

Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Policy December 2024

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1. Introduction

This policy takes into account:

- The Education Act 1996.
- The Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHCE) framework.
- The National Healthy Schools Standard.
- The DfEE "Sex & Relationship Education Guidance" of July 2000 (Ref: DfEE 0116/2000).
- Ofsted 2006 report on Sex and Relationships (HM1433)
- The DfEE "Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education" (September 2020) and
- Ofsted 2018 report on Relationships and Sex Education in Schools (England), Number 06103.
- Section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- Children, Schools and Families Act 2010.
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges September 2022.

2. Principles

Mersey View Learning Trust's Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education curriculum is based upon the following principles:

- Effective relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health education is an essential part of the curriculum if young people are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives.
- The key objective of relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health education is to help and support young people through their physical, emotional, and moral development.
- As part of the new PSHCE framework, relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health education will help students to develop the necessary skills and understanding for them to lead confident, healthy, and independent lives.
- The relationships education will cover five main topics 'Families and people who care for me', 'Caring friendships', 'Respectful relationships', 'Online relationships', and 'Being safe'.
- As part of relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health education, students should be taught about the nature and importance of marriage as well as issues relating to the demands of family life and parenthood.
- Pupils should learn the significance of marriage and stable relationships as key building blocks of community and society. However, care must be taken to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of students based on their home circumstances.
- Pupils will learn to identify abusive behaviour and be made aware of different avenues to seek help if they are experiencing or notice abuse.
- Pupils should be given accurate and up to date information regarding relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health matters and are encouraged to develop skills that promote an understanding of difference and a respect for themselves and others.
- Effective **RSE** does not encourage early sexual experimentation. Students should be taught the reasons for delaying sexual activity and the benefits to be gained from such delay. They will also be encouraged to seek appropriate advice on sexual health matters.
- It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that the needs of all students are met, whatever their developing sexuality. However, there should be no direct promotion of sexual orientation.

- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education promotes equal, safe, and enjoyable relationships and is to be taught in a way which fosters both genders, and LBQT equality, which is line with the Equalities Act 2010.

3. Aims and Objectives of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education at Mersey View Learning Trust:

3.1 Aims

- To contribute to the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of students.
- To contribute to the National Healthy School Standard.
- To support the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

3.2 Objectives

- To teach about one-to-one relationships, the value of love and care and the responsibilities of parenthood.
- To be inclusive of all our young people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, culture, or family circumstances.
- To build self-esteem.
- To teach pupils how to take responsibility for themselves and others and how to deal with the consequences of their actions.
- To provide students with information about different methods of contraception, safe sex and how to access local sources of advice and treatment.
- To give young people a clear understanding of the arguments for delaying sexual activity and resisting pressure.
- To ensure that students have a clear understanding of consent and understand what is meant by 'no means no'.
- To ensure pupils have the tools to make well-informed, positive choices for their mental and physical wellbeing and health.
- To link **RSE** with issues of peer pressure and other risk-taking behaviour in order to promote young people's personal safety and well-being, including safeguarding issues such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- To ensure students understand how the law applies to sexual relationships.

4. What is Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education?

Relationship Education provides information, skills and principles that help and support individuals in fostering healthy and stable relationships.

RSE provides young people with the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship. RSE includes the characteristics of healthy friendships on and offline.

RSE ensures that both boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings, drawing on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the national curriculum for science. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, gender, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching.

Health Education provides information to enable pupils to make well-informed, positive choices for their mental and physical wellbeing and health. The Health Education section has for main topics: puberty, the changing adolescent body, menstrual wellbeing, and the menstrual cycle.

4.1 Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education has three main elements:

4.1.1 Attitudes and Values

- Learning the importance of values, individual conscience, and moral considerations.
- Learning the value of family life, marriage, and stable loving relationships for the nurturing of children.
- Learning the value of respect, love, and care.
- Exploring, considering, and exploring moral dilemmas; and developing critical thinking as part of decision making.

4.1.2 Personal and Social Skills

- Learning to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively.
- Developing self-respect and empathy for others.
- Learning to make choices based on an understanding of difference and an absence of prejudice.
- Developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made.
- Managing conflict; and learning how to recognise exploitation and abuse and to develop strategies to deal with these issues.

4.1.3 Knowledge and Understanding

- Learning and understanding physical development at appropriate stages.
- Understanding human sexuality, reproduction, sexual health emotions and relationships.
- Learning about contraception and the range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception, and support services.
- Learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity, and the benefits to be gained from such delay.
- The avoidance of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.
- Understanding the implications of on-line relationships and know how to manage them safely, including the avoidance of sexting and sharing of explicit sexual pictures and videos with others for their protection.

4.2 How is Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Delivered at Mersey View Learning Trust?

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education at Mersey View Learning Trust follows current DfEE guidelines for schools (2000). It is principally delivered through two main curriculum areas:

I. PSHEE Curriculum and Student Support for Well-Being

In addition to our own staff who deliver **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education** through PSHCE in Key Stage 3 and Personal Learning in Key Stage 4. At times we draw upon the expertise of various outside agencies to help in the delivery of **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education** in assemblies or in special presentations.

II. National Curriculum Science

N.B: **RSE** related issues may, on occasion, be raised in other subjects including Religious Studies, English, Drama, General Studies, and Art.

KEY STAGE 2

Sex Education (Primary)

The Relationships Education, RSE, and Health Education (England) Regulations.

2019 have made Relationships Education compulsory in all primary schools. Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools and the content set out in this guidance therefore focuses on Relationships Education.

The content set out in this guidance covers everything that primary schools should teach about relationships and health, including puberty. The national curriculum for science also includes subject content in related areas, such as the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals. It will be for primary schools to determine whether they need to cover any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of their pupils. Many primary schools already choose to teach some aspects of sex education and will continue to do so, although it is not a requirement.

It is important that the transition phase before moving to secondary school supports pupils' ongoing emotional and physical development effectively. The Department continues to recommend therefore that all primary schools should have A sex education programme tailored to the age and the physical and emotional maturity of the pupils. It should ensure that both boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings and – drawing on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the national curriculum for science - how a baby is conceived and born. As well as consulting parents more generally about the school's overall policy, primary schools should consult parents before the final year of primary school about the detailed content of what will be taught. This process should include offering parents support in talking to their children about sex education and how to link this with what is being taught in school. Meeting these objectives will require a graduated, age-appropriate programme of sex education. Teaching needs to take account of the developmental differences of children.

Where a maintained primary school chooses to teach aspects of sex education (which go beyond the national curriculum for science), the school must set this out in their policy and all schools should consult with parents on what is to be covered.

Primary schools that choose to teach sex education must allow parents a right to withdraw their children. Unlike sex education in RSE at secondary, in primary schools, head teachers must comply with a parent's wish to withdraw their child from sex education beyond the national curriculum for science. Schools will want to draw on the good practice for conversations with parents around the right to withdraw.

Schools must also ensure that their teaching and materials are appropriate having regard to the age and religious backgrounds of their pupils. Schools will also want to recognise the significance of other factors, such as any special educational needs or disabilities of their pupils.

KEY STAGE 3

In Year 7 students will learn about:

- Friendship and developing positive working relationships.
- Recognising and dealing with bullying, including E-safety.
- Relationship boundaries, unwanted contact and consent.
- Personal hygiene.
- Adolescent change.
- Mental and physical wellbeing.
- Marriage and family life.
- Family roles and responsibilities.

- Effects of changes caused by divorce, separation, bereavement, and new family members.
- Negotiating with adults.
- Tackling discrimination.
- FGM.

In Year 8 students will learn about:

- Personal hygiene.
- Gender identity.
- Sexual diversity and attraction.
- Challenging homo/bi/transphobia.
- Exploring modern family life.
- Positive relationships.
- Mental and physical wellbeing.
- Adolescent change.
- Reproduction and sex education, including the law.
- Consent.
- Sexting.
- Contraception and STIs.
- The consequences of high-risk behaviour in relation to sexual activity.
- Equality & tackling discrimination.

KEY STAGE 4

In Years 9, 10 and 11 students will learn about:

- Understanding sex and sexuality.
- STIs: knowing the facts from the myths.
- Sexual readiness and consent.
- Sexual harassment.
- Getting sex and relationship advice.
- Tackling homo/bi/transphobia.
- Tackling discrimination and prejudice.
- Mental and physical wellbeing.
- The impact of drug and alcohol use on relationships.
- How having a baby changes a relationship.
- The reality of young parenting.
- The financial cost of parenting.
- HIV / AIDS – the global dimension.
- Contraception – making the right choices.
- Pregnancy.
- Pornography Education.
- Exploitation in relationships.
- Domestic violence

II. National Curriculum Science

At secondary school, the National Curriculum in Science requires that the following elements of **RSE** should be taught:

KEY STAGE 3

- Fertilisation in humans is the fusion of a male and female cell.
- The physical and emotional changes that take place during adolescence.
- The human reproductive system, the menstrual cycle and fertilisation.
- How the foetus develops in the uterus.
- How the growth and reproduction of bacteria and the replication of viruses can affect health.
- How fertilisation can be prevented by contraception and how some methods of contraception protect us from disease.

KEY STAGE 4

- The way in which hormonal control occurs, including the effects of sex hormones.
- Some medical uses of hormones, including the control and promotion of fertility.
- The defence mechanisms of the body.
- How sex is determined in humans.

5. The School Nurse

The school nurse can play a key role in terms of advice and provision of pastoral support for students and resources.

The school nurse and other health professionals follow guidelines which allow them to give advice and treatment to young people under 16 years old, without the knowledge or consent of the parents/carers, if that is in the young person's best interests. They will, however, encourage the young person to talk to their parents/carers. Only in cases where there is abuse or serious risk of harm would the health professional follow child protection procedures and breach the young person's confidentiality. The young person would be kept fully informed at all stages of the procedure.

When the school nurse sees pupils on a one-to-one basis, she will follow these professional guidelines. **RSE** lessons will inform pupils of their entitlement to seek confidential help, including contraceptive and sexual health advice and treatment, and they will be taught about how they can access local services for this both inside and outside school.

6. Pupils with SEND

As far as is appropriate, pupils with special educational needs should follow the same PSHCE education programme as all other students. Careful consideration is given concerning the level of differentiation needed, and in some cases the content or delivery will have to be adapted. Where necessary, teachers and/or teaching assistants work with individual pupils, if appropriate.

It is not the school's policy to withdraw pupils with special educational needs from PSHE education to catch up on other national curriculum subjects: these aspects of personal and social development are as important to all pupils as their academic achievement.

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life. At Valewood, we take care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures). At Valewood we reflect sensitively and consider that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example: looked after children or young carers).

Parents are the key people in teaching their children about sex, relationships and growing up. Their important role as sex educators is recognised in the Home Office strategy "Supporting Families", and the school seeks to work in close partnership with parents in this area.

As teachers have a key responsibility for the safety and welfare of pupils, they consequently act in loco parentis. Therefore, it is important to reassure parents that the personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers, and the representatives of outside agencies, will not influence the teaching of relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health education within the school's PSHCE framework. All **RSE** teaching will reflect and support the values set out in this policy document and current legislation.

The **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education** policy will be communicated to parents via the website. Parents have the right to withdraw their child from some, or all, **RSE** lessons, but not from statutory Science lessons.

The key purpose of this policy statement is to reassure parents that the school's **RSE** programme will complement and support their role as parents. However, parents do have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health education provided at school, except for those parts not included in the statutory National Curriculum.

If a parent/carer has any concerns about the **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education** provision we will take time to address their concerns and allay any fears they may have. If any parents/ carers decide to withdraw their child, we shall work with them and their child to explore possible alternative provision. Any parent wishing to withdraw their child is encouraged to make an appointment with their child's progress leader to discuss the matter. Any complaints about the content or delivery of **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education** should be addressed to the Headteacher through the school complaints procedure.

7. Safeguarding and Confidentiality

Teachers need to be aware that effective relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health education, which brings an understanding of what is and is not acceptable in a relationship, may lead to disclosure of a child protection issue. The staff member will inform the Designated Child Protection person in line with Mersey View Learning Trust's procedures for dealing with child protection concerns. A member of staff cannot promise absolute confidentiality if concerns exist. Staff must make this clear to students. Child protection procedures must be followed when any disclosures about abuse are made. It is very rare for a student to request absolute confidentiality. If they do, in situations other than those involving child protection issues, staff must make a careful judgement about whether or not a third party needs to be informed.

This judgement will be based upon:

- The seriousness of the situation and the degree of harm that the student may be experiencing.
- The student's age, maturity, and competence to make their own decisions. Where it is clear that a student would benefit from the involvement of a third party, staff should seek the consent of the student to do so.
- If appropriate, staff might inform the third party together with the student. Unless clearly inappropriate, students will be encouraged to discuss issues with their parents/ carers.
- There may be occasions when a teacher learns that a student under 16 is having or contemplating having sexual intercourse. In this case the teacher should:
 - Make sure the student is aware of the need to seek contraceptive and sexual health advice and knows how to get this.
 - Encourage the student to talk to a parent/carer.
 - Discuss the situation with the Child Protection designated lead who will then advise whether the school's child protection procedure needs to be followed. The student will be kept fully informed at all stages.

8. Dealing with Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education related bullying

Bullying commonly includes inappropriate and hurtful comments and behaviours concerning sexism, homo/bi/transphobia, appearance, and other sex/relationship issues. Mersey View Learning Trust takes the issue of bullying very seriously and this is reflected in the school's anti-bullying policy. Staff will challenge and deal sensitively with any evidence of bullying. Students will be encouraged to report any incidents. Staff will endeavour to investigate any incidents of bullying as soon as possible and give feedback to students who complain of bullying.

The PSHCEE curriculum will consider bullying and aim to discourage bullying based on sexism, homophobia, appearance, and other sex/relationship issues.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education** programme is regularly reviewed by the MAT School leaders both for science a, PSHE and Curriculum.

The Relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and Education Policy is reviewed in the context of the new PSHEE framework and current government guidelines and legislation.

It is the responsibility of the governing body and the Headteacher to ensure that the SRE policy is developed and made available for inspection.

OFSTED is statutorily required under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 to evaluate and report on the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of pupils at any school they inspect. This process includes evaluating and commenting on a school's relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health education policy and programme of study.

Review

This policy is reviewed yearly by the Trust. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.