

Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education Policy



Author	Assistant Headteacher Deputy Headteacher	Date: June 2026
Approved by:	LGB	Date: July 2026
Last reviewed on:	November 25 (no change)	
Next review due by:	November 2027	

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1. Aims

We believe that Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) can help children and young people develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships. We will deliver high quality, evidence-based and age-appropriate sessions that will help prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life as well as supporting their moral, social, mental and physical development.

Relationship and Sex Education at our school aims to foster positive characteristics in our young people including resilience, self-worth, self-respect, honesty, kindness and trustworthiness.

Relationship Education will equip pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to:

1. act with kindness and respect in all their relationships as they grow into adulthood
2. enjoy their relationships, and to keep themselves and others safe.
3. form and sustain positive relationships
4. identify risks and harms. Relationships education may therefore include topics related to preventing sexual abuse, for example, or avoiding sharing inappropriate material online. This can be done without describing the detail of any sexual activity involved.

Sex Education teaches pupils about:

1. the physical, social and emotional aspects of human sexuality and behaviour
2. where to access support and the knowledge to stay safe so they do not rely on misinformation on sexual health from the internet or hearsay

Effective RSE focuses on respect for oneself and others and does not encourage or normalise early sexual experimentation. We believe it is important to address this area of the curriculum because pupils have a universal entitlement to learning that will enable them to live safe, fulfilled and healthy lives. The programme contributes to protecting children and young people by addressing national and local health priorities. The programme also acts to protect children and young people from concerns raised through the pastoral system in school.

2. Statutory regulations and guidance

“The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, require all schools from September 2020 to deliver Relationships and sex education. Health Education is compulsory in all schools except independent schools.

The Stour Vale Academy Trust values PSHE as one way to support children's development as human beings, to enable them to understand and respect who they are, to empower them with a voice and to equip them for life and learning. We include the statutory Relationships and Health Education within our whole-school PSHE Programme. To ensure progression we have mapped a five year curriculum which caters for all aspects of the statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education.

Documents that inform this RSE policy include:

- Education Act (1996)
- Learning and Skills Act (2000)
- Education and Inspections Act (2006)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Keeping children safe in Education – Statutory safeguarding guidance (2025)
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Secondary- Statutory Guidance July (2025)

3. Policy development

This policy covers the school's approach to Relationships and Sex Education. This policy has been developed in consultation with various stakeholders. The policy development process involves reviewing all relevant information, stakeholder consultation including staff, pupils and parents/carers and ratification once amendments have been made. A workload impact assessment has been completed.

4. Policy availability to parents and carers

Parents will be informed about the policy through the website. The policy will be available to parents through the school websites and hardcopies will be made available on request. Translations may also be made available on requests.

5. The values we will promote

Our RSE curriculum promotes the British values of The Rule of Law, Individual Liberty, Mutual Respect and Tolerance. In this way our programme values the qualities of stable relationships, marriage and family life, without bias to any particular family structure.

6. The intended learning outcomes

RSE, as part of the PSHE education curriculum, is vital to the development of the young people in our schools. The planned programmes are designed to help them deal with the difficult moral, social and health-related issues that arise in their

lives and in society. They also help them to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to live confident, healthy, independent lives as individuals, parents, workers, and members of society. Effective RSE is a key component in our approach to safeguarding our pupils through the curriculum.

To ensure progression and a spiral curriculum, we use a variety of bespoke and innovative resources which have been designed to cater for student needs with support from the PSHE Association and Brook to ensure that PSHE meets the requirements of the DfE guidance on Relationship, Sex and Health education.

7. 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 with RSE. These topics can be found in Appendix 1.

8. Relationship and Sex Education: Secondary

RSE in secondary school should provide young people with the information they need to develop healthy, safe and nurturing relationships of all kinds. This should include the knowledge they need in later life to keep themselves and others safe, and how to avoid sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies.

The Guidance states that schools should continue to develop knowledge of topics specified for primary as required and in addition cover the content as set out in Appendix 2 by the end of secondary. This content reflects the updated Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Secondary- Statutory Guidance July (2025).

9. How will we assess this learning?

As with any learning, the assessment of young people's personal, social and emotional development is important. It provides information that indicates their progress and achievement which informs the development of the programme.

Young people do not pass or fail in this area of learning, but have the opportunity to reflect on their own learning and personal experiences, and set personal goals and agree strategies to reach them. This process of reflective assessment has a

positive impact on young people's self-awareness and self-esteem, and there are opportunities to record learning and progress in different ways. We will assess pupil's learning through; in class question and answer, discussion, group work, peer assessment, self-assessment and teacher assessment.

10. Inclusivity

Our RSE programmes recognise that young people will bring prior learning and real-life experiences to their learning. Our programmes respect and build on these, providing programmes that reflect both the universal and unique needs of our students. In this way, the programmes recognise and respect pupils' different abilities, levels of maturity and personal circumstances; for example their own sexual orientation, gender identity, faith or culture (which may, depending on their age and maturity, not be something they have yet considered or may be emerging) or the sexual orientation, gender identity, faith or culture of their immediate family, close friends and wider community.

11. Pupils with additional educational needs

As far as is appropriate, young people with special educational needs follow the same RSE programme as all other students. Careful consideration is given concerning the level of differentiation needed, and in some cases the content or delivery will be adapted. Learning support assistants work with individual pupils where required, sometimes on a one to one basis.

It is the school's policy not to withdraw young people with special educational needs from RSE to catch up on other national curriculum subjects, as we believe that these aspects of personal and social development are as important as academic achievement.

12. How will we ensure that our equalities obligations are fulfilled?

We promote the needs and interests of all pupils, irrespective of gender, culture, ability or aptitude. Teaching pedagogy will take into account the ability, age, readiness and cultural backgrounds of the young people to ensure that all can access the full RSE provision.

We promote social learning and expect our students to show a high regard for the needs of others. RSE is an important vehicle for addressing both multicultural and gender issues and for ensuring equal opportunities for all.

The planning and delivery of RSE is monitored by Senior Leaders in the school. The curriculum is delivered to mixed gender classes.

Every young person in Key Stages 3 and 4 has access to the full RSE provision, through their timetabled PSHE education lessons.

We will review this policy annually or in light of guidance from the DfE, Ofsted, PSHE Association and student voice.

13. Parents and carers involvement

We value a strong and open partnership with parents and carers. Curriculum materials are available to view upon request, and the way we do this in our school is by meeting parents face-to-face. We have found that this is the most helpful and supportive way to talk through any questions or concerns, by ensuring that these conversations are open, clear and collaborative.

Parents and carers have a right to request that their children be withdrawn from Sex Education content, 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 and addressed to the Head of PSHE education. Before granting any such request a member of SLT will discuss the request with parents and as appropriate, with the child to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum and any possible effects of withdrawal.

While there is no right of withdrawal from the content taught within the Science curriculum, or from the compulsory PSHE and Relationships content; we understand that some aspects of learning may feel sensitive or raise questions for parents or pupils. We are committed to teaching these lessons in a respectful and age-appropriate way. We are always very happy to share how these topics are approached in school and to talk through any concerns, working closely with families to ensure children feel supported and confident in their learning.

14. Support for children who are withdrawn from the programme

If a parent or carer requests that their child be excused from sex education, the school will provide support by ensuring the child understands that if they have questions, they may still speak with a member of staff directly.

The school will also provide other PSHE education work on the themes of positive social relationships and managing change. This will be completed in a supervised location in school.

15. Teaching methodologies

The RSE programme will be taught through a range of teaching methods. Our programme recognises that young people will bring prior learning and real life experiences to their learning. Our programme respects and builds on these, providing a programme that reflects both the universal and unique needs of our students.

We will ensure that all RSE sessions remain positive in tone by setting clear expectations at the beginning of the year and reinforcing them at the start of each topic. Behaviour will also be managed according to the Behaviour for Learning policy.

Controversial topics will be covered with sensitivity and respect for all viewpoints. The programme is not aimed to tell what is right and wrong but to take into account different perspectives and provide pupils with the information to make their own decisions. When teaching sensitive topics, teachers will use various approaches such as setting ground rules to develop a safe learning environment, and giving students a means to ask questions anonymously.

We will ensure cross-curricular learning by keeping an up-to-date overview of whole school deliveries and liaising with both senior curriculum and senior pastoral teams. Working closely with key subjects to ensure cross-curricular learning is explicit.

Learning about relationships and sex in PSHE classes will complement learning in Science (primarily Biology) and Religious Education. For a more detailed view of where and when aspects are delivered across the school, please see the relevant curriculum documentation available on the school website.

The programmes are overseen by the Senior Leadership Team. It is taught by staff who have strong relationships with the students. At times, these lessons will be supported by Teaching Assistants.

16. Pupils' questions

Pupils' questions will be answered by teachers honestly but not referring to personal experience. Answers will endeavour to reflect different viewpoints in order to provide information and guidance but not instruction. This supports our aim to develop young people who value and are open to the viewpoints of others.

Pupils who have been withdrawn from RSE lessons may still ask questions to staff. These questions will be answered with same guidance as above. Although pupils will be encouraged to speak with their parents/carers regarding the conversation, they will not be made to.

We will allow pupils to raise anonymous questions by having scheduled lessons in which students may write anonymous questions and drop them into a box. These questions will be answered during lesson time however students are also encouraged to speak with their teacher discretely after the lesson if they wish.

We are aware that pupils may ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner using their professional judgment.

If a pupil discloses information which is of concern with regards child protection, the procedure outlined in the Safeguarding policy will take place.

17. Data Protection Law

This policy adheres to the principles under Data Projection Law. For further information please review schools Data Protection policy published on school's website.

18. Links with other policies

This policy supports / compliments the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND
- Behaviour Policy
- Equal Opportunities policy

Appendix 1: The Law

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

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- 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)

Appendix 2: By the end of secondary school pupils should know (DfE legislation)

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW:
Families	• That there are different types of committed, stable relationships. • How these relationships might contribute to wellbeing, and their importance for bringing up children. • Why marriage or civil partnership is an important relationship choice for many couples. The legal status of marriage and civil partnership, including that they carry legal rights, benefits and protections that are not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have, for example, undergone a non-legally binding religious ceremony. • That 'common-law marriage' is a myth and cohabitants do not obtain marriage-like status or rights from living together or by having children. • That forced marriage and marrying before the age of 18 are illegal. • How families and relationships change over time, including through birth, death, separation and new relationships. • The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting and the importance of the early years of a child's life for brain development. • How to judge when a relationship is unsafe and where to seek help when needed, including when pupils are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust.
Respectful relationships	• The characteristics of positive relationships of all kinds, online and offline, including romantic relationships. For example, pupils should understand the role of consent, trust, mutual respect, honesty, kindness, loyalty, shared interests and outlooks, generosity, boundaries, tolerance, privacy, and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. • How to evaluate their impact on other people and treat others with kindness and respect, including in public spaces and including strangers. Pupils should understand the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, and that everyone is unique and equal. • The importance of self-esteem, independence and having a positive relationship with oneself, and how these characteristics support healthy relationships with others. This includes developing one's own interests, hobbies, friendship groups, and skills. Pupils should understand what it means to be treated with respect by others. • What tolerance requires, including the importance of tolerance of other people's beliefs.

	• The practical steps pupils can take and skills they can develop to support respectful and kind relationships. This includes skills for communicating respectfully within relationships and with strangers, including in situations of conflict. • The different types of bullying (including online bullying), the impact of bullying, the responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help. • Skills for ending relationships or friendships with kindness and managing the difficult feelings that endings might bring, including disappointment, hurt or frustration. • The role of consent, including in romantic and sexual relationships. Pupils should understand that ethical behaviour goes beyond consent and involves kindness, care, attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of the other person, as well as an awareness of power dynamics. Pupils should understand that just because someone says yes to doing something, that doesn't automatically make it ethically ok. • How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender reassignment, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). Pupils should be equipped to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice. • How inequalities of power can impact behaviour within relationships, including sexual relationships. For example, how people who are disempowered can feel they are not entitled to be treated with respect by others or how those who enjoy an unequal amount of power might, with or without realising it, impose their preferences on others. • How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, including by normalising harmful sexual behaviours and by disempowering some people, especially women, to feel a sense of autonomy over their own body and providing some people with a sense of sexual entitlement to the bodies of others. • Pupils should have an opportunity to discuss how some sub-cultures might influence our understanding of sexual ethics, including the sexual norms endorsed by so-called "involuntary celibates" (incels) or online influencers.
Online safety and awareness	• Rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online. • Online risks, including the importance of being cautious about sharing personal information online and of using privacy and location settings appropriately to protect information online. Pupils should also understand the difference between public and private online spaces and related safety issues.

	• The characteristics of social media, including that some social media accounts are fake, and / or may post things which aren't real / have been created with AI. That social media users may say things in more extreme ways than they might in face-to-face situations, and that some users present highly exaggerated or idealised profiles of themselves online. • Not to provide material to others that they would not want to be distributed further and not to pass on personal material which is sent to them. Pupils should understand that any material provided online might be circulated, and that once this has happened there is no way of controlling where it ends up. Pupils should understand the serious risks of sending material to others, including the law concerning the sharing of images. • That keeping or forwarding indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime, even if the photo is of themselves or of someone who has consented, and even if the image was created by the child and/or using AI generated imagery. Pupils should understand the potentially serious consequences of acquiring or generating indecent or sexual images of someone under 18, including the potential for criminal charges and severe penalties including imprisonment. Pupils should know how to seek support and should understand that they will not be in trouble for asking for help, either at school or with the police, if an image of themselves has been shared. Pupils should also understand that sharing indecent images of people over 18 without consent is a crime. • What to do and how to report when they are concerned about material that has been circulated, including personal information, images or videos, and how to manage issues online. • About the prevalence of deepfakes including videos and photos, how deepfakes can be used maliciously as well as for entertainment, the harms that can be caused by deepfakes and how to identify them. • That the internet contains inappropriate and upsetting content, some of which is illegal, including unacceptable content that encourages misogyny, violence or use of weapons. Pupils should be taught where to go for advice and support about something they have seen online. Pupils should understand that online content can present a distorted picture of the world and normalise or glamorise behaviours which are unhealthy and wrong. • That social media can lead to escalations in conflicts, how to avoid these escalations and where to go for help and advice. • How to identify when technology and social media is used as part of bullying, harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and other forms of abusive and/or illegal behaviour and how to seek support about concerns.
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	• That pornography, and other online content, often presents a distorted picture of people and their sexual behaviours and can negatively affect how people behave towards sexual partners. This can affect pupils who see pornographic content accidentally as well as those who see it deliberately. Pornography can also portray misogynistic behaviours and attitudes which can negatively influence those who see it. • How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online. • That websites may share personal data about their users, and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes (e.g. to enable targeted advertising). • That criminals can operate online scams, for example using fake websites or emails to extort money or valuable personal information. This information can be used to the detriment of the person or wider society. About risks of sextortion, how to identify online scams relating to sex, and how to seek support if they have been scammed or involved in sextortion. • That AI chatbots are an example of how AI is rapidly developing, and that these can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice. It is important to be able to critically think about new types of technology as they appear online and how they might pose a risk.
Being safe	• How to recognise, respect and communicate consent and boundaries in relationships, including in early romantic relationships (in all contexts, including online) and early sexual relationships that might involve kissing or touching. That kindness and care for others requires more than just consent. • That there are a range of strategies for identifying, resisting and understanding pressure in relationships from peers or others, including sexual pressure, and how to avoid putting pressure on others. • How to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, how to judge when a relationship is unsafe (and recognise this in the relationships of others); how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed. • How to increase their personal safety in public spaces, including when socialising with friends, family, the wider community or strangers. Pupils should learn ways of seeking help when needed and how to report harmful behaviour. Pupils should understand that there are strategies they can use to increase their safety, and that this does not mean they will be blamed if they are victims of harmful behaviour. Pupils might reflect on the importance of trusting their instincts when something doesn't feel right, and should understand that in some situations a person might appear trustworthy but have harmful intentions. • What constitutes sexual harassment or sexual violence, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it.

	• That sexual harassment includes unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching, taking and/or sharing intimate or sexual images without consent, public sexual harassment, pressuring other people to do sexual things, and upskirting. • The concepts and laws relating to sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault. • The concepts and laws relating to harmful sexual behaviour, which includes all types of sexual harassment and sexual violence among young people but also includes other forms of concerning behaviour like using age-inappropriate sexual language. • The concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour. • That fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviours can be criminal, and where to get help if needed. • The concepts and laws relating to harms which are exploitative, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and abuse, grooming, and financial exploitation. • The concepts and laws relating to forced marriage. • The physical and emotional damage which can be caused by female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty, where to find support, and the law around these areas. This should include that it is a criminal offence for anyone to perform or assist in the performance of FGM, virginity testing or hymenoplasty, in the UK or abroad, or to fail to protect a person under 16 for whom they are responsible. • That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences, and that strangulation (applying pressure to the neck) is an offence, regardless of whether it causes injury. That any activity that involves applying force or pressure to someone's neck or covering someone's mouth and nose is dangerous and can lead to serious injury or death. • That pornography presents some activities as normal which many people do not and will never engage in, some of which can be emotionally and/or physically harmful. • How to seek support for their own worrying or abusive behaviour or for worrying or abusive behaviour they have experienced from others, including information on where to report abuse, and where to seek medical attention when required, for example after an assault.
Intimate and sexual relationships,	• That sex, for people who feel ready and are over the age of consent, can and should be enjoyable and positive.

including sexual health	• The law about the age of consent, that they have a choice about whether to have sex, that many young people wait until they are older, and that people of all ages can enjoy intimate and romantic relationships without sex. • Sexual consent and their capacity to give, withhold or remove consent at any time, even if initially given, as well as the considerations that people might take into account prior to sexual activity, e.g. the law, faith and family values. That kindness and care for others require more than just consent. • That all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing. • That some sexual behaviours can be harmful. • The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available, including male and female condoms, and signposting towards medically accurate online information about sexual and reproductive health to support contraceptive decision making. • That there are choices in relation to pregnancy. Pupils should be given medically and legally accurate and 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, are transmitted. How risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use). The use and availability of the HIV prevention drugs Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and how and where to access them. The importance of, and facts about, regular testing and the role of stigma • The prevalence of STIs, the short and long term impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment. • How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead people to take risks in their sexual behaviour. • How and where to seek support for concerns around sexual relationships including sexual violence or harms. • How to counter misinformation, including signposting towards medically accurate information and further advice, and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.
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