Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy – Next review Sept 2027

1. Introduction

'Children and young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. In this environment, children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way' (Department for Education, Relationships, Sex and Health Education statutory guidance).

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education are compulsory in all secondary schools in England. All compulsory subject content must be age appropriate and developmentally appropriate. It must be taught sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of pupils and parents, while always aiming to give pupils the knowledge they need of the law.

Teaching will build on the knowledge acquired at primary and develop further pupils' understanding of health, with an increased focus on risk areas such as drugs and alcohol, as well as introducing knowledge about intimate relationships and sex.

RSE and Health Education are accessible to all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). High-quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised is the starting point for ensuring accessibility.

The purpose of RSE is to raise the awareness of all students of a range of related issues, with a view to preparing them for this important aspect of human life.

RSE is not dealt with in isolation. It forms an important part of our wider personal development programme, which is delivered throughout the school to all students by trained staff and enhanced by suitably vetted external speakers.

2. Statutory basis and related policies

This policy has been written in line with:

- the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019;
- the Department for Education's revised statutory guidance, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (published July 2025, in force from 1 September 2026);
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026;
- the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- the Education Act 2002 and the duty to promote the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils;

- the Ofsted education inspection framework, in particular the expectations for personal development and well-being, curriculum and teaching, inclusion and safeguarding.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety Policy, Behaviour Policy (including our approach to child-on-child abuse and sexual harassment), Anti-Bullying Policy, SEND Policy, Equality Policy, Visitors and External Speakers Policy, and the PSHE curriculum overview.

3. Aims of the policy

- To provide all students with the necessary information to understand the physical, emotional and social aspects of human sexual development.
- To provide all students with the basic understanding of human reproduction, how it occurs and the responsibilities it imparts.
- To promote an insight into the health-related issues associated with sexual activity and to encourage a responsible attitude towards the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancy.
- To foster attitudes which promote strong and positive family relationships, recognising and respecting the many different types of family, including families with single parents, same-sex parents, step-parents, kinship carers, foster carers and adoptive parents.
- To encourage a moral and fair-minded approach to a wider range of sexual issues which will increase their own sense of self-esteem and enable them to have a positive and happy acceptance of their own sexuality.
- To enable students to develop an awareness of the pressures that may be put upon them, both online and offline, and strategies to cope with these. Students will be encouraged to determine their own values within a moral framework to enable them to make informed decisions for themselves.
- To make students aware of the reasons for and the benefits to be gained from delaying sexual activity.
- To make students aware of the law relating to sexual activity, consent and online behaviour, and how they may gain access locally to confidential advice.
- To help students recognise abusive, exploitative and harmful behaviour, including online, and know how and where to report concerns and seek help, both in school and from outside agencies.

4. Curriculum content

RSE and Health Education are delivered mainly through our planned PSHE programme, supported by science, computing, physical education and religious education. Content is age-appropriate and sequenced to build knowledge and life skills over time, preparing pupils for issues they will soon face. A detailed curriculum map for each year group is available on the school website. By the end of secondary school, pupils will have been taught the statutory content set out in the 2026 guidance, including:

- **Families and relationships:** different types of committed, stable relationships and families; marriage and civil partnership; parenting; and how to recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships, including coercive control.
- **Respectful relationships, including friendships:** respect, tolerance, boundaries and consent; managing conflict; stereotypes; bullying; and recognising and challenging misogyny, including the influence of online “manosphere” and incel content.
- **Online safety and media:** online relationships; the risks of sharing personal information and images; the law on creating and sharing nude or semi-nude images; sextortion and online scams; AI-generated and deepfake images; the harmful and unrealistic portrayal of sex and relationships in pornography; and how to report concerns.
- **Being safe:** consent and how it can be withdrawn; sexual harassment and sexual violence; the illegality and dangers of strangulation and suffocation; grooming, criminal and sexual exploitation; female genital mutilation (FGM); forced marriage; virginity testing and hymenoplasty; spiking; and personal safety, including knife crime.
- **Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health:** the facts about reproductive health and fertility; contraception; pregnancy and the choices available; STIs, including HIV, and how to reduce risk; and the law relating to sexual activity.
- **Health and wellbeing:** mental wellbeing; drugs, alcohol and tobacco, including vaping; methanol poisoning; physical health and fitness; healthy eating; menstrual and gynaecological health, including endometriosis; the menopause; basic first aid; and changing adolescent bodies.
- **Equality and the law:** the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, including sexual orientation and gender reassignment. LGBT content is integrated throughout, taught factually and sensitively, and in line with the 2026 guidance on biological sex, gender identity and the law.

5. Delivery and teaching approach

- RSHE is taught by trained staff who receive regular professional development, including training on new statutory content and on handling sensitive topics.
- Lessons take place in a safe learning environment with clear ground rules agreed with pupils. Distancing techniques such as case studies and scenarios are used so that pupils are not asked to share personal experiences.
- Questions are answered honestly, factually and age-appropriately. Anonymous question boxes are available. Where a question is not appropriate to answer in front of the whole class, staff will follow it up individually or refer it on, and will consider whether the question raises a safeguarding concern.
- Materials are selected for their factual accuracy, balance and age-appropriateness. Contested views are not presented as fact, and political issues are handled impartially in line with the school’s legal duties.
- Pupils learn about the range of views held by different faiths and beliefs. Teaching respects pupils’ religious and cultural backgrounds while meeting the school’s statutory and equality duties. [Schools with a religious character should add how their faith ethos informs RSE here.]

Pupils with SEND

Teaching is adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, who may be more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues. Staff work with the SENCO to adapt resources, pace and delivery, which may include small-group or one-to-one sessions, visual resources and pre-teaching of key vocabulary. Parents of pupils with SEND are offered the opportunity to discuss how content will be delivered to their child.

Use of external speakers and agencies

External speakers enhance, but do not replace, the planned curriculum. All visitors are checked in line with KCSIE 2026 and the school's Visitors and External Speakers Policy. Their materials are reviewed in advance by the RSHE lead to make sure they are factual, age-appropriate and in line with this policy. A member of staff is present for every session. The school will not enter into any agreement with a provider that prevents materials from being shared with parents.

6. Safeguarding (KCSIE 2026)

RSHE is a key part of how the school teaches pupils to keep themselves safe, as required by Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026. It is planned alongside the school's wider safeguarding approach, so that pupils are taught about the risks they may face and know how to get help.

- **Disclosures:** RSHE lessons may lead a pupil to disclose abuse, or may raise a concern about a pupil. Staff will follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and report any concern straight away to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a deputy. Staff cannot promise confidentiality, and ground rules make this clear to pupils.
- **Child-on-child abuse:** the curriculum supports the school's zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence, sexual harassment, and the sharing of nude or semi-nude images (including AI-generated images). It helps pupils recognise and challenge misogyny and harmful attitudes towards women and girls.
- **Online safety:** content is planned with the Online Safety Policy and the school's filtering and monitoring arrangements. It covers content, contact, conduct, commerce and the risks posed by generative AI.
- **Pupils who are LGB or questioning their gender:** the school follows KCSIE 2026 and current DfE guidance. Concerns are discussed with the DSL, and parents are involved unless doing so would put the child at risk of significant harm.
- **Signposting:** pupils are told how to get support in school (form tutor, Head of Year, DSL, school nurse) and from outside the school, including local sexual health services, Childline and the CEOP reporting tool.

7. Working with parents and carers

- **Consultation:** parents and carers are consulted whenever this policy is written or reviewed, for example through a survey, information evenings and the opportunity to comment on a draft. Pupils' views are also gathered, and governors take this feedback into account.
- **Publication:** this policy is published on the school website and is available free of charge on request in printed form.

- **Transparency:** parents and carers can view all the materials used to teach RSHE, including resources from external providers, on request and at an annual information session. Parents will receive a copy of materials if they ask for one, where licensing allows.
- **Communication:** each year, an email is sent home before RSE topics are taught, giving an outline of the content and the timing.

8. Right to be excused from sex education

Parents and carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. They do not have the right to withdraw their child from Relationships Education, Health Education, or the sex education content of the National Curriculum for science. Requests should be made in writing to the head teacher.

Parents who request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory guidelines will be required to have a discussion with the head teacher to discuss the request and, as appropriate, with the child, to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum.

Following the discussions, except in exceptional circumstances, we will respect the parents' request to withdraw their child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16.

After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

The head teacher will ensure that where a pupil is excused from sex education, the pupil will receive appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

A record of all withdrawal requests and discussions will be kept on the pupil's file. Withdrawal does not remove the school's safeguarding duties, and the pupil will still receive the safeguarding content taught through Relationships Education and Health Education.

9. Roles and responsibilities

- **The governing board** approves this policy, monitors how it is put into practice, and holds the head teacher to account.
- **The head teacher** makes sure RSHE is taught consistently, manages withdrawal requests, and ensures the policy is published and shared with parents.
- **The RSHE lead** [name] plans and maps the curriculum, checks resources and external providers, organises staff training, and monitors the quality of teaching.
- **Staff** deliver RSHE sensitively and in line with this policy, respond to pupils' needs, and report any safeguarding concern to the DSL.
- **The DSL** [name] makes sure the curriculum reflects local safeguarding priorities and any issues identified in school, and advises staff on handling disclosures.
- **Pupils** are expected to take part fully and to treat others with respect and sensitivity.

10. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The RSHE lead monitors delivery through learning walks, work scrutiny, pupil voice and staff feedback. Pupils' knowledge is assessed at the start and end of units so that progress can be measured. Findings are reported to governors each year.

This policy is reviewed every year, or sooner if statutory guidance changes, in consultation with parents, pupils and staff.