



## Pupils learn to put condoms on models of erect penises. And 'beer goggles' that blur the vision demonstrate the effect of alcohol on people's ability to use contraception

pubic hair because it lies on the pubic bone. And I could tell the boys that they need to hold their penises when they pee so that it does not go everywhere."

Such straight-talking in SRE – which starts in her school for children as young as four – has enabled pupils to make informed decisions based on facts rather than rumour, she argues.

**B**ut it took Mrs Castor almost 30 years, which included a 10-year stint as her school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) co-ordinator, to overcome her crippling embarrassment and develop effective teaching practices.

The outlook for today's NQTs who are asked to teach SRE looks no rosier.

Plans to introduce compulsory sex education lessons in secondary schools were dropped by Labour in the run-up to the election, so without any statutory requirements (see box below), NQTs are likely to be just as ill-equipped as Mrs Castor was 30 years ago.

Three-quarters of teachers have been given no training in sex education, despite nearly half having been asked to teach it, according to a survey by *The TES* in 2008. The result is an army of teachers too poorly trained to adequately equip pupils with the information they need to keep themselves safe.

A more explicit approach to risk, relationships, consent and feelings is well overdue, argues John Lloyd, policy adviser at the PSHE Association.

"Until we get a fully-trained cohort of PSHE teachers, schools are always going to have problems teaching sex and relationship education effectively," he says.

The evidence is unequivocal. More children are having underage sex in Britain than in any other country in

Europe, according to the World Health Organisation, while teenage STI rates have risen by 58 per cent in the past five years.

A multitude of socio-economic factors undoubtedly play a part, but a dearth of decent SRE does not help, according to Ofsted. A report released earlier this year by the inspectorate found that lessons about sex, relationships and health are not good enough in a quarter of schools in England. Inspectors found that teacher embarrassment and lack of knowledge were often to blame.

In the absence of formal staff training, SRE teaching ideas, resources and materials are being acquired on an ad hoc basis. Television programmes are an unlikely source. Taking tips from TV may



Dr Modgil advises on *The Sex Education Show*

sound like a last resort, but Dr Radha Modgil insists it is better than nothing.

As resident doctor on Channel 4's *The Sex Education Show* – a lively, informative series for teenagers filmed in secondary schools and aired over the summer – she was surprised by the range of pupils' knowledge. Some were incredibly clued up, while others still believed it was impossible to get pregnant if they had sex in a shower.

Cue graphic images of male and female genitalia, bringing babies into the classroom and an unflinching examination of sex, pregnancy and contraception myths.

"At the moment, pupils are caught between uncomfortable lectures in anatomy at school and explicit, misleading scenes in pornography," Dr Modgil says. "There is little that helps them navigate their relationships and feelings."

Dr Modgil agrees that a lack of training and support for teachers is a problem, but adds that teachers also fear a backlash from parents and the media over what could be construed as an inappropriate or overly sexualised syllabus.

Alarmist newspaper stories about schools teaching sex to young children can certainly deter teachers from exploring the nitty-gritty with pupils, particularly when they have to negotiate parental sensitivities about the subject.

*The Sex Education Show* originally aired at 8pm, until a hostile reaction from viewers convinced schedulers to push it back by an hour. Ironically, its new programming slot excluded a large chunk of its target audience.

However, the show was well received by teachers on the hunt for material. Dr Modgil does not expect schools to adopt the "extreme naked" tactics of the show, but hopes it may trigger innovation in SRE or at least encourage schools to adopt