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Relationships & Sex Education Policy

March 2023

University of Birmingham School

Relationships and Sex Education Policy (RSE)

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At University of Birmingham School we refer to Pupils (who are in Years 7-11 and aged 11-16) and Students (who are in Years 12/13 and aged 17-18)	

1. Aims

Government guidance outlines the purpose of relationships and sex education as ‘helping pupils understand the positive effects that good relationships have on their mental wellbeing, identify when relationships are not right and understand how such situations can be managed’

Knowledge about safer sex and sexual health remains important to ensure that young people are equipped to make safe, informed and healthy choices as they progress through adult life. This should be delivered in a non-judgemental, factual way and allow scope for young people to ask questions in a safe environment. Many teachers use approaches such as distancing techniques, setting ground rules with the class to help manage sensitive discussion and using question boxes to allow pupils to raise issues anonymously.

The aims of relationships and sex education (RSE) at our School 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
- Help pupils understand different types of relationships, including different cultural and religious attitudes to relationships and know what constitutes a healthy relationship
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies
- Understand exploitation and grooming, and how to seek help
- Understand the framework of consent; when it is granted and when it is not

This will be underpinned by our commitment to teach character education, and to help pupils understand how important virtues such as kindness, honesty, empathy, courage, and love are present and enacted in a healthy relationship.

2. Statutory requirements

As a secondary academy School we must provide RSE 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.

Reference:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

3. Policy development

This policy has been reviewed. This means this policy was shared with staff, a selection of parent representatives who shared an interest in joining the review process, a selection of pupil representatives and Governors before it being ratified and shared.

4. Definition

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about healthy relationships, sexual health, sexuality - and tolerance, healthy lifestyles, diversity, the law around certain relevant topics and personal identity.

RSE involves a combination of sharing information, and exploring issues and values, often using the language of character education and of 'No Outsiders'.

Effective RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation. It should teach young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. It enables young people to mature, build their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity. Effective RSE also supports people, throughout life, to develop safe, fulfilling and healthy sexual relationships, at the appropriate time.

5. Curriculum

Our secondary RSE can be underpinned by a wider, deliberate cultivation and practice of resilience and character in the individual. These should include character traits such as belief in achieving goals and persevering with tasks, as well as personal attributes such as honesty, integrity, courage, humility, kindness, generosity, trustworthiness and a sense of justice, underpinned by an understanding of the importance of self-respect and self-worth. There are many ways in which secondary Schools should support the development of these attributes, for example by providing planned opportunities for young people to undertake social action, active citizenship, and voluntary service to others locally or more widely.

Pupils should be taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way. All pupils should feel that the content is relevant to them and their developing sexuality. Sexual orientation and gender identity should be explored at a timely point and in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner. When teaching about these topics, it must be recognised that young people may be discovering or understanding their sexual orientation or gender identity. There should be an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships. This should be integrated appropriately into the RSE programme, rather than addressed separately or in only one lesson.

It is recognised that there will be a range of opinions regarding RSE. The starting principle when teaching each of these must be that the applicable law should be taught in a factual way so that pupils are clear on their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Schools may choose to explore faith, or other perspectives, on some of these issues in other subjects such as Religious Studies.

Pupils should understand the benefits of healthy relationships to their mental wellbeing and self-respect. Through gaining the knowledge of what a healthy relationship is like, they can be empowered to identify when relationships are unhealthy. They should be taught that unhealthy relationships can have a lasting, negative impact on mental wellbeing.

Internet safety should also be addressed. Pupils should be taught the rules and principles for keeping safe online. This will include how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how and to whom to report issues. Pupils should have a strong understanding of how data is generated, collected, shared and used online, for example, how personal data is captured on social media or understanding the way that businesses may exploit the data available to them.

Some pupils are also exposed to harmful behaviours online, and via other forms of media, which may normalise violent sexual behaviours. A focus on healthy relationships and broader Relationships Education can help young people understand acceptable behaviours in relationships.

We are developing the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, taking into account the age, needs and feelings of pupils. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so pupils are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

6. Delivery of RSE

Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum, and other aspects are included in Religious Studies (RS). The majority of RSE in KS3 will be taught in stand-alone Learning for Life lessons by teachers who have had support in delivering the curriculum.

Pupils in KS4 and KS5 will be taught RSE in tutor time and in dedicated drop down Health and Well Being days by health professionals, professionals from external agencies and by staff who have received training.

Pupils who have SEND and may find accessing the information difficult will be supported by our TIA team and Learning Coaches.

RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds including:

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

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendix 2 at page 8 of this policy.

These areas of learning are taught within the context of 'No Outsiders' taking care to ensure 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, foster parents/carers amongst other structures) along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example: children in care or young carers).

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The Governing Board

The Governing Board will approve the RSE policy, and hold the Principal to account for its implementation.

7.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible through delegated senior leaders for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the School, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory Learning for Life, tutor time and drop-down session components of RSE (see section 8 at page 6 of this policy).

7.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory components of RSE

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 Principal or link senior leader.

7.4 Pupils

Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity. They are expected to show character virtues of empathy and compassion and respect, and to follow a 'No Outsiders' approach of ensuring no one feels excluded through bullying or unkindness.

8. Parents' right to withdraw

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory components of sex education within RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16 years of age. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the School will arrange this.

Parents do not have a right to withdraw their child from health education, healthy relationships lessons or any other aspect of Learning for Life and there is no right of withdrawal from National Curriculum Science which includes elements of sex education.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in Appendix 1 (at page 7) of this policy and addressed to the Principal.

A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The Principal will discuss the request with parents/ carers so they can be made aware of the reasons and take appropriate action. Pupils who are withdrawn from lessons will be able to study privately in the library or an alternative venue within the School.

9. Training

Staff are trained on the delivery of RSE as part of their induction and it is included in our continuing professional development calendar.

Other relevant staff will also invite visitors from outside the School from time to time, such as School nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE.

10. Monitoring arrangements

The delivery of RSE is monitored by senior leaders through learning walks and pupil feedback. Pupils' development in RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems.

This policy will be reviewed annually at the Governors' Pastoral Committee. At every review, the policy will be approved and adopted on behalf of the Governing Body.

Appendix 1

Template for requesting withdrawal from non-statutory aspects of RSE lessons

I am formally requesting that my child (insert name of child) _____

Of form group _____ be withdrawn from lessons where there is explicit discussion around sexual activity. I understand I will need to speak with the Principal or delegated School senior leader around my reasons for doing this and that someone will contact me to organise a conversation.

I realise that I cannot request to withdraw my child from Sex Education where it is part of the Science National Curriculum, or where it forms part of healthy lifestyles work, or learning around positive relationships, the promotion of equality, and fundamental British values.

..... Date
(Print parental / carer name)

Signed

Appendix 2

Our curriculum content

By the end of secondary School -

We shall continue to develop knowledge on topics specified for primary Schools as required and in addition cover the following content by the end of secondary phase schooling:

Families

Pupils should know:

- that there are different types of committed, stable relationships.
- how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children.
- what marriage is, including their legal status – for example, that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony.
- why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into.
- the characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships.
- the roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting.
- how to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships), how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.

Respectful relationships, including friendships

Pupils should know:

- the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships, in all contexts including online, such as:
 - trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict
 - reconciliation and ending relationships, this includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship
- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships

- how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (for example, how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice)
- that in School and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs
- about different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help
- that some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable
- the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal

Online and media

Pupils should know:

- their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online
- about online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online
- not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them
- what to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online
- the impact of viewing harmful content
- that specifically sexually explicit material, for example pornography, presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners
- that sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail
- how information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online

Being safe

Pupils should know:

- the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships
- how people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn, in all contexts, including online

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

Pupils should know:

- how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex, and friendship
- that all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, for example physical, emotional, mental, sexual, and reproductive health and wellbeing
- the facts about reproductive health, including fertility and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women and menopause
- that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others
- that they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex
- the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available
- the facts around pregnancy including miscarriage
- that there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help)
- how the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing
- about the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment
- how the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour
- how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment

The Law

It is important to know what the law says about sex, relationships and young people, as well as broader safeguarding issues.

This includes a range of important facts and the rules regarding sharing personal information, pictures, videos and other material using technology. This will help young people to know what is right and wrong in law, but it can also provide a good foundation of knowledge for deeper discussion about all types of relationships.

There are also many different legal provisions whose purpose is to protect young people and which ensure young people take responsibility for their actions.

Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, including for example:

- marriage
 - consent, including the age of consent
 - violence against women and girls
 - online behaviours including image and information sharing (including 'sexting', youth-produced sexual imagery, nudes, etc.)
 - pornography
 - abortion
 - sexuality
 - gender identity
 - substance misuse
 - violence and exploitation by gangs
 - extremism and radicalisation
 - criminal exploitation (for example, through gang involvement or 'county lines' drugs operations)
 - hate crime
 - female genital mutilation (FGM)
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