# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

**Equalities Statement**

In our Trust we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community who hold a range of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as having regard to other factors which have the potential to cause inequality, such as socio-economic factors. For further information, please see our Equalities Policy.

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## 1. Scope

This policy applies to all schools within Swale Academies Trust.

## 2. Aims

The aims of relationships and sex education (RSE) within our Trust are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- Prepare pupils for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies
- Support character development to prepare young people for the future

## 3. Statutory Requirements

At our schools we must provide relationships education to all pupils as per section 34 of the Children and Social work act 2017.

In teaching RSE, we are required by our funding agreements to have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996 and part 6, chapter 1 of the Equality Act 2010.

At our schools we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

## 4. Policy Development

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

1. Review – a cross-Trust working group pulled together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance.
2. Staff consultation – all school staff were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations.
3. Parent/stakeholder consultation – parents and any interested parties were invited to share their views and thoughts about the policy.
4. Pupil voice – we investigated what exactly pupils want and need from their RSE. We continually seek the views of our pupils as we refine and develop the RSE curriculum.
5. Ratification – once amendments were made, the policy was shared with local governing bodies/challenge committees and ratified.

## 5. Definition

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about positive relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity at developmentally appropriate levels across the different phases.

RSE involves a combination of sharing information, and exploring issues and values in a safe and inclusive environment.

RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

## 6. Curriculum

The curriculum, as set out by the department for Education can be found by following the links below:

Primary Relationships Education Curriculum

Secondary Relationships Education Curriculum

Our RSE curriculum is set out as per Appendices 1 but we may need to adapt it as and when necessary.

We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents and carers, pupils and staff, and taking into account the age, developmental stage, needs (such as cultural and religious needs) and feelings of our pupils. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so that pupils are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

We may amend our curriculum content to respond to the needs and context of our pupils, to discuss issues affecting them in an age-appropriate manner. We will inform parents and carers of any deviation from our published policy in advance, and share any relevant materials on request.

We will share all curriculum materials with parents and carers on request.

## 7. Delivery of RSE

Across our Trust schools, RSE is taught within the context of family life, taking care to make sure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBTQ+ parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents and foster parents/carers, amongst other structures), along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example, looked-after children or young carers).

High quality resources support our RSE provision and delivery. These are reviewed regularly and enable the RSE curriculum to be embedded across all areas of the curriculum as an integral part of daily school life. Teachers will make sure that all pupils' views are listened to, and will encourage them to ask questions and engage in discussion. Teachers will answer questions sensitively, honestly and appropriately for the age of the pupils.

The programme will be designed to focus on boys as much as girls, and activities will be planned to make sure both are actively involved.

Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum, and other aspects are included in religious education (RE). RSE is taught within the broader curriculum, details of which can be found in Appendix 1.

In our **primary** schools relationships education focuses on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships including:

- Families and people who care for me
- Caring friendships
- Respectful, kind relationships
- Online safety and awareness
- Being safe

The following statements outline what is covered within our **primary** RSE curriculum in addition to the

statutory science curriculum:

- Preparing boys and girls for the changes that adolescence brings (beyond the factual and anatomical teaching of puberty and the human body covered in the science curriculum)
- How a baby is conceived and born

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendix 1.

In our **secondary** schools, RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships, including:

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online and media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

It is important for secondary pupils to know what the law says about certain topics covered in RSE, particularly in relation to the law and young people. This will help pupils identify what is right and wrong, and can provide a foundation of knowledge for deeper discussion. These topics include, but are not limited to:

- Marriage, including forced marriage and civil partnerships
- Consent, including the age of consent
- Domestic abuse, stalking, rape, sexual offences, female genital mutilation (FGM), 'virginity testing' and hymenoplasty
- Sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation, including public sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour
- Online behaviours including image and information sharing (including sexual imagery, youth-produced sexual imagery and including AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes). Pupils should understand the law about online sexual harassment and online sexual abuse, including grooming and sextortion
- Pornography
- Abortion
- The protected characteristics
- The age of criminal responsibility

**In both primary and secondary schools** RSE complements several other curriculum subjects. Where appropriate, the school will look for opportunities to make links between the subjects and integrate teaching. The RSE curriculum will be delivered by appropriately trained members of staff.

Teachers will make sure that pupils understand the importance of equality and respect, and learn about the law relating to the protected characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, by the end of their secondary education. The curriculum is designed to focus on pupils of all gender identities and expressions, and activities will be planned to make sure all are actively involved.

Throughout each year group we will use appropriate material to assist learning, such as:

- Diagrams
- Videos
- Books

- Games
- Discussions and practical activities

Teachers will make sure that all pupils' views are listened to, and will encourage them to ask questions and engage in discussion. Teachers will answer questions sensitively, honestly and appropriately for the age of the pupils.

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendices 1.

## 8. Inclusive & Adaptive Teaching for all including Pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

RSE is accessible for all pupils. We will teach about these topics in a manner that considers how a diverse range of pupils will relate to them and is sensitive to all pupils' experiences. We recognise the importance of planning teaching to be accessible for all pupils including those with special educational needs and disabilities. High quality teaching that is adapted and personalised will be the starting point to ensure accessibility.

### 8.1 Use of resources

We **will** consider whether any resources we plan to use:

- Are aligned with the teaching requirements set out in the statutory RSE guidance
- Would support pupils in applying their knowledge in different contexts and settings
- Are age-appropriate, given the age, developmental stage and background of our pupils
- Are evidence-based and contain robust facts and statistics
- Fit into our curriculum plan
- Are from credible sources
- Are compatible with effective teaching approaches
- Are sensitive to pupils' experiences and won't provoke distress

## 9. External Agencies

To ensure the safety and quality of our RSE provision, the school follows a rigorous vetting process for all external agencies and contributors. We only collaborate with organisations that demonstrate full transparency and align with our legal duties and where we have full confidence in the agency and its resources. This includes:

- **Vetting & Compliance:** All agencies and speakers undergo standard safeguarding checks and are vetted to ensure they are compliant with this policy and do not promote extreme political positions or undermine fundamental British values. This includes a review of their data protection protocols and procedures regarding the use of personal data or the taking of photographs during sessions.
- **Transparency:** We do not work with agencies that restrict the legal obligation to share materials with parents and carers.
- **Content Review:** All materials and resources are reviewed in advance to ensure they are age and developmental stage appropriate, evidence-based, politically impartial, and compliant with the *Equality Act 2010* and *Teachers' Standards*.
- **Oversight:** A school member of staff will remain present during all external sessions. Staff retain the

authority to pause or terminate any session that deviates from agreed content or school policy.

## 10. Equality

Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership or sexual orientation (collectively known as the protected characteristics).

Within the Trust we make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage and are aligned with the SEND Code of Practice & Mainstream Core Standards when planning for these subjects.

## 11. Roles and responsibilities

### 11.1 The Governing Body

Local Governing Bodies are authorised to adopt the policy and ratify any local modifications in the policy. Local Governing Bodies will monitor the ongoing implementation of this policy.

### 11.2 The Headteacher

Headteachers are responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently in schools across the Trust and for managing requests, where appropriate, to withdraw pupils from non-statutory/non-science components of RSE (see section 8).

### 11.3 Staff

All staff in all schools across the Trust are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory/non-science components of RSE
- Modelling positive behaviour and avoiding language that might perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and being conscious of everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes
- Reporting any safeguarding concerns or disclosures that pupils may make as a result of the subject content to the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) following the schools Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSE are encouraged to discuss this with the headteacher of their school.

### 11.4 Pupils

Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

## 12. Parents' Right to Withdraw

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from relationships education.

In our Trust **primary** schools parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory/non-science components of sex education within RSE as outlined below and in appendix 1.

- Preparing boys and girls for the changes that adolescence brings (beyond the factual and anatomical

teaching of puberty and the human body covered in the science curriculum)
- How a baby is conceived and born

In our Trust **secondary** schools parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory/non-science components of sex education within RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in Appendix 4 of this policy and addressed to the headteacher of the school.

A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The headteacher will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action.

A copy of any withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The headteacher will discuss the request with parents/carers and take appropriate action and provide the parents/carers with their decision in writing.

In exceptional circumstances, for example because of a safeguarding concern or a pupil's specific vulnerability, the headteacher can refuse a request to withdraw the pupil from sex education.

Alternative schoolwork will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education.

## 13. Training

Staff should have access to training and expertise within school on the delivery of RSE as part of their continuing professional development.

The headteacher may also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE as appropriate.

## 14. Assessment and Monitoring

The delivery of RSE is monitored by leadership teams in our Trust schools through systems including (but not limited to):

- planning scrutinies
- learning walks
- pupil voice & pupil conferences

Pupils' development in RSE is monitored as part of our internal assessment systems and are used to ensure all pupils gain a sound knowledge of all curriculum areas. Appropriate support and intervention is put in place as needed.

This policy will be reviewed by a cross-Trust working party annually. After every review, the policy will be approved by Trustees and then adopted by local governing bodies.

**Appendix 1: PCS PSHE Curriculum Map**

The curriculum map (below) sets out when each broad topic will be covered for each year group. At this stage, it is provisional and subject to minor changes. The final version will be sent out shortly before the start of the 2026-27 academic year, along with the "medium term plans", which set out the specific lessons that will be covered in each term. If you would like to see the provisional medium term plans now, please email olivia.letang@swale.at

PSHE education | Curriculum Map

Statutory RSHE | Statutory RSHE | Economic Wellbeing & Careers | Economic Wellbeing & Careers

| | Autumn 1 | Autumn 2 | Spring 1 | Spring 2 | Summer 1 | Summer 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year 7 | Emotional Wellbeing: managing change and transition | Friendship and Bullying | Families and Changing Relationships | Puberty and Keeping Safe | Influences on Relationships | Financial Decisions |
| Year 8 | Health and Wellbeing | Personal Safety and managing risk | Belonging and Community | The online world | Healthy and unhealthy relationships | Managing money |
| Year 9 | Mental health and wellbeing | Careers and future choices | Drug education | Managing risk in relation to the law | Intimate sexual relationships | Navigating online harms |
| Year 10 | Independence, health choices and wellbeing | Navigating the online world **(drop-down day)** | Managing influence | Friendship, diversity and challenging extremism **(drop down day)** | Exploring consent and recognising abuse | Study, work and careers **(during PDI)** |
| Year 11 | Families, fertility and pregnancy | Drugs and personal safety **(drop-down day)** | Online financial harms | Safe relationships and sexual health | Life-long wellbeing **(during PDI)** | |

**Appendix 2: Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within RSE**

| TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Name of child | | Class | |
| Name of parent | | Date | |
| Reason for withdrawing from sex education within relationships and sex education | | | |
| | | | |
| Any other information you would like the school to consider | | | |
| | | | |
| Parent signature | | | |

| TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL | |
|---|---|
| Agreed actions from discussion with parents | Include notes from discussions with parents and agreed actions taken. |
| | |