

**Consultation on, the revised *Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools* teaching guidance**

**RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM**

Please note, this form **MUST** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as:

- Individual  
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Full Name or Organisation's Name

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The Scottish Government requires your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

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**Information for Organisations.**

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the Organisation Name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your Organisation Name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes  
 No

Dear Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills,

I write in response to the **Consultation on, the revised *Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools* teaching guidance.**

Question 1: Introduction

Is the draft introduction clear on the status and application of the guidance? Are there further additions required?

The introduction offers an overview of some of the developments in education since 2014 with the suggestion that these are the reasons why the 2014 iteration of guidance requires to be refreshed. However, there is no explanation or justification for why the 2023 version should have departed so far from the previous version, why sections should be deleted and why disproportionate emphasis should be given to certain aspects.

The 2014 guidance could have been adapted and enhanced to include necessary developments while maintaining the previous content and ensuring that it remained high level guidance.

Question 6: Faith, belief and RSHP education

Is the guidance sufficiently clear in ensuring faith and belief is accurately captured in RSHP education?

No.

**As a member of the Catholic Education Community, I have grave concerns that the paragraphs dedicated to Denominational Education (paragraphs 38 – 41) in the 2014 iteration of guidance have been deleted.**

**I ask that these be fully reinstated.**

**In addition, I request that Scottish Government reiterates their support for Denominational Education and that the Religious Authorities with a role in denominational education, in our context the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, continue to have the right to provide guidance on RSHP for their schools and that Scottish Government Guidance is complementary to that of the Religious Authority – not as 4.11 states that the guidance from religious authorities is 'additional and complementary'.**

It is striking that the term Catholic School is not used within this document and the phrase Denominational schools only once.

This section of the document gives no cognisance to the fact that approximately 20% of the school estate in Scotland is formed of Catholic schools, chosen by parents and families, of all faiths and none. A distinction must be made between schools with a distinctive faith character (i.e. denominational schools) and children raised in a religion or with religious belief.

A separate section should therefore be included within the main text of the document to reflect the place of denominational schools within the state system – as per the RSHP conduct paper of 2014. The current draft does not fully explain the legal protection and right of denominational schools, nor does it fully express the role of the denominational body in whose interest the school is managed.

As it is recognised that schools with a religious character have a distinctive approach across the **whole** school and in all areas of the curriculum, this should be reflected in this guidance paper.

Faith and belief influence all aspects of teaching and learning, and are not limited, for example, to the Catholic children and families in a Catholic school, but are the foundation for the mission, aims and values for the whole school community, including those families, not of the Catholic tradition who actively choose Catholic education. (The same would be true for those who choose a Jewish or Episcopalian school).

This distinctive nature is recognised in the Equality Act and was coherently presented in the denominational section of the current conduct paper and in particular through paragraphs 39 and 41.

In addition – in terms of this section relating to faith and belief:

The national census data from 2011 shows that 56% of Scottish people belong to a faith. Relationships and sexual behaviour are part of the key teachings of all of the major world religions, and particularly so for the 5 of the largest in Scotland (Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and Judaism).

It may be helpful to have an indication about what each Religion teaches on sexual relationships, so as to better equip teachers in their preparation for lessons, and to ensure that all pupils are fully included in learning.

[https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/censusresults/release2a/rel2A\\_Religion\\_detailed\\_Scotland.pdf](https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/censusresults/release2a/rel2A_Religion_detailed_Scotland.pdf)

Religiously aggravated hate crime remains a source of concern within Scotland. Catholics remain disproportionately likely to suffer such hate crimes." (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/religiously-aggravated-offending-scotland-2017-18/>).

Families, young people, schools and parishes, continue to raise concern regarding the intolerance and prejudice shown to young people who openly practice their faith and maintain the teachings of their religion on relationships and life issues. For example, this has been seen at universities where young people who support the right to life of unborn children have been discriminated against, Muslim families have raised concern that their religious beliefs are being contradicted in RSHP lessons and Christian families are anxious that matters relating to sexual health and sexuality are being taught at too early an age.

Christian teachers have noted that they feel increasingly coerced to teach against their conscience in matters relating to sexual relationships, and they report that pupils are hiding their faith belief in school for fear of bullying and intimidation.

#### Protection of Teachers with Religious Belief:

The previous iteration of the Guidance mentioned specifically the process through which teachers, who felt unable to teach aspects of RSHP due to their religious belief, could raise concerns. It is significant that this has been removed and suggests that Scottish Government has no concern for the beliefs of those tasked with delivering RSHP.

The inclusion of Whole School Guidance tables and links for websites from this point on in the Guidance is unhelpful. It clutters the guidance and suggests that these sites are being promoted or endorsed by Scottish Government. Scottish Government could not have facts checked each of these sites and cannot know what content may be added to them in the future.

It is unclear which parts of this document are the actual guidance and which parts are embedded appendices, for reference only. The previous iteration of guidance offered clear, high level guidance enabling local authorities and schools to work towards policy and practice.

Name

Signature