



Bowland High

Tradition, Care and Challenge

27th April 21

Dear Parent/ Carer,

Over the next few weeks during PSHCE lessons we are planning to deliver sessions on consent, contraception and sexually transmitted infections.

You will no doubt want to be prepared to answer your child's subsequent questions or simply talk together about your child's learning, so we have put together some information regarding the teaching of the topics. If you have further questions, please contact Miss Hardisty at fhardisty@bowlandhigh.lancs.sch.uk

The set of lessons to be delivered have been produced by the leading national body for the subject under funding from the Department of Education.

Lessons cover:

Year 7

- Friendships

Year 8

- Introducing and recognising consent
- Contraception and STI's

Year 9, 10 & 11

- Contraception and STI's
- Consent and the law
- Avoiding assumptions relating to consent
- The right to withdraw consent
- Capacity to consent
- Persuasion, pressure and coercion
- Pornography, sexual images and consent
- Rape myths and victim blaming

What is consent?

Consent is agreement which is given willingly and freely without exploitation, threat or fear, and by a person who has the capacity to give their agreement. Sexual consent refers to a positive choice to take part in a sexual activity by people who understand the nature and implications of the activity they are agreeing to.

Both parties take part not because they have to, but because they want to. Consent must be free – an active, personal choice; it must not be inferred, assumed, coerced or gained by exploitation. In addition, the person giving consent must have the capacity to do so: they should be old enough, have all the information they need to make the decision, and be in a fit state to give consent (and not, for example, with their judgement impaired by alcohol or drugs).



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It is the person seeking consent who is legally and ethically responsible for ensuring that consent is given and meets these criteria, and because people may change their minds or consent to one activity but not another, the seeker of consent should not see seeking consent as a 'one-off' but rather a continuing process of making sure the other person is consenting.

The key signs of consent are that the person clearly wants to engage in the activity and actively demonstrates this verbally and/or through their body language. There should be no ambiguity or confusion about whether consent is given: 'not saying no' is not giving consent.

Both ethically and in the law, responsibility for ensuring that consent has been given lies with the person seeking consent. This means being sure that a partner is actively consenting and that none of the conditions which prevent free, informed consent (such as manipulation or exploitation) are present.

Consent will be explored in the context of pupils learning about healthy relationships and this will not be solely limited to situations of a sexual nature. For example, when looking at the definition of consent, pupils may suggest that there are times during a relationship when people do things they wouldn't necessarily want to do but choose to do for a partner or friend. This could be as simple as watching a film which a friend really wants to see. In response, teachers may highlight the idea of a healthy relationship in which both parties care.

Key concepts in a 'healthy relationship' are mutual respect, trust and reciprocity. A healthy relationship can be contrasted with an unhealthy relationship – an unequal relationship without mutuality, respect and reciprocity, where one person has more power or control and manipulates or takes advantage of the other.

Rational for teaching Consent

All young people need to know the importance of building healthy relationships and identifying those relationships that are unhealthy.

Learning about consent should begin before young people are sexually active, otherwise it is too late. As part of learning about consent, pupils learn that the law is clear that sexual activity is illegal for young people under the age of 16. We know, however, that some young people are sexually active before 16, and learning about healthy relationships is crucial to keeping them healthy and safe from abuse and exploitation. Recognising that some young people will be sexually active before the age of 16 does not equate to encouraging underage sexual activity. Furthermore, the key learning set out in this guidance – about respecting the rights of others, communication, negotiation and considering the freedom and capacity of others to make choices – is crucial in a range of situations young people will encounter in their lives.

PSHE education seeks to reinforce three points of key learning for all pupils, which reflect the law as well as basic human rights:



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- It is the person seeking consent who is responsible (ethically and legally) for ensuring that consent is given by another person, and for ensuring that that person has the freedom and capacity to give their consent.
- If consent is not clear, informed, willing and active, it must be assumed that consent has not been given. If consent is not clearly given, or is given and then subsequently retracted, this decision must always be respected. Since people can change their minds, or consent to one thing but not to something else, the seeker of consent must keep assessing whether consent is clear, informed, willing and active. Consent must be seen as an ongoing process, not a 'one-off'.
- In healthy relationships, both parties respectfully seek each other's consent and know that their decision to give or not give consent will be respected. A person is never to blame if their decision not to give consent or to withdraw consent is not respected.

If you have further questions, please contact Miss Hardisty at fhardisty@bowlandhigh.lancs.sch.uk

Best regards,

Miss F Hardisty



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