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## **Preface for Headteachers, PHSE coordinators and teachers**

As teachers of SRE we are often asked to teach sensitive subject material using resources that have been put together from a variety of sources. Often these resources do not have the same tone or methodology. It is therefore difficult to develop a continuous SRE course which links together sex, relationships and wider social issues within a complete and coherent framework.

Whilst teaching SRE in the past within my role as form tutor I experienced the stress of using materials which took me out of my comfort zone and for which I had received no training. I also worried about responding to some students' questions, fearing that there may be some reprisal from parents were I to respond too explicitly.

Later, as a university sexual health advisor, I started to think about ways in which SRE could be taught in secondary schools, and how a course could be devised to include wider issues such as puberty, sex, self-esteem, self-efficacy, peer pressure, notions of attraction and beauty and socialisation. I wanted the course to raise the level of discussion about sexual matters to include intelligent debate and a degree of critical thinking which would engage students by allowing them to come to conclusions themselves about what is or is not appropriate behaviour. Likewise, sex is not a subject outside the domain of the general curriculum, and where possible I have tried to make cross-curricular links with history, sociology, art, science, and literature.

However, any successful course should be adopted with pleasure by teachers with easy planning and preparation, and without fear of being thrown in at the deep end. To this end, the complete course consists of photocopiable worksheets with enough variety for teachers to choose those which they feel most at ease with for each chapter.

Likewise, because the course is designed as a coherent whole, it is possible for it to be used as a document in consultation with parents about the school's SRE policy, as any parent can be shown a copy of the workbook and the chapter layout to see how SRE issues are linked together into a cohesive course. Having consulted numerous government documents and guidelines on the subject of sex education, I believe I have produced a course which takes into consideration the concerns of parents, but which is also likely to be well received by the government. This does not mean that important issues are not tackled frankly. On the contrary it is possible to deal with the most sensitive issues providing there has been sufficient preamble and the issue is approached within a suitable context.

I have brought together my experiences as a classroom teacher, sexual health advisor and as a parent of teenagers in order to devise this course, and wish teachers well in using it. Thank you for choosing Sex and Sensibility.

Shona Kerr

## **Sample letter to parents**

Dear Parents,

In line with local authority and national guidance, your child will receive sex and relationships (SRE) lessons. Teachers, with their understanding and knowledge of their pupils in terms of age, maturity, development, religious, cultural and special needs, are in the ideal position to deliver SRE.

SRE is fully supported by the ethos and values of our school and we uphold it as a right for all our pupils. We recognise the need to work with parents and carers to ensure a shared understanding of SRE and to deliver an effective programme that meets the needs of our pupils. We welcome parents' participation and comments. We have decided to use the course book "Sex and Sensibility" which has been devised within government guidelines formed in consultation with parents. A copy is available in the school for you to consult, should you wish to do so.

SRE is taught in all classes from year 7 to year 11, as appropriate to the age of the students, as part of our well-established programme of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). Attached is the content of the National Curriculum related to SRE for Key Stages 3 and 4.

The school's SRE course aims to encourage better communication between young people and their parents, with an emphasis on fostering healthy relationships. It focuses on raising self-esteem, resisting peer pressure, improving individual responsibility and thinking about the consequences of behaviour, as well as the biology of sex, and encouraging healthy attitudes.

Any parent wishing to discuss SRE lessons in more detail is invited to make an appointment with \_\_\_\_\_ who will be happy to answer any questions.

Together with parents we hope to ensure all our students have safe and responsible relationships.

Yours faithfully,

## **Establishing a respectful classroom environment**

It is useful to brainstorm a code of ethics for sex and relationship lessons in order to create an environment in which the participants feel comfortable sharing or **not** sharing information, and in which you as a teacher feel at ease. Students should be encouraged to come up with a list themselves, and the following sorts of rules could be elicited:

1. Everyone has the right to say as much or as little as they wish.
2. No personal comments or insults are allowed.
3. The teacher does not answer personal questions about his/her own life.
4. Other people's opinions must be respected at all times.
5. Language should always be appropriate.

These rules may be placed in evidence during SRE lessons, or written by the students on the first page of an SRE exercise book or folder so that in the event of a transgression a student may simply be reminded of the rule in question. As teachers and individuals we have our own thresholds and these may be challenged by students' questions. In the event of a student asking an indiscreet question such as "How old were you when you lost your virginity?" it is perfectly appropriate to refer them to rule 3 above, and then to say "but we can discuss the idea of when it is or is not an appropriate time".