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Relationships and Sex Education Policy

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INTRODUCTION

As a secondary school, we at Huish Episcopi Academy are committed to delivering high-quality Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) to all pupils as required by the statutory guidance.

The current guidance "Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance" was published in June 2019 and updated in July 2025. It establishes legal duties on all schools in England to teach RSE and Health Education. We will continue to ensure our policy, curriculum and practice align with this guidance, including the new requirements that will become statutory from September 2026: Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance

RATIONALE

We believe that effective RSE is essential to enable pupils to make informed, safe and responsible decisions as they grow, have healthy relationships and take increasing responsibility for their own wellbeing. It contributes to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, emotional, mental and physical development of our pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Our RSE provision is embedded within the wider PSHE curriculum and is reinforced by other areas including Science, Computing (online safety) and Religious Education.

DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION

Relationships and Sex Education is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. We recognise that parents and carers are the primary educators of their children in many of these matters, and the school aims to support and complement their role.

Relationships Education

At our school we understand relationships education to involve teaching about respect, love, care, and the variety of relationships individuals may form. We recognise the importance of stable relationships, including marriage and civil partnerships, as part of a supportive community. Pupils will learn about how to build and maintain healthy relationships of all kinds.

Sex Education

Sex education is also included and refers to teaching about intimate, sexual relationships and sexual health: for example, contraception, the risks associated with unprotected sex, pregnancy, sources of support and options. It includes teaching about resisting pressure to engage in sexual activity or the application of pressure.

Digital and Online Context

We acknowledge that young people are growing up in a digital world with particular challenges: social media influence, online relationships, cyber-bullying, exposure to inappropriate content and learning from unreliable sources. Our curriculum supports pupils to navigate these safely and confidently.

Inclusion of All Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities

Our teaching of RSE is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities. It is designed to be relevant for all pupils.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

At Huish Episcopi Academy we aim to provide pupils with an age-appropriate, progressive (spiral) RSE programme, which is sensitive to their physical, emotional and developmental maturity. The key objectives are to enable pupils to learn about:

- Families and people who care for them, including the nature and significance of marriage, civil partnership and other stable relationships for bringing up children.
- How to form and maintain healthy, respectful, safe relationships, including friendships, intimate relationships and online relationships.
- The characteristics of healthy and respectful relationships, with particular reference to consent, boundaries, respect, equality, abuse, harassment, and how these apply online too.
- How relationships, including sexual activity, can affect physical and mental health and wellbeing, and how to manage those impacts.
- Intimate and sexual relationships, and sexual health: knowledge of contraception, prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unplanned pregnancy, and the availability of support services.
- Online safety and digital behaviour, including how to navigate media and social influences, consent in a digital context, the risks of sharing images, and how to seek help.
- The legal, social and cultural contexts of relationships and sex education, including the law concerning sexual activity, sexual consent, coercive behaviour and exploitation.
- Developing the skills, attributes and values to recognise and build healthy relationships, respect diversity and different viewpoints, and make safe, informed choices.

The statutory guidance emphasises that for secondary schools the RSE component must include "intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health" (Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, 2025).

CURRICULUM CONTENT AND ORGANISATION

Delivery

- RSE is delivered through our planned PSHE curriculum, Science lessons (where biological aspects are taught), Computing/ICT (online safety) and other relevant subject areas as appropriate.
- The PSHE programme will include weekly or regular sessions, often delivered via form tutors or specialist staff, providing continuity and a safe environment for discussion.
- Within the RSE component, most teaching is in co-educational classes; however, the school may arrange single-sex or smaller group sessions where considered appropriate (for example to address sensitive issues or support specific cohorts).
- When visitors or external agencies are used to support the RSE programme, they will operate under the guidance of the school: they will be properly briefed, accompanied by a teacher, and their contribution will support but **not supplant** the role of the teacher.
- Teaching approaches will include whole-class discussion, group work, paired work, case studies, role-play, digital scenarios, and opportunities for reflection and skills development.

CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

We provide a spiral programme which addresses key themes at increasing depth as pupils progress through the school.

Key themes include (but are not limited to):

Theme 1: Health and Wellbeing

- Physical health and responsibility for own health (including puberty, self-examination, sexual health)

- Mental and emotional wellbeing, including the impact of relationships and sexual activity
- Risk, safety and informed decision-making, both online and offline

Theme 2: Relationships

- Families and caring relationships
- Respectful relationships, including friendships, intimate relationships, and relationships in wider contexts (e.g. online)
- Consent, boundaries, coercion and the law
- Parenthood, contraception and pregnancy
- Bullying, abuse, discrimination, exploitation, and how to recognise and respond to these
- Influence of the media, social media and peer groups on relationships and sexual behaviour

Theme 3: Living in the Wider World

- The law as it relates to sexuality, sexual behaviour, relationships, consent and online conduct
- Equality, diversity, protected characteristics (including sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion or belief)
- Healthy lifestyle choices, digital citizenship, and being responsible citizens.

Tailoring for SEND and Vulnerable Groups

The statutory guidance states that RSE must be accessible for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Schools should tailor content appropriately, considering pupils' developmental stage, emotional maturity and vulnerability (Relationships and Sex Education in Schools, 2023).

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The PSHE/RSE lead and senior leadership team will monitor curriculum delivery, evaluate learning outcomes and gather pupil feedback.
- Annual review of the RSE programme, including consultation with pupils, parents, staff and governors, will inform future development.
- Resources will be reviewed regularly to ensure they are up to date, evidence-based, inclusive, and free from stereotyping or bias.

VALUES AND MORAL FRAMEWORK

Our RSE curriculum will be taught within a values-based framework that promotes:

- Honesty, respect, openness and self-awareness
- Critical thinking about self, relationships, society and media
- Tolerance, understanding, respect and care for others
- Recognition of rights, responsibilities and mutual obligations in relationships
- Positive attitudes to one's own identity and others' identities
- Awareness of the value of stable relationships for family life (recognising the diversity of family types)
- Self-discipline and personal responsibility regarding sexuality
- Understanding of the role of media, including social media, in shaping attitudes and behaviour
- Respect for diversity of religion, culture, sexual orientation and gender identity

WORKING WITH PARENTS

- The PSHE/RSE curriculum overview will be published each academic year on the school website, and parents/carers will be given the opportunity to view materials and make appointments to discuss content with the PSHE Coordinator.
- Parents/carers will be informed via usual school communications (e.g., reviews, reports) about their child's engagement in PSHE/RSE.
- Parents/carers have the right to withdraw their child from **the sex education component** of RSE (i.e., those lessons dealing with intimate and sexual relationships and sexual health) **until three terms before the pupil turns 16**. After that point, if the pupil wishes to receive the sex education, the school will make appropriate arrangements for this. GOV.UK
    - Note: The right to withdraw does **not** apply to Relationships Education, Health Education or statutory curriculum elements (such as puberty, reproduction, contraception, STIs) that are part of the broader guidance. National Governance Association+1
- If a parent wishes to withdraw their child, the Principal (or designated senior leader) will hold a discussion with the parent (and pupil where appropriate) to ensure their views are understood, to offer clarity about the curriculum purpose and content, and to explain potential implications of withdrawal (e.g., pupil may hear peer content, social/emotional consequences).
- The school will provide alternative, purposeful learning for any pupil withdrawn from sex education lessons, ensuring their learning continues in a safe environment.
- For pupils with SEND, parental withdrawal requests will be treated with due care; however, pupils' individual needs and best interests will be taken into account in deciding whether withdrawal is appropriate.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND INCLUSION

- RSE is inclusive: all pupils, irrespective of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability, ethnicity or background, have equal entitlement to high-quality RSE.
- Our curriculum will avoid discrimination on any grounds and will promote equality and respect for diversity.
- Teaching resources will be reviewed to ensure they are free from stereotyping, bias, and cultural or gender assumptions, and are accessible to all pupils.
- Pupils who are absent (e.g., through illness, school refusal) will be supported via online resources (where appropriate) so that they continue to have access to broadly the same content as their peers.
- The school will challenge issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and gender stereotypes. The statutory guidance instructs schools to foster healthy, respectful peer-to-peer behaviour and make clear that sexual harassment and sexual violence are unacceptable.

SAFEGUARDING AND LEGAL CONTEXT

- Staff teaching RSE have a duty of care and must follow the school's safeguarding policy (including Keeping Children Safe in Education) at all times.
- It is a criminal offence for a person aged 18 or over to engage in sexual activity with a child under 16, if the older person is in a position of trust. The school will ensure teaching reflects the legal context, including issues of consent, exploitation, online risks and safeguarding.
- Pupils will be taught about the law relating to sexual behaviour, harassment, consent, exploitation, online pornography, and grooming.
- Confidentiality: While lessons may refer to sensitive issues, pupils will be reminded that the classroom is not a place for personal disclosures and staff cannot promise absolute confidentiality. Procedures for safeguarding disclosures will be followed if required.

TEACHING ISSUES AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Ground rules and safe classroom environment

- Staff will establish ground rules in RSE lessons: for example, no one (teacher or pupil) will be required to answer a personal question, no one will be forced to participate in discussion, language used will be inclusive and understandable, and anatomically correct terms will be used for body parts.
- Pupils will be involved in negotiating additional rules for discussion, and distancing techniques (case studies, role-play, third person language) will be used to reduce disclosure of personal information.
- Teachers will ensure they create a safe, respectful, and non-judgemental classroom atmosphere.

Dealing with difficult questions

- If a question posed by a pupil in a lesson is too explicit, personal, or outside the planned curriculum, a teacher may choose to respond later and report it as a safeguarding concern.
- If a disclosure of concern arises (e.g., abuse, grooming, exploitation), the staff member will follow our school's safeguarding policy promptly (reporting the concern on CPOMS or, if the pupil is at immediate risk, making urgent contact with a DSL).

Specific content areas

- **Menstruation**: Pupils will be prepared for menstruation, with basic information given to all pupils to remove misconceptions. Arrangements will be made for sanitary provision, disposal facilities and support for pupils who need it.

- **Contraception, STI prevention, abortion**: Pupils will learn about contraception, emergency contraception, sexual health services, STI prevention and treatment, and the choices and support available in the event of unplanned pregnancy (including abortion).

- **LGBTQ+ inclusion**: The curriculum will be fully inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils and relationships. It will use inclusive language (e.g., "partner") and will ensure content is relevant and positive for all pupils. Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying is not tolerated and is addressed under the school's anti-bullying and behaviour policies.

- **Online behaviour and risks**: Pupils will learn about the influence of social media, the risks of sharing intimate images, pornography, online grooming, sexting, and how to manage digital consent, boundaries and their digital footprint.

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

- The PSHE/RSE Coordinator is responsible for the development, implementation and oversight of the RSE curriculum. The Vice Principal holds overall responsibility for PSHE/RSE across the academy.
- The curriculum will be regularly reviewed (at least annually) with input from staff, pupils, parents/carers and governors. The review will evaluate content, delivery, outcomes, inclusivity, and alignment with current statutory guidance and best practice.
- Governors will receive regular reports on RSE provision and outcomes to help ensure accountability and continuous improvement.
- Any complaints about the RSE programme should be addressed via the school's published complaints procedure, which is available on the school website.

POLICY APPROVAL AND REVIEW

This RSE policy was approved by the Governing Body of Huish Episcopi Academy and will be reviewed in full every two years or earlier if there are changes in statutory guidance, legislation, or significant school context changes. As part of our policy review, a consultation will be held with parents (online survey and in-person meeting).