-rural south Wales) has a family learning programme that helps families build positive relationships with their children through taking part in family bonding activities. After taking part in an RSE professional learning programme, the school has built RSE into the family learning programme ***'so that we are aware of what parents want to teach their children and support them to do that.'*** (Assistant head, Special school, Wales).

