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**Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP**  
Minister of State for School Standards

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Sir Mark Hendrick MP  
By email: [mark.hendrick.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:mark.hendrick.mp@parliament.uk)

19 March 2019

*Dear Mark*

Thank you for your email of 6 March, addressed to the Secretary of State, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, \_\_\_\_\_, regarding relationships and sex education (RSE). I am replying as the Minister of State for School Standards.

The Government has responded to the petition to which \_\_\_\_\_ refers. The response provides a summary of our approach, and is available at: [tinyurl.com/YazeL38n](http://tinyurl.com/YazeL38n).

From September 2020, relationships education will be made compulsory in all primary schools, RSE compulsory in all secondary schools, and health education compulsory for all state funded primary and secondary schools. This requirement will replace the current obligation for maintained secondary schools, and the recommendation for other schools, to teach sex and relationships education and to have regard to the Sex and Relationship Education guidance, published in 2000. While many schools are already teaching these subjects very well, it is important that we ensure improved quality and universal coverage for all pupils.

We have been clear that the compulsory subject content must be age appropriate. It must be taught sensitively and inclusively, with respect for the backgrounds and beliefs of pupils and parents while providing pupils with the knowledge and understanding they need to grow into well rounded individuals who are able to deal with the challenges of the modern world. All schools will be required to take into account the age and religious backgrounds of their pupils when teaching relationships education and RSE. Teaching should, however, be inclusive and all young people should feel that the content covered is relevant to them.

Relationships education will focus on different types of respectful relationships including friendships and family relationships, and will also cover safety, including in the online world. All teaching will be age appropriate.

The Government recognises that parents are the primary educators of their children. Schools should complement and reinforce this role. As set out in draft regulations, we are proposing that schools will be required to consult with parents when designing and delivering relationships education and RSE. Schools should engage proactively with parents to set out how and when they plan to cover topics included in the subjects so that parents can understand what is going to be taught. If a primary school chooses to teach sex education, they will be required to publish a policy and to discuss with parents whether or not they wish to withdraw their child.

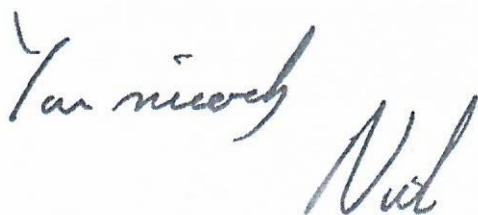
Parents will have a right to request that their child be withdrawn from the sex education element of RSE. As set out in the draft guidance, this request should be granted unless the head teacher, taking into account any considerations about the pupil and their circumstances, decides otherwise. The draft guidance states that, except in exceptional circumstances, the school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, until three terms before the child turns 16 years of age. There will be no right to withdraw from relationships education and, as is the case currently, there is no right of withdrawal from sex education delivered as part of the National Curriculum for science.

With regard to the teaching of LGBT related topics, RSE is an evolving and vital area of education and we need to ensure it is appropriate for children growing up in modern Britain. We expect all schools to ensure that young people, whatever their developing sexuality or identity, feel that RSE meets their needs. Schools should also adhere to their duty under the Equality Act 2010, and to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

These subjects represent a significant opportunity to help children and young people to develop, in order to become successful and happy adults who make a meaningful contribution to our society.

We have now published the Government response to the consultation and revised draft guidance. The regulations will be laid before Parliament for a full debate and vote. More information, including the draft guidance and regulations, is available at: [tinyurl.com/Y7ke6Pr8](http://tinyurl.com/Y7ke6Pr8).

With best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne Williams', with a stylized flourish below it.