



Responding to Children's Questions in PSHE and RSE at Graveney Primary School

Our approach

At Graveney Primary School, we recognise that children will naturally have questions about themselves, their relationships, their bodies, growing up, health, emotions and the wider world.

PSHE and RSE lessons provide a safe, structured and age-appropriate environment in which children can develop the knowledge, vocabulary and skills they need to understand these areas. Our curriculum follows the Kapow Primary RSE & PSHE scheme, which provides a carefully sequenced programme from Reception to Year 6.

Children are encouraged to ask questions. Questions are treated respectfully and without embarrassment, judgement or ridicule. However, staff must ensure that responses remain appropriate to the child's age and the content of the curriculum being taught.

Kapow's curriculum revisits key themes over time, allowing children's knowledge and understanding to develop progressively. Staff should therefore avoid providing information that is significantly beyond the planned learning for a particular year group unless there is a clear educational or safeguarding reason to do so.

Creating a safe environment for questions

At the beginning of PSHE and RSE learning, teachers should establish clear ground rules with pupils. These may include:

- We listen respectfully to one another.
- We do not laugh at or make fun of another person's question or response.
- We use appropriate and respectful language.
- We do not have to share personal experiences.
- We respect that people and families may be different.
- We can choose not to answer a question ourselves.
- We understand that some questions may need to be discussed privately with an adult.

Children should not be required to disclose personal or family information as part of a PSHE or RSE activity.

Where appropriate, teachers may use anonymous question boxes or similar approaches so that pupils can ask questions without feeling embarrassed.

How staff should respond to questions

When a child asks a question, staff should:

- 1) **Listen carefully and remain calm.**
- 2) **Thank the child for asking the question.**
- 3) **Consider what the child is actually asking.** Sometimes a question may have a very simple explanation.
- 4) **Give a clear, factual and age-appropriate answer.**
- 5) **Use the correct vocabulary taught within the curriculum.**
- 6) **Avoid giving unnecessary detail.**
- 7) **Check the child's understanding where appropriate.**
- 8) **Consider whether the question is relevant to the lesson or needs to be followed up separately.**
- 9) **Refer to the lesson objectives and Kapow guidance when unsure.**
- 10) **Follow safeguarding procedures if the question indicates a possible concern or disclosure.**

A useful principle is:

Answer the question that has been asked, rather than answering the question that you think the child might be asking.

If a child asks a question that cannot appropriately be answered immediately, the teacher can say:

"That's an interesting question. It's not something we are covering in today's lesson, so I would like to check the best way to answer it and come back to you."

This is preferable to either ignoring the question or providing information that is beyond the child's developmental stage or the planned curriculum.

Questions that are beyond the curriculum

Children may sometimes ask questions about topics that are not part of the current lesson or that are not appropriate for the whole class.

Teachers should not feel under pressure to answer every question immediately or in front of the class.

Where appropriate, staff may:

- Acknowledge the question.
- Explain that it is not part of today's learning.
- Provide a brief, factual response if this is appropriate.
- Arrange to speak with the child individually.
- Consult the PSHE/RSE subject leader.

- Consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) if the question raises a safeguarding concern.
- Return to the question at an appropriate point if it is relevant to future curriculum learning.

Staff should not provide personal opinions or enter into extended discussions about matters that are outside their professional role.

Questions about relationships, bodies, puberty and reproduction

Children's questions about relationships, bodies and growing up should be answered sensitively and factually.

Staff should use the terminology and level of detail appropriate to the child's age and the curriculum sequence. Kapow provides progression of knowledge and vocabulary across the year groups, helping teachers to understand what pupils are expected to encounter as they progress through the curriculum. Kapow Primary+1

Teachers should avoid:

- Laughing or appearing embarrassed by a question.
- Using euphemisms where correct terminology is being taught.
- Sharing personal experiences.
- Giving children information that is unnecessarily detailed.
- Expressing personal moral or religious opinions as though they were facts.
- Asking children to share their own experiences.
- Making assumptions about children's families, identities or experiences.

Correct anatomical vocabulary should be used where it forms part of the curriculum. This supports children's understanding, communication and safeguarding.

Questions about sex education

Relationships Education and Health Education are statutory elements of primary education. The teaching of sex education beyond the statutory content is subject to the school's policy.

Kapow's revised curriculum includes an optional Year 6 Sex Education unit. Schools decide whether to teach this unit and should set out their approach in their RSE policy, including information about parental rights of withdrawal where applicable. Kapow Primary+1

Where children ask questions about sexual reproduction or other aspects of sex education, staff should respond consistently with:

- The school's RSE policy.
- The content and sequencing of the Kapow curriculum.
- The child's age and developmental stage.
- Current statutory guidance.
- Safeguarding requirements.

Teachers should seek advice from the PSHE/RSE subject leader or DSL where they are uncertain how a question should be handled.

Unexpected or explicit questions

Children may occasionally use language or ask questions that are unexpected, explicit or inappropriate for the context.

Staff should remain calm and avoid showing shock or embarrassment.

The teacher should establish, where possible, what the child means and then decide whether the question can be answered appropriately.

For example:

Child: "What does _____ mean?"

Possible response:

"That's a word some people use for _____. In school, we use the word _____ because it is the correct/respectful term."

If the question is inappropriate for the lesson:

"That's not something we are going to discuss in this lesson. If you have a genuine question about it, you can speak to me afterwards."

If the wording or context raises concern about how the child has obtained the information, the teacher should not conduct an investigation. Instead, they should follow the school's safeguarding procedures and consult the DSL.

Questions involving personal experiences or disclosures

A question may sometimes be a disguised disclosure.

For example, a child might ask:

"What should you do if an adult touches you somewhere you don't want them to?"

Staff should respond sensitively without immediately assuming that the child is describing their own experience.

A suitable response might be:

"That's an important question. Everyone has the right to feel safe and to have their body respected. If something like that has happened to you or someone you know, you can talk to me or another trusted adult."

If a child then makes a disclosure, staff must follow the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Staff should:

- Listen.
- Remain calm.
- Take the child seriously.

- Avoid promising confidentiality.
- Avoid leading questions.
- Avoid investigating the allegation themselves.
- Record the concern accurately using the school's agreed procedure.
- Report the concern promptly to the DSL or deputy DSL.

PSHE and RSE lessons must never be used as an opportunity for staff to investigate children's personal circumstances.

Confidentiality

Children should understand that the classroom is a respectful and safe environment, but staff cannot promise absolute confidentiality.

At the start of relevant lessons, teachers should explain that:

"You can ask questions and talk to us, but if you tell an adult something that makes us worried about your safety or someone else's safety, we may need to tell another adult who can help."

This distinction is particularly important in RSE and safeguarding-related discussions.

If a child asks about their own circumstances

Children may ask questions relating to their own family, body, relationships or experiences.

Staff should acknowledge the question without requiring the child to share personal information in front of others.

For example:

"Families can be different, and there are lots of different ways that families can look. You don't need to tell us anything personal about your family."

If the question relates to a child's wellbeing or safety, staff should follow the appropriate pastoral or safeguarding procedures.

If a teacher does not know the answer

Teachers do not need to know the answer to every question.

It is acceptable and appropriate to say:

"I'm not sure of the answer to that. I don't want to give you the wrong information, so I'll check and come back to you."

The teacher should then seek advice from an appropriate source, such as:

- The relevant Kapow lesson materials and teacher guidance.
- The PSHE/RSE subject leader.
- The school's RSE policy.

- The DSL, where there may be a safeguarding issue.
- Appropriate statutory guidance or professional guidance.

Kapow provides teacher guidance and CPD to support staff with potentially sensitive content and to promote consistent approaches to teaching. Kapow Primary

Questions that are not answered in front of the class

A question should normally be moved to a private conversation when:

- It concerns a child's personal circumstances.
- It involves a potential safeguarding concern.
- It is significantly beyond the planned curriculum.
- It contains explicit or inappropriate content.
- Answering it in front of the class could embarrass or distress the child.
- It requires information that is not appropriate for the wider age group.

The teacher should explain to the child why the question is being discussed separately, rather than making the child feel that they have done something wrong.

Maintaining consistency across the school

All staff delivering PSHE and RSE should use a consistent approach.

The school should ensure that:

- Staff are familiar with the relevant Kapow units and vocabulary before teaching them.
- Sensitive content is identified in advance.
- Teachers follow the school's RSE policy.
- Staff know the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The PSHE/RSE subject leader is available for advice.
- Staff understand that children may have different levels of prior knowledge and life experience.
- Parents and carers are able to understand what is taught and when.

Kapow recommends using the curriculum progression and lesson guidance to support teachers in understanding how knowledge and vocabulary develop across year groups

Examples of appropriate responses

Child's question	Possible staff response
"Why do people have different families?"	"Families can be different in lots of ways. What makes a family important is that the people in it care for and support one another."
"Why do bodies change when you get older?"	"As people grow, their bodies naturally change. We learn about some of those changes at different points in the curriculum."
"Where do babies come from?"	"That's an important question. We learn about how babies develop and how reproduction works at an age-appropriate point in our curriculum."
"What does that word mean?"	"Let's make sure we understand what you mean by the word. We use the correct term _____ in school."
"Has that happened to you?"	"This lesson isn't about sharing our own personal experiences. We can talk about the general information we're learning."
"What if someone touches you and you don't want them to?"	"Everyone has the right to feel safe and have their body respected. If you're worried about something that has happened to you or someone else, you can talk to a trusted adult."
"I know someone who..."	"Thank you for telling me. Let's talk about that privately."

Key message for staff

The aim is **not to avoid children's questions**, but to respond to them in a way that is:

Calm

Factual

Age-appropriate

Inclusive

Curriculum-led

Safeguarding-aware

Children should leave PSHE and RSE lessons feeling that questions about their bodies, feelings, relationships and wellbeing can be discussed safely and respectfully.

At the same time, staff should remember that not every question needs an immediate or whole-class answer. The teacher's professional judgement, the Kapow curriculum sequence, the school's RSE policy and safeguarding procedures should guide the response.

Staff reminder

If in doubt: Pause → Listen → Clarify → Give an age-appropriate answer → Check the curriculum → Seek advice if needed → Follow safeguarding procedures where necessary.

The priority is always the child's safety, dignity, wellbeing and right to receive accurate, age-appropriate information.