GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

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This information pack is designed to assist parents in understanding their rights and responsibilities when it comes to their children's education, particularly concerning sensitive topics such as sex education and gender issues. It provides guidance on how parents can exercise their rights to request that certain teachings, which may conflict with their religious and cultural values, be modified or restricted.

The pack outlines:

- What is taught in school: Details of what is taught in schools regarding relationship and sex from the Department of Education – *Page 2 - 17*
- Guidance for Parents & Templates: guidance on reviewing school policies, making informed decisions, and maintaining open communication with your child. Includes templates for requesting information from the school – *Page 18- 22*
- Next steps: Guidance on reviewing material after receiving the school's response, raising concerns, and tailoring communication to address sensitive topics in alignment with your values - *Page 23-24*
- Withdrawing a Child from RSE Lessons: Templates for notifying the head teacher of your decision to withdraw your child from Relationships and Sex Education lessons due to concerns about curriculum content that conflicts with your faith and values, while requesting a discreet arrangement to safeguard your child's emotional well-being – *Page 25 – 30*
- Exploring Gender Identity Through an Islamic Lens: We answer the most pressing questions parents and youth have asked with regards to gender identity, modern influences, and how we can protect our families – *Page 31 – 40*

By offering resources, sample letters, and strategies for discussion, this pack empowers parents to make informed decisions about their children's education, ensuring their values are respected while supporting their children's development in a diverse learning environment.

Guidance for parents: Details of what is taught in schools regarding relationship and sex education.

Information from Department of Education (DfE)

RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) and RSHE (Relationships and Sex Education, and Health Education) typically refer to the same guidance. It is most commonly associated with the statutory guidance from the Department of Education. This statutory guidance applies to all schools, both primary and secondary. Most schools teach these lessons in PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) or Personal Development lessons.

(Ref:https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/fil e/1090195/Relationships_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf 2019).

Summary:

RSE/ RSHE

- All primary schools in England teach relationships education.
- All secondary schools teach relationships and sex education.
- Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools.
- However, many primary schools choose to teach sex education. Parents have a right to withdraw their children from the sex education but not relationships education.
- All schools providing secondary education must deliver Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) as well as Health Education. Like at primary school, parents do not have the right to withdraw pupils from Relationships or Health education. However, parents do have the right to withdraw their child from some aspects of Sex Education. This does not include what is taught as part of the science curriculum. A child can request Sex Education without their parent's

consent from three terms before their 16th birthday.

- Schools can remain flexible in their approach. This includes faith schools being allowed to teach within the tenets of their faith.

Science

- Primary Science: The national curriculum for science also includes subject content in related areas, such as the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals. Parents do not have a right to withdraw from Science lessons.
- Secondary Science: The national curriculum for science also includes subject content under Biology which covers Human Reproduction in detail. Parents do not have a right to withdraw from Science lessons.

FAQ

This document from the DfE has some Frequently Asked Questions on this subject matter

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse- and-health-education-faqs

Content of Relationships, Health and Science

All of the content below as parents - you should be aware of so you can have discussions at home with your children. The words in red are some of the key important concepts that we have highlighted that you should speak to your child about before and after the lesson (guiding them through the islamic concepts).

Relationships Education

By the End Of Primary Schools

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Families and people who care for me	● That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability ● The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives ● That others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care ● That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up ● That marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong

	● How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed
Caring friendships	• How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends • The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties • That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded • That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right • How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed
Respectful relationships	• The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs • Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships

	• The conventions of courtesy and manners • The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness • That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority • About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help • What a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive • The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults
Online relationships	That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not • That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous • The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them • How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met • How information and data is shared and used online
Being safe	What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context) • About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe • That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact • How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know • How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult

	● How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard ● How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so ● Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources

Relationships Education

By the End Of Secondary Schools

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Families	• that there are different types of committed, stable relationships. • how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children. • what marriage is, including their legal status e.g. that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony. • why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into. • the characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships. • the roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting. • how to: determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy: judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships); and, how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.

Respectful relationships, including friendships	• the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online) including: trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. This includes different (non- sexual) types of relationship. • practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships. • how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). • that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs. • about different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help. • that some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control. • what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable. • the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal.

Online and media	•their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online. • about online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online. • not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them. • what to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online. • the impact of viewing harmful content. • that specifically sexually explicit material e.g. pornography presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners. • that sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail. • how information and data is generated, collected, shared andused online.
Being safe	•the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships. • how people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	• how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship. • that all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing. • the facts about reproductive health, including fertility, and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women and menopause. • that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others. • that they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex. • the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available. • the facts around pregnancy including miscarriage. • that there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help). • how the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing. • about the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment. • how the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour. • how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing Education

By the End of Primary Schools

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Mental Wellbeing	• that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health. • that there is a normal range of emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, nervousness) and scale of emotions that all humans experience in relation to different experiences and situations. • how to recognise and talk about their emotions, including having a varied vocabulary of words to use when talking about their own and others' feelings. • how to judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate. • the benefits of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation, voluntary and service- based activity on mental wellbeing and happiness. • simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family and the benefits of hobbies and interests. • isolation and loneliness can affect children and that it is very important for children to discuss their feelings with an adult and seek support. • that bullying (including cyberbullying) has a negative and often lasting impact on mental wellbeing. • where and how to seek support (including recognising the triggers for seeking support), including whom in school they should speak to if they are worried about their own or someone else's mental wellbeing or ability to control their emotions (including issues arising online). • it is common for people to experience mental ill health. For many people who do, the problems can be resolved if the right support is made available, especially if accessed early enough.

Internet safety and harms	•that for most people the internet is an integral part of life and has many benefits. • about the benefits of rationing time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing. • how to consider the effect of their online actions on others and know how to recognise and display respectful behaviour online and the importance of keeping personal information private. • why social media, some computer games and online gaming, for example, are age restricted. • that the internet can also be a negative place where online abuse, trolling, bullying and harassment can take place, which can have a negative impact on mental health. • how to be a discerning consumer of information online including understanding that information, including that from search engines, is ranked, selected and targeted. • where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online
Physical health and fitness	• the characteristics and mental and physical benefits of an active lifestyle. • the importance of building regular exercise into daily and weekly routines and how to achieve this; for example walking or cycling to school, a daily active mile or other forms of regular, vigorous exercise. • the risks associated with an inactive lifestyle (including obesity). • how and when to seek support including which adults to speak to in school if they are worried about their health.
Healthy eating Pupils	• what constitutes a healthy diet (including understanding calories and other nutritional content). • the principles of planning and preparing a range of healthy meals. • the characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating (including, for example, obesity and tooth decay) and other behaviours (e.g. the impact of alcohol on diet or health).

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco	• the facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, alcohol use and drug-taking.
Health and prevention	• how to recognise early signs of physical illness, such as weight loss, or unexplained changes to the body. • about safe and unsafe exposure to the sun, and how to reduce the risk of sun damage, including skin cancer. • the importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and that a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn. • about dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene and dental flossing, including regular check-ups at the dentist. • about personal hygiene and germs including bacteria, viruses, how they are spread and treated, and the importance of handwashing. • the facts and science relating to immunisation and vaccination
Basic first aid	• how to make a clear and efficient call to emergency services if necessary. • concepts of basic first-aid, for example dealing with common injuries, including head injuries
Changing adolescent body	• key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, particularly from age 9 through to age 11, including physical and emotional changes. • about menstrual wellbeing including the key facts about the menstrual cycle.

Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing Education

By the End of Secondary Schools

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Mental wellbeing	• how to talk about their emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary. • that happiness is linked to being connected to others. • how to recognise the early signs of mental wellbeing concerns. • common types of mental ill health (e.g. anxiety and depression). • how to critically evaluate when something they do or are involved in has a positive or negative effect on their own or others' mental health. • the benefits and importance of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation and voluntary and service-based activities on mental wellbeing and happiness.
Internet safety and harms	•the similarities and differences between the online world and the physical world, including: the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparison with others online (including through setting unrealistic expectations for body image), how people may curate a specific image of their life online, over-reliance on online relationships including social media, the risks related to online gambling including the accumulation of debt, how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online. •how to identify harmful behaviours online (including bullying, abuse or harassment) and how to report, or find support, if they have been affected by those behaviours.
Physical health and fitness	• the positive associations between physical activity and promotion of mental wellbeing, including as an approach to combat stress. • the characteristics and evidence of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, maintaining a healthy weight, including the links between an inactive lifestyle and ill health, including cancer and cardio- vascular ill-health. • about the science relating to blood, organ and stem cell donation.

Healthy eating	• how to maintain healthy eating and the links between a poor diet and health risks, including tooth decay and cancer.
Drugs, alcohol and tobacco	• the facts about legal and illegal drugs and their associated risks, including the link between drug use, and the associated risks, including the link to serious mental health conditions. • the law relating to the supply and possession of illegal substances. • the physical and psychological risks associated with alcohol consumption and what constitutes low risk alcohol consumption in adulthood. • the physical and psychological consequences of addiction, including alcohol dependency. • awareness of the dangers of drugs which are prescribed but still present serious health risks. • the facts about the harms from smoking tobacco (particularly the link to lung cancer), the benefits of quitting and how to access support to do so.
Health and prevention	• about personal hygiene, germs including bacteria, viruses, how they are spread, treatment and prevention of infection, and about antibiotics. • about dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene and dental flossing, including healthy eating and regular check-ups at the dentist. • (late secondary) the benefits of regular self-examination and screening. • the facts and science relating to immunisation and vaccination. • the importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and how a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn.
Basic first aid	• basic treatment for common injuries. • life-saving skills, including how to administer CPR. • the purpose of defibrillators and when one might be needed.
Changing adolescent body	• key facts about puberty, the changing adolescent body and menstrual wellbeing. • the main changes which take place in males and females, and the implications for emotional and physical health.

National Curriculum Science

Key Stage	Science Content
Primary School	
KS1 Science (Year 1 and 2)	Animals, including humans identify, name, draw and label the basic parts of the human body and say which part of the body is associated with each sense. notice that animals, including humans, have offspring which grow into adults
KS2 Science (Year 5 and 6)	Living things and their habitats describe the differences in the life cycles of a mammal, an amphibian, an insect and a bird describe the life process of reproduction in some plants and animals. Animals, including humans describe the changes as humans develop to old age. Evolution and Inheritance recognise that living things produce offspring of the same kind, but normally offspring vary and are not identical to their parents
Secondary School	
KS3 Science (Year 7, 8 and 9)	Biology: Reproduction reproduction in humans (as an example of a mammal), including the structure and function of the male and female reproductive systems, menstrual cycle (without details of hormones), gametes, fertilisation, gestation and birth, to include the effect of maternal lifestyle on the foetus through the placenta

KS4 Science (Year 10 & 11)	Biology: communicable diseases including sexually transmitted infections in humans (including HIV/AIDs) hormones in human reproduction, hormonal and non-hormonal methods of contraception sex determination in humans

Template letter for parents to use when communicating with schools

Guidance for Parents

PLEASE DO NOT COPY AND PASTE. THIS IS STRICTLY TO BE USED AS GUIDANCE ON WHAT CAN BE WRITTEN, HOWEVER THIS WILL DEPEND ON YOUR CHILD'S INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL.

Step 1: Do your background research

- Before you approach the school, do your background research. Use the guidance from Section 1 to understand what is statutory and non-statutory under the DfE (Department of Education) guidance.
- Refer to the school policies on the website, this is normally under RSHE/ RSE/ PSHE.
- Refer to the material and content that is being taught (this should be available online). If it is not, approach the school (Class teacher/ PSHE lead/ Headteacher).
- Make contact with the school (this can be through preferably email or letter) that you would like to get some information of what is being taught in PSHE/ RSHE/ RSE lessons so you can support your child.

Step 2: Make informed decision as a family and communicate with school

- After reviewing the content, make a suitable decision for your child.
- Remember each school's policies vary from school to school and each school curriculum of when they teach depends from school to school. However, they are bound by the guidance of the DfE (Department of Education) guidance.
- Understand which term it will be taught and when.
- Use the template emails/ letters attached below.

Step 3: Support your child with safe environment to discuss as appropriate

- Educate yourselves as parents and understand what the correct Islamic stance is to take.
- **Open Communication:** Create a safe and respectful space for your child to ask questions and express any concerns. Encourage open dialogue about what they are learning at school and how it aligns with your values.

- Provide Age-Appropriate Information: Ensure your child is receiving developmentally appropriate information at home, which complements your faith and helps them make sense of sensitive topics in a way that aligns with your values. Have open discussions with them before and after these lessons are taught.
- Always pray and write to beloved Huzoor (aba).

SAMPLE EMAIL 1 TO SCHOOL

Call the school office and ask for the RSHE Leader and your child's class teacher's email address. They may only offer you the office email address in which case you should write…

In subject line write: FOA Head of RSE and (your child's class teacher)

Date

Dear _____

I hope you are well.

I wanted to get some more information in regards to what is taught in RSHE for my child who is in year____ (enter your child's year group).

I would like to see all the lesson plans, resources including the diagrams and videos that will be used in the RSE lessons. I am aware some content may be taught in the Science Curriculum from which they cannot be withdrawn.

I am only interested in viewing this content to help make me aware of the topics that the school will be covering in the RSE lessons so that it can help me best support my child.

I appreciate your time

I look forward to working in partnership with the school. Yours sincerely,

SAMPLE EMAIL 2 TO SCHOOL

This is given if they have not responded back to the 1st email

Date

Dear_____,

I contacted you in relation to the RSE lessons taught for my child in year *(enter your child's year group).* I have still not received a response. As previously stated I would like to view all the material and content relevant to my child's year group for these lessons.

It has been _____ weeks. Please let me know if you require any information from me. We are keen to work in partnership with the school.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

NEXT STEPS IF THE SCHOOL ARE UNWILLING TO SHARE CONTENT WITH YOU

Dear_____,

I contacted you in relation to the RSE lessons taught for my child in year (enter your child's year group).

Please find the Secretary of Education's guidance detailing the right for parents to view all content relating to RSE lessons taught in schools.

https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/10/24/education-secretarys-letter-to-parents-you-have-the-right-to-see-rshe-lesson-material/

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

NEXT STEPS AND EXAMPLE LETTER AFTER VIEWING THE CONTENT.

If the school asks you to come into school to view the material, make sure you take screenshots and notes of the vocabulary lists and objectives they will be covering in the lessons for your child's year group.

Next you need to compare the material with what is compulsory learning, if there is any doubt then do not hesitate to ask the school to clarify.

Below is an example of an email sent by a parent after she/he viewed the content for their child in year 4. Please do not copy and paste this email. This will look different for each year group.

Good morning,

I had a few questions following on from the RSE meeting to parents, and I would appreciate it if they could be raised with the appropriate teachers please.

Throughout the presentation, there was an emphasis on only using scientific terms, which is great. However, the phrase 'making love' appeared in the year 4 vocabulary - alongside sexual intercourse and 'having sex'. I wanted to query why 'making love' has been added to the vocabulary when a) it isn't a scientific term and b) it alludes more to the emotional or romantic aspect of a relationship.

Secondly, does IVF need to be introduced in year 5? This seems to be introducing children to a new cause of worry of their fertility, or infertility, when they are not concerned with family planning at this age. It is already covered at secondary school, at a more appropriate age and I am not aware of this being part of the statutory learning for year 5. If it is a matter where certain families are going through IVF, would it not be more appropriate to speak to the children concerned on a case-by-case basis?

Finally, mention was made of scenarios discussed with the children. In one of them it mentioned 'it's way too embarrassing to speak to my parents about it'. I understand that teachers will encourage children to speak openly to their parents about questions they have. Would this not be a leading statement that encourages the opposite?

I appreciate the hard work that the teachers put into teaching these subjects and am just looking for some clarity. I look forward to your reply.

SAMPLE EMAIL AFTER VIEWING THE CONTENT AND YOU HAVE DECIDED TO WITHDRAW YOUR CHILD FROM THE RSE LESSONS.

Dear (*name of head teacher*),

Thank you for sharing the content on RSE lessons for my child's year group. I appreciate your time and cooperation.

I would like to inform you that I wish to withdraw my child from the Sex Education lessons within Relationships and Sex Education Curriculum.

Please let me know where my child will be taken during these lessons as I do not want it to impact his/her social and emotional well-being. I would appreciate your discretion when withdrawing my child from these lessons.

Kind regards

SAMPLE LETTER 1 TO SCHOOL

Name of Head Teacher
Address of School

Date

RE: Right to Withdraw from ….

Student Full Name: Student Year Group Dear
[*name of head teacher*],

We are writing to inform you that we wish to withdraw my child from the Sex Education lessons within Relationships and Sex Education Curriculum. We are aware that this content may be taught in the Science Curriculum which we know he/she cannot be withdrawn. However, if this is taught in their PSHE/RSHE lessons, please withdraw my child from these lessons.

Please make me aware of the topics that the school will be covering in the SRE/RSHE lessons and I will ensure I talk to my child about these matters when I feel it is appropriate to do so and in a way that is best for my child.

I look forward to working in partnership with the school.

Yours sincerely,

SAMPLE LETTER 2 TO SCHOOL

This is given if they have not responded back to the 1st letter

Name of Head teacher Address
of School

Date

RE: Right to Withdraw from ….

Student Full Name: Student Year Group Dear
[*name of head teacher*],

We wrote previously in relation to that we wish to withdraw my child from the Sex Education lessons within relationships and sex education Curriculum. It has been….. and we have not got a response from you. We are keen to work in partnership with the school.

Please see attached the previous letter that was sent on this date… We look forward in hearing from you soon.
Yours sincerely,

SAMPLE LETTER 3 TO SCHOOL

This is given if they have not responded back to the 1st and 2nd letter or To the first letter and have stated that your child cannot be withdrawn from the Sex Education lessons in RSHE/ PSHE lessons and they have not shared the Curriculum content with you.

Name of Head teacher Address
of School

Date

RE: Right to Withdraw from ….

Student Full Name: Student Year Group Dear
[*name of head teacher*],
We have written previously in relation to that we wish to withdraw my child from the Sex Education lessons within Relationships and Sex Education Curriculum. It has been many …. and we have not got a response from you. We are keen to work in partnership with the school.

I would like to exercise my legal right under S405 of the Education Act 1996 to withdraw my child from Sex Education classes in your school.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/405#:~:text=%5BF1(1)%5D%20If,until%20the%20request%20is%20withdrawn.

In this, I am also exercising my right under the Human Rights Act 1998 Protocol1, Article 2 that states:

ARTICLE 2
In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

In this, I am also asking the school to respect my religion, which is a protected characteristic of the Equality Act 2010 and ensures a person of religious faith is not to suffer discrimination.

Yours sincerely,

IF THE SCHOOL SAYS YOU DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW THEM FROM THE SEX EDUCATION THE BELOW EMAIL / LETTER CAN BE SENT.

Dear *(name of Head Teacher)*

Thank you for your response.

I would like to inform you that I would like to exercise my legal right under S405 of the Education Act 1996 to withdraw my child from Sex Education classes in your school.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/405#:~:text=%5BF1(1)%5D%20If,until%20the%20request%20is%20withdrawn.

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In this, I am also asking the school to respect my religion, which is a protected characteristic of the Equality Act 2010 and ensures a person of religious faith is not to suffer discrimination.

Yours sincerely,

During the preparation of this document, Dr. Faheem Younus sahib delivered a powerful speech titled 'Exploring Gender Identity Through an Islamic Lens' at the Western Canada Jalsa Salana 2024. His address on this issue was so compelling and insightful that we decided to present it in article form and add it to this document to benefit all parents.

Exploring Gender Identity Through an Islamic Lens

The role of parenting is more crucial than ever in today's fast-changing world. As Muslims, we are tasked with safeguarding our children not only physically but spiritually and emotionally as well. Today, I want to answer some of the most pressing questions parents and youth have asked me about gender identity, modern influences, and how we can protect our families. Let's explore these concerns together.

Question 1: What is intersex and how is it different from the transgender movement?

This question often comes from parents. They are familiar with the concept of intersex but struggle to understand the transgender movement. Intersex refers to about 1% of human beings born with a condition that does not fully align with the male or female binary. These individuals may not have the "correct" hormones, chromosomes, or physical traits typically associated with their gender. Throughout human history, intersex individuals have always existed.

However, I must point out that some people, albeit unintentionally, use derogatory terms like “hermaphrodite” for intersex individuals. It’s important to avoid such language, as Islam teaches us to be respectful. In the Holy Qur’an, Allah commands, "O ye who believe! Let not one people deride another people, nor call one another by nicknames" (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:11). In Urdu, we refer to them as “hijra,” and we must strive to follow the Qur’an not just when it’s convenient, but always.

When it comes to transgender individuals, it's a different issue. Some people are born with female chromosomes, hormones, and internal organs, but as they reach adolescence, they feel they are trapped in the wrong body and express a desire to live as the opposite gender. This is called being transgender. In other words, intersex people face a physical challenge, while transgender individuals experience a psychological one.

Question 2: Why are we discussing this?

Our world has changed drastically. We live in the time of the Dajjal, the Antichrist, a period of great trials and mischief, as prophesied by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has also repeatedly warned us about the challenges of this time. Our children face difficult questions and situations at school, many of which they don't even share with us at home.

The largest gender identity clinic in London has seen a 3,000% increase in referrals over the past decade, showing that this issue is real and growing. Our parents need answers, and our children need guidance—that is why we are discussing it here.

Question 3: What does Islamic guidance say? Is it permissible to change one's gender?

The answer is no. Islam teaches that Allah has created males and females, and the Holy Qur'an says, "And by the creation of male and female" (Surah Al-Layl, 92:3). Every one of us exists because our parents lived this biological reality, not because of any social construct. The Qur'an repeatedly affirms this fact over 20 times.

The desire to change one's gender, according to the Qur'an, is a temptation from Satan. Allah warns, "Surely I will excite in them vain desires, and surely I will incite them, and they will alter Allah's creation" (Surah An-Nisa, 4:119). Isn't that exactly what's happening today—altering Allah's creation?

Out of compassion, Islam seeks to protect humanity from these dangers. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Cursed are those men who imitate women and those women who imitate men."

Question 4: Is Islam transphobic?

At this point, some might ask whether Islam is transphobic. I want to address this directly: Islam is not transphobic. When we study the life of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) or the Rightly Guided Caliphs, we do not find any instances where someone was punished for being transgender or intersex. In fact, discrimination against transgender individuals, as well as the criminalization of LGBTQ people, was largely introduced by British colonial laws, not Islam.

We must not allow others to project their fears or biases onto us. Still, I wasn't satisfied with just this claim, so I tested it. I asked groups of families, wherever I traveled, a hypothetical question: "If you were present in a situation where you had to choose between joining the attackers or the defenders,

which side would you choose?" Nearly 90% of people, young and old, said they would choose to defend, even at the risk of their own lives.

When I asked why, one of the most profound responses came from a 10-year-old boy, who said, “Because Allah says in the Holy Qur’an, ‘Whoever saves one life, it is as if they have saved all of humanity’” (Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:32). This is the merciful teaching of Islam.

As for the other 10% who said they couldn’t decide, I simply appreciated their honesty and prayed for them. Some people may need more time to understand and find courage, and that’s okay.

Question 5: Why can't we just let people be happy? What's the harm if someone changes their gender?

This is a question that comes up often, especially from young people. "Why can't we just let people be happy? What's the harm?" Giving in to temptations may seem like the path to happiness, but in reality, it often leads to regret. There are many stories that serve as cautionary tales. If you search “detransitioning” on YouTube, you’ll find many heartbreaking accounts of individuals who regret undergoing gender transitions. Many transgender individuals experience anxiety, depression, broken relationships, and difficulties in socialization.

Studies show that life can be harsh for people who undergo gender change surgeries. In fact, one study found that the risk of suicide is 19 times higher among those who have had gender-affirming surgeries compared to the general population. This is a serious battle, and we must not think that there is no harm in it.

Question 6: Isn't the science clear? Don't people with gender dysphoria feel better after transitioning?

The science on this issue is far from settled. For 20 years, we were told that there was a “gay gene,” which supposedly explained why some people have certain sexual orientations. However, in 2019, the largest study of its kind debunked that claim. It found that sexual orientation is a complex phenomenon involving multiple genes and social factors, not just a single genetic cause.

Similarly, when it comes to transgender individuals, it’s too early to make definitive conclusions. Many people who undergo gender-affirming surgeries do not feel better afterward. One study followed 237 individuals who had medical, surgical, or social treatments to change their gender. Within four years, all of them had reverted to their biological gender. Of those, 70% said they

realized that their depression or anxiety was the real issue—not their gender. So no, the science is not clear on this matter.

Question 7: Why does Islam take such a strong position on gender identity?

Another common question is why Islam takes such a firm stance on this issue. Some people argue that since the brain can't be changed, why not let people do what they feel is right? However, research suggests that while the brain does influence habits, habits can also reshape the brain.

One fascinating study examined the brains of London taxi drivers, who constantly navigate complex city streets. It was found that the part of their brain responsible for navigation—the posterior hippocampus—was significantly larger than average. After retirement, their hippocampus returned to its normal size. This shows that, while habits can drive brain changes, those changes can also be reversed. So yes, change is possible, even in the brain.

Question 8: I'm a teenager having doubts about my gender identity. What should I do?

This is a real struggle, and I cannot imagine how difficult it must be. But please know that what you're going through may be a phase. Studies show that 95-96% of people who experience doubts about their gender during their teenage years eventually settle into the gender they were born with by the time they reach 25 years of age. It's a period of immense growth, and with the right support, many people come through it.

During this time, it's important to remain compassionate—towards yourself and others. Speak to your parents without fear, knowing that they love you and will work with you. But you also need to work with them. Pray regularly and ask Allah for guidance. Limit your social media use, as studies show that teens who spend more than three hours a day on social media have double the risk of developing anxiety or depression. Also, 46% of teens report that social media makes them feel worse about their body image. Most importantly, avoid making any irreversible decisions until you are at least 25, when your brain has fully matured.

Question 9: Can cutting back on social media help? Where's the proof?

While social media doesn't directly cause gender dysphoria, it can certainly amplify the struggle. I once heard about a mother in California whose seventh-grade daughter suddenly expressed a desire to become a boy. The trigger was a sex education class in school. This mother, who had a loving relationship with her daughter, decided to take away her phone, limit social media, cut ties with bad

influences, and change her daughter's school. Over time—about a year and a half—the same girl returned to identifying with her biological gender. Today, that mother runs a website to educate other parents.

However, I must caution that you shouldn't take this approach without first building a strong relationship with your children. The key is compassion and understanding, not force.

Question 10: Why is there so much confusion around this issue?

Many people feel overwhelmed by the information surrounding gender identity. This confusion, I believe, is a result of the schemes of the Dajjal, as explained in Islamic eschatology. The Dajjal's tool is deception, presenting one thing on the surface while hiding another truth underneath. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that the Dajjal's paradise will actually be a hell, and his hell will appear as paradise. It's a powerful metaphor for the times we live in—what seems appealing and liberating may, in fact, be harmful in the long run.

Question 11: Is there an agenda being pushed on us?

This is a sentiment I've heard repeatedly. People tell me that they feel like an agenda is being forced upon them: pride flags everywhere, the pressure to use pronouns, and even having trans teachers influencing students. Some say it makes them feel abnormal. I hear you, and you're not alone in this observation.

Indeed, there is a clear direction in society that challenges Islamic values. But remember what Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: "O you who believe! Be mindful of your own selves. He who goes astray cannot harm you when you are rightly guided" (Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:105). We have to live among those who disagree with us, but we fight these challenges with prayers, grace, and inner strength—not with hatred or name-calling. The Holy Qur'an describes the servants of Allah as those who, when they encounter indecency, pass by with grace (Surah Al-Furqan, 25:63).

Focus on strengthening your own identity and your connection to Allah. No one is stopping you from becoming a stronger, better Muslim. Work on what is within your control and let your faith guide you through these challenging times.

Question 12: We are parents of young children—what should we change?

The most important thing you can do is spend time with your children. Just yesterday, I was discussing gender identity with four boys, probably sitting among us today, and I asked them if it

makes a difference whether a child comes from a healthy or unhealthy household. These 12-year-olds unanimously said, "Absolutely, it makes a difference." I was intrigued, so I asked them, "What do you mean by a healthy household?"

They responded wisely for their age: *"It matters if the parents pray Salah and read the Qur'an. It matters if the parents have a loving relationship. It matters if they take their kids to classes and care about their faith sincerely."* One of them added, *"If they only do it for looks, then it's all fake."*

I was proud and embarrassed at the same time. Here were kids repeating precisely what our Khalifa has been saying for years! A healthy household is not just about appearances, but about sincere devotion to faith, love, and care.

Question 13: But my children are just 3 or 4 years old—why should I worry so early?

It's important to start early because **neuroplasticity**—the brain's ability to change—is highest in the first five years of life. Many fathers may not know that during the first three years of a child's life, they are forming **one million neural connections every second**. And mothers may not realize that even toddlers with smartphones are exposed to **over 250 LGBT characters** in cartoons.

While you may be taking a break, the world is not. That's why it's crucial to start early and spend time with your children. The Dajjal (Antichrist), as warned in Islamic eschatology, is constantly influencing the world, and if you don't engage with your children, others will.

Question 14: I feel like my children will tell me everything—should I still be worried?

This is a key instruction from Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba)—**befriend your children**. Many parents feel confident that their kids will tell them everything. But we wanted to test this, so we conducted an anonymous survey with over 1,000 Ahmadi parents in the U.S. We asked, "If your child made a moral mistake, would they tell you without fear?" A staggering **83% of parents** believed their children would tell them.

We then spot-checked with children, and the results were very different. Only **10-20% of children** said they would feel comfortable telling their parents. Why? They cited **fear of negative reactions, retaliation, or rejection**. This shows there is a significant gap between what parents believe and what children feel.

Question 15: Why not reject children who stray from righteousness? Wouldn't it discipline them?

Some may feel that rejecting or disowning a child who makes a mistake is justified. But ask yourself, have you ever known anyone who reformed after being thrown out of their home? Islam teaches that we can hate the **act**, but we must not hate the **person**. Hazrat Masih Maud (as) emphasized that a child should feel concerned about a parent's disappointment, but they should **never fear rejection**.

This doesn't mean we compromise on our faith—it means we **reform through role modeling and prayer**. Many of us are standing here today because of the Tahajjud (late-night) prayers of our parents. As Hazrat Masih Maud (as) prayed: *"O my Lord, manifest success upon their foreheads and shield their abodes from the deception of the Dajjal."* We must pray for our children and support them.

Question 16: The Dajjal whispers, "Why can't Ahmadis get with the times? Why not embrace modern ideas?"

Yes, this is a common whisper from the Dajjal. We've seen how Christianity has "adapted" to modern values—allowing practices like drinking, dating, and children born out of wedlock—and the results have been disastrous. Today, **50% of children** in Christian communities are born outside of marriage, and church attendance has plummeted.

Ross Douthat, a conservative columnist for The New York Times, warns that if Christianity continues down this path of endless change, it will "change and die." He wants Christianity to stand firm in its values. Islam, similarly, is not about blindly adopting trends. We have something pure, something tested, something worth **defending**. **Changing gold into copper is not progress—it's regression**.

Question 17: Why move to the West if you don't want to change?

Some may wonder, "If you didn't want to change, why did you come to the West?" The answer lies in the wisdom of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra), who sent missionaries to the West with the advice to **be like a chemist who studies poison but does not consume it**.

Western society offers many benefits, like **religious freedom**, which often exceeds that in so-called Muslim countries. But we are not here to consume the cultural poison that conflicts with our faith. We are here to maintain our Islamic identity while appreciating the positive aspects of the society we live in.

Question 18: What if the Dajjal threatens us with cancellation?

In today's world, the threat of "cancellation" looms large. If you stand by your faith, people might gather against you, trying to shame or silence you. But this is nothing new. As Allah says in Surah Al-Imran (3:173): *"Those to whom people said, 'The people have gathered against you, so fear them,' but it only increased them in faith, and they said, 'Sufficient for us is Allah, and He is the best disposer of affairs.'"*

We stand firm in our faith without apology or fear. The truth is, if you've never been "canceled," perhaps you haven't spoken enough truth yet.

The Hardest Questions: Reflecting on Obedience and Change

Question 19: Parents often complain that their children don't listen—are we as adults listening?

Let me bring this closer to home. Parents usually say, *"Our children don't listen, they're not obedient."* But here's a tough question: **Do we, as adults, listen to our spiritual father? Do we truly listen to the guidance of Khalifatul Masih?** If we were listening to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba), then our homes would look very different.

There's something important I need to share about those **10%**—the 10% of children who said they didn't have the courage to stand up for their beliefs, specifically about transgender issues. One of those boys went home, researched, and the next day sent me a long message. He said, *"I want to change my answer because Islam requires me to stand up for my beliefs."* That young boy reflected on his stance, sought knowledge, and came back with conviction. **Our children are willing to change**. They have the courage to admit they were wrong and correct their course. The lesson here is powerful: the problem is not entirely with our children—it's also with us, the adults.

When our children are educated, they are willing to change. But **we, as adults, resist change**, even after 20 years of Bai'at (initiation). My question is, do we really listen to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih? If we are expecting obedience from our children, **are we demonstrating obedience ourselves?** Does it make sense to demand obedience from them if we are not being obedient ourselves? Or are we simply feeding our own egos?

If we were truly listening to our beloved Huzoor (aba), every household would have established **congregational Salat** (prayers). We would be offering Tahajjud (pre-dawn prayers). Husbands and wives would exercise patience and tolerance towards each other, controlling their egos and tempers. **We would all be willing to change**.

If you're doing these things, **Alhamdulillah** (praise be to Allah). But if not, how can we blame the West for taking away our children when we haven't built the foundation within our own homes? Our children may work at Burger King or eat at McDonald's, but we can't just blame those establishments. We need to focus on **regaining our spiritual quality** instead of complaining about external influences.

For **21 years**, Huzoor (aba) has been advising us that **change begins from within**. We cannot selectively quote the Qur'an on issues of gender or morality when it suits us and ignore it in other areas of our lives. This shouldn't just be the battle of one child sitting here, possibly afraid to share something with their parents—this is a battle for **all of us**. Parents and children alike need to be united in this struggle for righteousness.

If you want to understand the full depth of this topic, I encourage you to watch the **July 27th, 2024, address** of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih at Jalsa Salana UK. His guidance is the key to understanding the purpose of our **Bai'at**, which is to bring about an **extraordinary righteous transformation** in ourselves.

How do we empower our children spiritually?

Let me leave you with a **tip**. Since we've established that our children are more willing to change, how do we give them **spiritual wings**? **Empower your children** by instructing them: *"If you ever see a divergence between my actions and the guidance of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih, you must follow Khalifatul Masih. And I will not consider that disobedience."* Teach them that **following the Khalifa** is always the priority, even above parents when it comes to matters of faith.

This way, your children will have the courage to make the right decisions, even when you, as a parent, may falter. **Empower them to stay connected to the Khalifa**, and they will have the wings to soar spiritually.

Question 20: Imagine if we did that—what would the future look like?

The future would be extraordinary. We would transform ourselves, and in doing so, we would transform our children, our beliefs, and our communities. Our homes would be filled with peace, and our hearts with the light of faith. As the Promised Messiah (as) has beautifully said, *"When a person becomes new through their spiritual transformation, Allah becomes a new God for them."*

There would be no fear of what the world is doing around us, for we would be firmly grounded in our faith. In time, the truth of Islam will prevail, as the Promised Messiah (as) has assured us.

A Final Thought: A Congratulations

Let us leave you with the words of the Promised Messiah (as): *"Unfortunate are those who battle with God for the sake of their own souls, but blessed are those who wage a battle with their inner selves for the sake of God."* Let's all aim to be among those blessed individuals who strive for self-reformation for the sake of Allah.