RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

Whole School Policy

Reviewed and Updated: September 2026
Next Review: Summer 2028

Policy Review at Holme Court Dorset

The Governors acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective and follows regulatory requirements. The SLT and Governors undertake a regular review to satisfy themselves that the implementation of this policy is effective.

The RSE Policy is monitored by the Head of Centre. This policy will be reviewed and updated biennially, or as events or legislation change dictates.

All teaching staff and relevant stakeholders will be informed of any changes in the current legislation as they affect the policy.

1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out the School's approach to Relationships Education (RE), Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), and Health Education across all phases of the School for pupils aged 7-16.

The School recognises that high-quality, age-appropriate RSE is essential in supporting pupils to:

- develop safe, healthy and respectful relationships;
- understand emotional and physical development;
- safeguard themselves and others;
- develop resilience, confidence and self-worth;
- make informed and responsible decisions;
- prepare for adult life in modern Britain.

The School is committed to delivering RSE within a framework that promotes safeguarding, inclusion, dignity, equality, respect and wellbeing.

RSE is delivered in partnership with parents and carers and reflects the School's ethos and values while complying with current statutory requirements and guidance.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance: *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education* (2019, currently in force);
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children Act 1989 and 2004;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (September 2026);
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (current edition);
- Independent School Standards Regulations;
- Education Act 1996;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Online Safety Act 2023;
- DfE guidance relating to safeguarding, sexual violence and sexual harassment between children, mental wellbeing, online safety and attendance.

The School also takes account of updated and emerging DfE expectations and safeguarding priorities including:

- consent and healthy relationships;
- misogyny and harmful sexual behaviours;
- sexual harassment and sexual violence;
- online harms and pornography;
- image sharing and exploitation;
- child-on-child abuse;
- equality, inclusion and protected characteristics;
- mental health and wellbeing.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- Holme Court Dorset School;
- all staff involved in teaching or supporting RSE;
- visiting speakers and external providers.

RSE is delivered through:

- PSHE;
- pastoral programmes;
- science curriculum;
- assemblies and tutor programmes;
- visiting speakers and specialist organisations;
- safeguarding and wellbeing education;
- wider co-curricular opportunities.

4. Definition of RSE

Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education is lifelong learning about:

- relationships;
- emotional wellbeing;
- physical development;
- sexuality;
- sexual health;
- online behaviour and safety;
- identity;
- consent;
- respect;
- personal responsibility.

RSE is designed to equip pupils with accurate information, practical skills and the confidence to seek help and support when required.

5. Aims of RSE

The aims of RSE at the School are to:

- provide accurate, age-appropriate and inclusive information;
- support pupils to form healthy, respectful and caring relationships;
- develop pupils' understanding of consent, boundaries and personal safety;
- promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing;
- help pupils recognise unhealthy, exploitative or abusive behaviours;
- support pupils in understanding online safety and digital citizenship;
- ensure pupils know how and where to seek support;
- encourage respect for diversity and protected characteristics;
- prepare pupils for adulthood and future relationships;
- develop pupils' confidence, resilience and self-esteem;
- support safeguarding and pupil welfare.

6. Guiding Principles

The School's RSE programme is:

- age-appropriate and developmentally sequenced;
- inclusive and accessible;
- factually accurate and evidence-informed;
- delivered in a safe and supportive environment;
- sensitive to the needs and backgrounds of pupils;
- mindful of faith, culture and family circumstances;
- aligned with safeguarding procedures.

Teaching will:

- promote respect for self and others;
- challenge prejudice, discrimination and stereotypes;
- encourage critical thinking;
- avoid political bias;
- uphold the Equality Act 2010.

The School recognises that families and home backgrounds differ and will ensure that no pupil or family arrangement is stigmatised.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The School is committed to ensuring that RSE is inclusive and accessible to all pupils. Teaching and resources will:

- reflect diversity within society;
- promote respect for protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010;
- avoid stereotyping;
- support pupils with SEND appropriately;
- take account of differing levels of maturity and understanding.

Pupils will be taught that:

- everyone deserves respect;
- discrimination is unacceptable;
- bullying, harassment and prejudice are harmful;
- healthy relationships are based on kindness, respect and consent.

The School recognises that pupils may have differing beliefs and values. Teaching will be balanced, factual and respectful.

8. Safeguarding

Safeguarding is central to the School's RSE provision.

RSE supports pupils in:

- recognising abuse and exploitation;
- understanding consent and boundaries;
- identifying unsafe situations;

- understanding grooming and coercion;
- recognising online risks;
- seeking help appropriately.

Staff delivering RSE understand their safeguarding responsibilities and are trained in current safeguarding procedures.

Any disclosure or safeguarding concern arising during RSE lessons will be managed in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Staff cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality and pupils are made aware of this.

Where concerns arise, staff will:

- listen appropriately;
- avoid asking leading questions;
- reassure pupils;
- explain next steps;
- report concerns promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Governors
Governors are responsible for:

- ensuring the School meets its statutory obligations;
- approving this policy;
- monitoring effectiveness;
- ensuring safeguarding and equality duties are met.

Head
The Head is responsible for:

- overall implementation of this policy;
- ensuring appropriate staffing and training;
- supporting quality assurance and compliance
- coordinating the RSE curriculum;
- monitoring provision;
- staff guidance and training;
- reviewing resources;
- liaising with parents and external providers;
- ensuring safeguarding compliance.

Teaching Staff
Teaching staff are responsible for:

- delivering RSE professionally and sensitively;
- establishing safe classroom environments;
- maintaining appropriate boundaries;
- following safeguarding procedures;
- using approved resources.

Pupils
Pupils are expected to:

- engage respectfully;
- contribute appropriately;
- respect confidentiality within agreed boundaries;
- follow classroom expectations.
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Parents and Carers
Parents and carers are recognised as the primary educators of children in matters relating to relationships and values.

The School seeks to work in partnership with parents and carers by:

- communicating curriculum content;
- sharing policy information;
- offering opportunities for discussion;
- responding to questions and concerns appropriately.

10. Curriculum Overview

The RSE curriculum is progressive and age-appropriate.

Key Stage 2

Pupils learn about:

Relationships
- healthy friendships;
- peer pressure;
- bullying and cyberbullying;
- respectful behaviour;
- inclusion and diversity;
- stereotypes.

Health and Wellbeing
- emotional wellbeing;
- puberty and physical changes;
- menstruation;
- body confidence;
- healthy lifestyles.

Safety
- online safety;
- consent and permission-seeking;
- privacy and personal boundaries;
- recognising unsafe situations;
- reporting concerns.

Human reproduction is taught within the science curriculum and through age-appropriate health education.

Key Stage 3

Pupils learn about:

Healthy Relationships
- qualities of healthy relationships;
- respect and equality;
- consent;
- communication skills;
- relationship pressures;
- managing conflict.

Online Safety
- social media;
- online exploitation;
- pornography and unrealistic portrayals;
- digital footprints;
- image sharing;
- online consent.

Sexual Health and Development
- puberty and adolescent development;
- reproduction;
- contraception awareness;
- STIs;
- sexual orientation and identity;
- delaying sexual activity.

Safeguarding
- coercion and manipulation;
- grooming;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- child-on-child abuse;
- sexual harassment.

Key Stage 4

Pupils learn about:

Intimate Relationships
- healthy intimate relationships;
- consent and the law;
- coercive and controlling behaviour;
- sexual ethics and responsibility;
- communication and respect.

Sexual Health
- contraception and pregnancy;
- STIs and prevention;
- accessing support services;
- fertility and reproductive health.

Online and Media Influences

- pornography and unrealistic expectations;
- image-based abuse;
- exploitation;
- online reputations.

Equality and Respect

- gender stereotypes;
- misogyny and discrimination;
- equality legislation;
- allyship and bystander intervention.

11. Teaching Approaches

RSE is taught using a range of evidence-informed teaching strategies including:

- discussion and reflection;
- scenarios and case studies;
- role play and problem solving;
- videos and digital resources;
- group activities;
- external speakers;
- question boxes and anonymous questioning.
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Teachers establish clear ground rules to ensure lessons remain safe, respectful and appropriate.

Teaching is factual and balanced. Correct anatomical terminology is used alongside age-appropriate explanations.

Sensitive topics are approached carefully and in a manner suitable to pupils' age and developmental stage.

12. Safe Learning Environment

The School aims to create an environment in which pupils feel safe to learn and ask questions.

Ground rules may include:

- respecting others' opinions;
- no personal disclosures;
- no judgement or ridicule;
- appropriate language;
- confidentiality within safeguarding limits.

Staff will use distancing techniques where appropriate to avoid personalisation of sensitive issues.

13. Managing Questions

Pupils are encouraged to ask questions appropriately.

Staff will:

- answer questions honestly and age-appropriately;
- correct misinformation;
- maintain professional boundaries;
- avoid sharing personal views inappropriately;
- signpost pupils to support where needed.

Where questions are:

- overly explicit;
- inappropriate for the group;
- related to safeguarding concerns;
- beyond the planned curriculum;

Staff may defer responding and address issues individually or at a more appropriate time. Anonymous question systems may be used.

14. SEND and Additional Needs

The School recognises that pupils with SEND may require adapted teaching and additional support.

Provision may include:

- differentiated resources;
- smaller group teaching;
- adapted language and visuals;
- repetition and reinforcement;
- increased pastoral support.

The School recognises that pupils with SEND may be more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse or misunderstanding of social and sexual relationships. RSE therefore plays an important safeguarding role. The School recognises that our learners benefit from a trauma informed approach when teaching RSE.

15. Use of External Visitors and Agencies

External visitors may contribute to RSE where their expertise adds value.

All visitors:

- are appropriately vetted;
- receive guidance on safeguarding and School expectations;
- work under staff supervision;
- use approved materials;
- support rather than replace teacher-led provision.

The School remains responsible for the content and quality of all RSE delivered.

16. Online Safety

Online safety is embedded throughout the curriculum.

Pupils are taught about:

- respectful online behaviour;
- social media risks;

- privacy and security;
- misinformation;
- pornography and harmful content;
- image sharing;
- online exploitation and grooming;
- reporting concerns.

Teaching reflects current safeguarding risks and developments in technology.

17. Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation

RSE is monitored and evaluated through:
- lesson observations;
- pupil voice;
- curriculum review;
- staff feedback;
- safeguarding trends;
- parental feedback;
- governor oversight.

Assessment within RSE focuses primarily on:
- knowledge and understanding;
- reflection;
- communication skills;
- application of learning.

Pupils are not assessed on personal beliefs or experiences.

18. Training

Staff involved in delivering RSE receive appropriate professional development and safeguarding training.

Training may include:
- safeguarding updates;
- handling sensitive questions;
- online safety;
- equality and inclusion;
- sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour;
- mental health awareness.

19. Confidentiality

Staff must not promise unconditional confidentiality.

Pupils are informed that:
- staff may need to share information where there are safeguarding concerns;
- support is available;
- disclosures will be handled sensitively.

Any concerns relating to abuse, exploitation, self-harm or significant risk will be referred in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

20. Parent Consultation

The school recognises that parents and carers are the primary educators of their children in relation to relationships, health and growing up. We are committed to working in partnership with parents to ensure that our Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) programme complements learning at home and reflects the needs of our school community.

The school will:

- Consult with parents when developing and reviewing the RSE policy.
- Provide opportunities for parents to view the curriculum, teaching resources and lesson content before it is taught.
- Inform parents when RSE will be delivered and explain the learning objectives for each year group.
- Offer opportunities for parents to ask questions, raise concerns and discuss the curriculum with senior leaders.
- Consider parental feedback when reviewing the policy and curriculum, whilst ensuring compliance with statutory guidance.
- Publish the RSE Policy on the school website and make copies available on request.
- Support parents by signposting appropriate resources to help continue discussions at home.

21 Methods of Consultation

The school may consult with parents through:

- Parent information evenings.
- Curriculum workshops.
- Surveys and questionnaires.
- Consultation meetings.
- School newsletters.
- Email communications.
- The school website.
- Individual discussions where appropriate.

22 Right to Withdraw

Parents and carers have the right to request withdrawal from some or all of the non-statutory sex education elements of RSE.

There is no right to withdraw from:

- Relationships Education in primary phases;
- Health Education;
- science curriculum content.

Requests for withdrawal should be made in writing to the Head of Centre.

The School will:
- discuss concerns with parents;
- explain curriculum content;
- clarify statutory requirements;
- respect legal rights relating to withdrawal.

In accordance with statutory guidance:
- pupils cannot be withdrawn from statutory curriculum content;
- three terms before a pupil turns 16, the pupil may choose to receive sex education if previously withdrawn by parents.

Appropriate supervision and alternative educational provision will be arranged for withdrawn pupils.

23. Responding to Parental Concerns

The school understands that parents may have different views regarding RSE. Where concerns are raised, the Head of Centre or designated member of staff will meet with parents to:

- Explain the statutory requirements for RSE.
- Share teaching materials where appropriate.
- Discuss how lessons are delivered in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner.
- Answer any questions regarding curriculum content.
- Clarify parents' rights regarding withdrawal from aspects of sex education.

If concerns remain unresolved, complaints should follow the School's Complaints Procedure.

24. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Online Safety Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- PSHE Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy;
- Complaints Procedure.

25. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier in response to:

- statutory changes;
- safeguarding developments;
- curriculum review;
- inspection findings;
- significant incidents or emerging risks.
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The Governors and Senior Leadership Team will monitor implementation and effectiveness.