

## IDEAS FOR SEX EDUCATION

We hope both new and experienced teachers may find inspiration in our ideas bank. You may use our material free of charge and copy our suggestions. If you would like to feedback on your experiences of using the material, or have ideas you would like to share with us, please contact us!

## CONSIDERATIONS

Obviously teachers will focus on what's appropriate for the stage of development of different age pupils. Here we concentrate on the age group who are entering puberty (predominantly Key Stage 3, 11-14 year-olds), as well as those who (mostly) will have already experienced some of the significant physical and emotional changes that mark the start of growing into an adult (Key Stage 4, 14-16 year-olds).

Some children will have parents who prepare their children by talking openly about what to expect during puberty, and who are also happy to discuss any concerns their child has. However, some parents are uncomfortable about or delay discussing the subject with their offspring, are uncertain they have all the facts straight, or are delighted that schools take over or complement the home teaching. It cannot be ignored that today's teenagers are also likely to be taking in information and attitudes from surfing the internet, watching TV dramas, and browsing printed media. Some of the latter may lead to feelings of anxiety about their bodies and their sexuality.

Of particular concern is the amount of porn reported to be watched by teenagers, which can leave them unsure about the reality of sexual relationships and expectations placed on them.

The law on what's compulsory teaching about puberty, sex and related issues is different for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Anatomical and scientific facts are usually compulsory, but for some lessons with what might be considered a moral framework parents may be able to withdraw their children from the classes. Full information on the legal framework for each country is available at [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk) (click through to 'professionals' and 'factsheets'). All schools should make available to parents the content of their SRE (Sexual and Relationship Education).

## TEACHING

Everyone is interested in their own body's development and that of the opposite sex. So, it is our opinion that facts about the changes to expect in female and male anatomy can be given to whole classes, even if that's a mix of boys and girls. However, as girls are often more advanced in starting puberty than boys some teachers may decide to opt for an all-girl group at first, to discuss issues such as menstruation in a less embarrassed atmosphere. The information can be repeated later to a mixed group.

Almost inevitably the subject of physical changes associated with puberty, or anything to do with sex, can set off some giggling in a class. That's likely to be due to nervous embarrassment, though you can turn it into a learning experience. If the boys laugh at something that either you (as the teacher), or the girls say, get the girls to analyse the boys' reaction. If the girls giggle and suggest they think the boys are childish, stupid, weird, or 'perverts', ask the boys to analyse why they think girls have that perception of them.

It's important for teachers to think in advance about what kind of role to have in the discussions that will surely arise. Do you want to influence students' behaviour and attitudes by participating in the discussions and offering perhaps more nuanced views than the 'black and white' attitudes they may at first present? Or do you want to put more emphasis on giving students factual insight and knowledge so that they will look after themselves and make their own choices?

The more active students are in class, the more nuanced the teaching. For some subjects, starting with small discussion groups may be feel less intimidating to some students, and these groups can then report back to the whole class.

Asking the students to evaluate the lessons may help assess the existing knowledge of the group and where to pitch future discussions.

### BODY AND PUBERTY:

The aim is for pre-pubescent girls and boys to gain an understanding of how their bodies will look and behave when they are in puberty, and for them to know and trust their own bodies.

- You might start by asking the class for all the words they know for genitals. Explain to them and agree which words are acceptable for use in school.
- Ask what they know about the changes that affect girls' and boys' bodies at puberty, as this can both help draw out the facts along with any misconceptions that need correcting. Information on all aspects of menstruation, aimed specifically at girls who are just about to or who have entered puberty is available on this website at [www.bodyform.co.uk](http://www.bodyform.co.uk) Please feel free to use that information.
- Give students a picture of a man and a woman and ask them to plot the male and female genitals.
- Using materials such as problem pages and features from teenage magazines, or playing a recording of a popular TV drama aimed at this age group can be a useful way to begin discussions.

### RELATIONSHIPS AND FEELINGS:

It's our experience that students get more out of lessons when they revolve around discussing emotions, relationships and thoughts about the opposite sex.

This is where it can become especially valuable to start with five-minute discussions in small groups that have one topic each to discuss and then bring back to the whole class to discuss. It may be advantageous to start by dividing into separate gender groups, as students may feel more at ease airing their thoughts with the same sex before sharing them with the whole group.

A few suggested subject areas that might provoke useful discussion include:

- How can you tell if someone likes you?
- Do boys and girls show love in different ways?
- Should parents have a say over who you want to see as friends, or as boyfriends or girlfriends?
- What do girls tend to like in boys?
- What do boys tend to like in girls?
- Is there an age by which people know if they fancy people of the opposite sex, the same sex, or both?
- Can the changes going on in the body during puberty be unsettling, exciting, worrying – add anything else you feel they can be.
- How do you think it would feel to be the first person in a group to go through puberty changes such as (for girls) starting to develop breasts, or (for boys) having a voice that begins to drop or starting to develop facial hair?
- How do you think it would feel to be the last in a group to show obvious signs of puberty?
- What would you say would be an ideal first date?
- Are boys or girls more likely to brag about sexual experience? And can such boasting be believed?
- If someone says they wish to remain a virgin, will this stop them having loving relationships with the opposite sex?
- Is sex the same thing as love?
- Do boys and girls view relationships differently?
- Is dumping by text a good way to end a relationship?
- Is it okay to date a good friend's 'ex'?
- Can girls get pregnant the first time they have sex?
- Can a boy tell if a girl is on her period?
- Can you tell if someone has an STI (sexually transmitted infection)?

One way of eliciting questions that people in the group may be too embarrassed to say out loud is to pass round a box where everyone should put in one question – anonymously – and then go through those with the group.

The discussions may lead to disagreements because of the different maturity levels, opinions, attitudes, cultural or religious backgrounds, and some prejudices. It can be helpful to ask people to explain their stance and justify it – even if most of the group don't agree with it.

Using news reports or fictional stories can also trigger discussions. There may be a news story on 'date rape' for instance – what does the group feel about that? Or a woman 'crying rape' and that turning out to be a malicious lie. Or perhaps even a story of a relationship between a teacher and a pupil – what do they think about that, and why are such relationships, along with those between, say, doctor and patient outlawed?

Ask them to analyse popular dramas/soaps. Questions that may arise could include:

- Why is a girl/woman viewed as cheap if she has a series of boyfriends quite quickly?
- Would a boy/man in similar situations also be seen as cheap?
- Are gay and lesbian relationships treated like any other relationship on television?
- Could you trust someone who you knew had cheated before?
- What mistakes can step parents make?
- What do you think about marriage?

With older pupils subjects for discussion could include:

- Are there differences between how boys and girls fall in love?
- How can you show that you are in love?
- What is the difference between being in love and "making out"?
- At what age does it become legal to have sex if you wish to?
- What are the signals from a partner that you can interpret as it being okay to go further?
- Is masturbation normal?
- Would you sort out contraception before having sex for the first time?
- Would you talk to a parent about contraception, or tell them that things were getting that serious with a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- How do you say 'no' to unwanted sexual advances?
- What are your expectations for the first time you have sex?
- How much do friends' opinions matter about the boy/ girl you're in love with?
- What would you do if you fell for a friend's boyfriend / girlfriend?
- Is there a good way to end a relationship?

The complexities of emotions in relationships are often what preoccupy not just this age group, but many much older. Topics that can be useful for discussion here include:

- What is jealousy?
- What happens in a relationship if one partner is very jealous?
- Is it okay to date more than one person at the same time?
- If someone is two-timing, should they tell their boyfriend / girlfriend?
- Some sexual relationships are illegal – can you say what those are?
- If someone is violent in a relationship, who's to blame?
- Is it okay to flirt?
- Are arguments always a bad thing?

Specific subject areas that involve fact, legal implications, and emotional discussion, and could be areas for at least one lesson each include:

### CONTRACEPTION

- Do you know where you can get contraception?
- Name as many different types of contraception that you can think of.
- Which are the most effective contraceptives?
- Is there such a thing as a safe time to have sex?
- Can you get condoms free – if so where?

- Where can people get information, advice and, if necessary, supplies of contraceptives?
- Can young people get contraception from a doctor/clinic, even if they are under the age of consent?
- How do you suggest to a partner that you want/need to use condoms?
- What can you do if a condom breaks during love making?
- What is the “morning after pill”?
- Is it better to use both condoms and the pill to be 100% sure?
- Are there reasons a girl might take the pill, other than contraception?
- Who in a couple should be responsible for contraception – the boy, the girl, or both?

## PREGNANCY

- How do you tell if a girl's pregnant?
- What would you do if you or a partner became pregnant?
- Would you know where to seek advice for coping with an unintended pregnancy?
- If someone is pregnant, what are their options?
- What do you know, or think about adoption?
- What do you think about teenagers becoming parents?
- Do you think there's an ideal time to become a parent – physically and/or emotionally?

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

- Do sexually transmitted diseases always have symptoms?
- What, if any, can be symptoms of STIs in boys/men
- What, if any, can be symptoms of STIs in girls/women?
- Do people have to be promiscuous to catch an STI?
- What is safer sex?
- Who can people go to for diagnosis/treatment if they suspect they have a sexually transmitted disease?

## HOMOSEXUALITY

- With 100 people in a room, how many people do you think would be gay?
- Is it obvious if someone is gay?
- Is the age of consent in Britain the same for heterosexuals and homosexuals?
- If someone is gay, should they tell others? If so, why and how?
- Where can gay men and lesbians get help and support, including over issues about how to tell their parents?

## FANTASIES AND DREAMS

- Is it normal to watch porn?
- Is porn a realistic portrayal of what you can expect from sex?
- Do boys and girls think differently about porn?
- Can watching porn have a bad effect on the viewer's self image?
- Can porn be addictive? Whether your answer is yes or no, why do you think that is?
- Is it normal to play out sexual fantasies with a partner?
- Is it okay for one partner to demand the other fulfils their sexual fantasies?
- Is it normal to have sex toys?

## SEXUAL ABUSE

- How would you define sexual abuse?
- What would you do if a friend confided that she/he has been sexually abused?
- How can young people protect themselves from being 'groomed' by potential abusers on internet chat rooms?
- Are girls or boys more at risk of sexual abuse as children?
- Are girls who go out looking sexy 'asking for trouble'?
- Does a boy/man's health suffer if he's aroused but doesn't have sex?
- Who can help someone who has been sexually abused?

**[www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk) –**

for up-to-date information on contraception and clinic services

**[www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk) –**

specialists in advising/supporting young people with anything related to sexual health

**[www.playingsafely.co.uk](http://www.playingsafely.co.uk) –**

NHS site on sexual health, aimed at young people

**[www.lgls.org.uk](http://www.lgls.org.uk) –**

London Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, offers support and advice to young people questioning their sexuality

**[www.itsnotyourfault.org](http://www.itsnotyourfault.org) –**

website from National Children's Homes for young people dealing with family break up

**[www.there4me.org.uk](http://www.there4me.org.uk) –**

For 12-16 year-olds living in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands looking for help or advice with any problems

**[www.youthinformation.com](http://www.youthinformation.com) –**

National Youth Agency offers information on many topics for young people