

Whole-school healthy relationships programmes: questions parents and governors can ask



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Whole-school healthy relationships programmes

Questions parents and governors can ask

The Government has announced a new whole-school approach to tackling misogyny and promoting healthy relationships.

The practical framework itself has **not yet been published**, so parents should not assume that a new national programme is already in place at their child's school.

Schools already have duties around safeguarding, behaviour and RSHE. The important question is what happens when similar content is delivered through assemblies, pastoral work, mentoring, external workshops or wider school culture.

This guide is designed to help parents and governors ask clear, reasonable questions.

Start with these four

- **What is the programme?** Ask for the name of the programme, who produced it and what it is intended to achieve.
- **Who is delivering it?** Is it being delivered by teachers, pastoral staff, a charity, a campaign organisation or another external provider?
- **Where is it being delivered?** Is it part of RSHE, safeguarding, behaviour work, an assembly, mentoring or enrichment?
- **Can parents see the materials?** Ask what pupils will see and whether parents can inspect the resources in advance or on request.

Key principle

Safeguarding girls and scrutinising school programmes are not opposing positions. Schools should be able to do both.

Questions parents can ask

1. What exactly is my child being taught?

Ask for the session outline, lesson plan or programme summary.

Useful questions include:

- What will pupils be expected to know, understand or consider after the session?
- Are any political, philosophical or contested social propositions included?

2. Can I see the materials?

Parents can ask to see resources used in RSHE. Where related material is being delivered through assemblies, mentoring, pastoral work or external workshops, ask:

- Will the school provide the same level of transparency?

3. Is any part of this sex education?

Ask the school to explain which parts of the programme it classifies as:

- sex education;
- relationships education;
- health education;
- safeguarding;
- behaviour work;
- pastoral provision;
- or enrichment.

This matters because different rules apply to different types of provision.

4. What definitions are being used?

Ask:

- How does the school define “misogyny”?
- What does “belonging” mean in practice?
- What counts as a “harmful attitude”?

A school should be able to distinguish between harmful conduct, safeguarding concerns, immature behaviour, disagreement and political or religious opinion.

Questions parents can ask

5. Are pupils being asked personal questions?

Ask whether pupils will complete:

- attitude surveys;
- relationship questionnaires;
- wellbeing assessments;
- questions about family life;
- questions about sexual behaviour;
- or pre- and post-programme evaluations.

Then ask:

- What information is being collected?
- Who sees it?
- Is it identifiable?
- How long is it kept?

6. Can pupils ask questions or disagree?

Ask:

- Can pupils respectfully question or disagree with contested ideas without being labelled or disciplined?

A safe classroom should protect pupils from harassment while still allowing appropriate discussion.

7. How are boys being treated?

Ask:

- Does the programme treat boys as individuals rather than as a problem group?
- Does it distinguish perpetrators from non-perpetrators?
- Does it recognise that boys can also be victims of abuse?

8. How can parents raise concerns?

Ask for the school's complaints procedure and the name of the person responsible for the programme. Keep questions specific to the material, provider or session concerned.

Questions governors and school leaders should ask

1. Who approved the programme?

Was it approved by:

- the headteacher;
- RSHE lead;
- DSL;
- governing body;
- academy trust;
- or another body?

2. What evidence supports it?

Ask:

- What published evidence supports this particular intervention?
- Does the evidence measure actual behaviour, or only attitudes and knowledge?
- Has it been evaluated with pupils of this age?
- Have unintended effects been considered?

3. What due diligence has been carried out?

If an external provider is involved, governors should ask:

- What does the organisation campaign on?
- Has the school reviewed its wider public positions?
- Have all materials been checked in advance?
- Are staff suitably trained?
- What safeguarding arrangements are in place?
- Does the provider collect pupil data?
- Can school staff intervene if agreed content changes?

4. How is political impartiality protected?

Where genuinely political or contested issues arise, ask:

- How will the school ensure that pupils are not exposed to one-sided advocacy?
- How are factual claims distinguished from opinion or interpretation?

Questions governors and school leaders should ask

5. How are safeguarding and discipline kept distinct?

Ask:

- What behaviour triggers a safeguarding response?
- What behaviour is dealt with through ordinary discipline?
- How are pupils protected from being labelled because of an opinion rather than conduct?

6. What outcomes will be measured?

Governors should ask whether the programme will measure:

- harmful behaviour;
- sexual harassment;
- safeguarding incidents;
- pupil wellbeing;
- complaints;
- adverse or unintended effects;
- outcomes for girls and boys separately;
- and whether any effect lasts over time.

7. What happens if parents object?

Ask:

- How will lawful parental questions or requests for information be handled?
- Is there a clear complaints route?
- Will parents be treated as partners in the process?

Five key questions to ask first

1. What programme is being used?
2. Who produced and delivers it?
3. Can parents see all the materials?
4. Is it RSHE, safeguarding, pastoral work or something else?
5. What evidence shows that it works?

If the school cannot answer those five questions clearly, ask for more information before the programme is treated as routine.



Official guidance behind this guide

This guide should be read alongside:

- DfE – Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education
- Statutory guidance in force from 1 September 2026. Includes parental transparency, curriculum materials, external providers and withdrawal arrangements.
- DfE – Political impartiality in schools
- Guidance on political issues, balanced presentation and schools' responsibility for external agencies.
- DfE – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Statutory safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges.
- DfE – Education Secretary unveils plan for schools to tackle misogyny, 26 September 2026. The Government announcement to which this guide responds.

This guide provides general information and questions for parents and governors.

It does not replace the statutory guidance or individual legal advice.