



Whitehall Junior School

RHSE Parent Tips

How can I talk to my child about relationships, puberty and human reproduction?

What children learn at school, children can continue to learn from you at home. For some parents/carers, it can feel totally natural to discuss relationships, puberty and human reproduction with their child, while for others it can seem awkward and difficult. Either way, it is important to remember these key points:

- We all want children to feel safe and to be happy and healthy
- We need to consider their needs
- We need to normalise talking about relationships, puberty and human reproduction so taboos don't need to exist
- We might need to challenge our own ways of thinking
- We have choices: we can avoid it or we can communicate openly and honestly with children – they need us!

Here are some tips for talking to your child:

• **Be honest:** if you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and say so. Tell your child that you will need to find out and that you will get back to them with more soon.

• **Remember that children are curious and want to know and understand.** We tend to place our adult perspective on children's questions and comments, allowing our brains to fill up with all the possible horrors that an innocent question could be about, when actually a child just wants (and needs) a very simple, matter-of-fact answer. This answer will not involve an 'adult' understanding of a topic – it needs to be at a child's level, with opportunity given for the child to be able to ask further questions if needed. Give yourself time to respond by asking something like, "What do you think that means?" or "Why do you ask?"

• **Keep lines of communication open:** having an open and honest relationship with your child can really help make conversations easier, so make sure that you are always willing to talk when your child needs you; if you can't, explain why and find another time when it is more mutually convenient.

• **Use correct terminology:** it helps that children aren't confused by hints, euphemisms and innuendo; use correct terminology whenever you can, especially for body parts. This is hugely important for safeguarding too.

• **Respond to what children say they need:** bear in mind that children's lives today are very different from even five years ago. Therefore, the education they receive needs to reflect this. Research shows us time and time again that children want and need RHSE that is age- and stage-appropriate, that teaches them about relationships and emotions, and that is returned to consistently throughout their education. We may feel that they know too much, when

actually ignorance is the enemy of innocence: we believe effective RHSE delays sexual activity, ensures children are safer and empowers them to make their own healthy choices.

- **Answer questions and don't be afraid to say:** "I really don't know – let's work it out or look it up together." Have a phrase for awkward moments, such as: 'That's a good question, and let's talk about it once we get home' (then make sure you do!).

- **Always respond:** if you don't, she or he may think it is wrong to talk to you about relationships, puberty or human reproduction and as a result you may find your child clams up when you raise the subject.

- **If it all feels too personal,** try talking about people in books, films and favourite television programmes.

- **Listen rather than judge.** Try asking them what they think.

- **Enjoy it.** Laugh with each other.

- **Work in partnership with the school.**

- Most parents/carers want their children to be healthy and happy.

Schools do too... and high quality RHSE is part of this.