



# Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy (Secondary)

Document Provenance	
Approver:	Education Committee
Date Approved:	26 February 2026
Effective From:	26 February 2026
Date of Next Review:	February 2027
Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Owner:	National Director of Secondary Education

*Unless there are legislative or regulatory changes in the interim, this policy will be reviewed annually. Should no substantive changes be required at that point, the policy will move to the next review cycle.*

Version Control		
Version	Date	Changes
1.0	26/02/2026	In-cycle policy review and re-approval

**Policy Purpose and Summary:**

The policy outlines the legal framework around relationships and sex education for secondary school pupils and explains how the curriculum content will be determined and quality assured.

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**Summary of changes at last review:**

- Expanded definition of Relationships & Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education
- Updated legal framework references, including:
  - Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
  - Sections 406 & 407 of the Education Act 1996 (Political Impartiality)
  - The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)
- Greater emphasis on inclusivity, with specific references to:
  - LGBT+ relationships being fully integrated into the curriculum
  - Tailored RSE approaches for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Strengthened safeguarding provisions, including:
  - Clarification on confidentiality and disclosure procedures
  - Establishment of a safe learning environment for sensitive discussions
- Refined curriculum content and delivery, with new additions on:
  - Online safety (social media risks, sexting, grooming, and consent)
  - The impact of pornography and harmful media representations
  - Healthy romantic relationships and recognising coercive control
- Stronger parental engagement and consultation process, including:
  - More structured parental notifications on RSE curriculum delivery
  - Clearer guidelines on the right to withdraw from non-statutory sex education
- Enhanced expectations for staff training, with a focus on:
  - Regular CPD to address emerging RSE trends
  - Training on handling sensitive and controversial issues
- Improved vetting process for external agencies and speakers, ensuring:
  - Resources align with statutory guidance and school values
  - Prevention of partnerships with organisations promoting extreme political views
- Annual curriculum reviews introduced, allowing:
  - Responsive updates to reflect new societal challenges and risks
- Feedback-driven improvements from students, staff, and parents

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## 1. Introduction and purpose

- 1.1 Relationships and sex education is giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship is like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship. It should also cover contraception, develop intimate relationships and resist pressure to have sex (and not applying pressure). It should teach what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships. This will help 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. Health Education is teaching pupils about physical health and mental wellbeing (and that they are interlinked) to give them the information that they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing. It should enable them to recognise what is normal and what is an issue in themselves and others and, when issues arise, know how to seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.
- 1.2 Relationships and sex education (hereafter to include health education) is a key part of helping children and young people to stay safe and be well-prepared for life in modern Britain. This policy outlines the legal framework around relationship education for secondary school pupils, how the curriculum is planned, and quality checked and confirmation that from September 2020, parents cannot withdraw pupils from Relationships Education. Parents may request withdrawal from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE curriculum; such requests should normally be granted up to three terms before the pupil's sixteenth birthday, after which the pupil may choose to receive sex education if they wish. Parents should be aware that our academies must uphold the legal duties set out in the Equality Act 2010 and not discriminate against anyone with protected characteristics.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all E-ACT secondary academies.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all pupils in Years 7 to 13 and includes:
  - Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) for secondary pupils
  - Health Education, delivered through PSHE (Personal, Social, Health, and Economic) education

## 3. Legislation and regulation

- 3.1 The statutory framework for Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education came into force in September 2020 under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and accompanying statutory guidance. Section 34 requires:
  - Relationships education to be provided to pupils of compulsory school age receiving primary education at schools in England
  - Relationships and sex education to be provided (instead of sex education) to pupils receiving secondary education at schools in England
- 3.2 Under the regulations, schools are required to:
  - Publish a statement of policy in relation to the education to be provided and make this available to parents or other people
  - Set out the circumstances in which a pupil may be excused from receiving relationships and sex education or specified elements of that education
  - Ensure that when relationships education or relationships and sex education delivered, pupils are taught about:

- Safety in forming and maintaining relationships
  - The characteristics of healthy relationships
  - How relationships may affect physical and mental health and wellbeing
- 3.3 In delivering this curriculum, education must be appropriate to the age and religious background of the pupils.
- 3.4 Academies must also have regard to the statutory guidance 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (DfE):
- Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education must be accessible for all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). High-quality, differentiated teaching will be the starting point to ensure accessibility. The academy's SENDCo, alongside the Headteacher, will have oversight of this aspect.
  - Schools retain the freedom to determine an age-appropriate and developmentally suitable curriculum which meets the needs of their pupils.
  - Pupils will be made aware of relevant legal provisions when appropriate topics are taught. Where legal matters arise, pupils will be directed to appropriate sources of information.
- 3.5 This policy adheres to the following statutory guidance and legal requirements:
- [DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education Statutory Guidance \(2019\)](#)
  - [The Equality Act 2010](#)
  - [The Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)
  - [The Education Act 2002](#)
  - [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(latest version\)](#)
  - [Sections 406 and 407 of the Education Act 1996](#)
  - The Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010)
- 3.6 Preparation for revised statutory guidance (effective September 2026):
- In July 2025, the Department for Education published revised statutory guidance Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, which will replace the 2019 guidance and come into statutory force on 1 September 2026.
  - E-ACT academies will continue to comply fully with the current statutory guidance until that date. In preparation for the revised guidance, the Trust will undertake a structured review of curriculum content, resources, staff training and parental engagement arrangements to ensure full compliance by September 2026.
  - Once the revised guidance comes into effect, this policy and associated curriculum provision will be updated as required to reflect statutory expectations.

## 4. Policy statement

- 4.1 The academy aims to help pupils understand:
- Characteristics of a healthy family (commitment, stability, care, security etc.) and how to recognise/respond if a family relationship is making them feel unhappy/unsafe
  - Respecting differences in others' families
  - That marriage (civil or religious) is a formal/legal commitment intended for life
  - The importance of friendships and their characteristics (caring, respect, trust, loyalty, kindness etc.); and how to recognise/respond if a friendship is making them feel unhappy/unsafe
  - Respect and respecting difference (including self-respect, bullying, cyberbullying, stereotyping, permission-seeking/giving)
  - Online risks (people, relationships, data) and how to stay safe online/report concerns

- Being safe through boundaries, privacy, a person's body belonging to them, responding appropriately to adults, how to recognise/report feeling unsafe and abuse
  - The importance of their physical, emotional, and moral development
  - How to develop skills to enable them to make healthy responsible choices about their health and wellbeing (including mental health)
  - How to move more confidently and responsibly into adolescence
  - Basic first aid
  - The facts/risks with smoking, alcohol, and drugs
  - Different types of committed relationships and why marriage must be freely entered.
  - Characteristics of successful parenting
  - How to determine whether sources of information are trustworthy and when a relationship is unsafe
  - Managing conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships
  - How stereotypes can cause damage (e.g., normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice)
  - Tolerance of others' beliefs
  - Violent behaviour, coercive control, sexual harassment and why these are always unacceptable
  - Risks with sharing online material, the impact of viewing harmful content, how data is collected/shared/used online
  - The concepts and laws of a range of safeguarding risks (i.e., sexual consent, exploitation, grooming, domestic abuse, honour-based abuse, FGM (Female Genital Mutilation))
  - Intimate and sexual relationships including sexual health and the increased risks with alcohol and drugs
- 4.2 This policy is fully considered in conjunction with Keeping Children Safe in Education (latest version) and it is a key aspect of safeguarding through raising pupils' awareness and providing an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues.
- 4.3 In preparation for the revised statutory guidance effective from September 2026, Relationships, Sex and Health Education will continue to be delivered in a way that is factually accurate, age-appropriate, safeguarding-led and free from political or ideological bias. Teaching will promote respectful behaviour, challenge harmful stereotypes, and support pupils to develop the knowledge and skills needed to stay safe, particularly in online contexts.

## 5. Policy development

- 3.1 Each academy should undertake their own local consultation with staff, pupils and parents/carers regarding their RSE policy. The consultation and policy development process should involve the following steps:
- **Review:** A member of staff or working group bringing together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance
  - **Staff consultation:** All school staff being given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations
  - **Parent/stakeholder consultation:** Parents/carers and any interested parties being invited to attend a meeting about the policy
  - **Pupil consultation:** Investigating what exactly pupils want from their RSE

## 6. Definition

- 6.1 RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity.
- 6.2 RSE involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values.
- 6.3 RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

## 7. Coordination and implementation

- 7.1 The proposed content of a programme of relationship education from Year 7 to Year 13 will be determined by each academy and overseen by the Education Directors.
- 7.2 The headteacher in each secondary academy will oversee the planning of a programme of content for relationships education. Each Education Director will review this on an annual basis with our secondary headteachers. The headteachers will ensure it is age appropriate, meets all statutory guidance, is inclusive and is taught well.
- 7.3 Relationships and sex education is coordinated by the Personal Development Lead and delivered through:
  - National curriculum subjects (e.g., citizenship, science, computing, PE, RE)
  - Themes and topics within PSHE
  - Spiritual, moral, social, and cultural provision; Pastoral, tutor time, check-ins, and assemblies
  - Discrete RSE lessons within the PSHE curriculum
  - Science lessons covering biological aspects of sex education
  - Cross-curricular links with subjects such as computing, RE, and citizenship
  - Workshops and assemblies, including sessions with external agencies
  - Use of external agencies/organisations to enhance existing delivery- The academy will ensure appropriate checks are completed on any visitors to ensure their credentials and that the delivery is in line with the planned programme.
- 7.4 Staff will ensure clear ground rules are set when teaching sensitive topics. Examples include safeguarding, confidentiality, respect, listening and non-judgemental.
- 7.5 We have high expectations of the quality of pupils' work within relationships education. We will build on the knowledge that pupils have previously acquired and obtain regular feedback to assess and capture progress.

### Staff Training

- 7.6 All teachers involved in delivering RSE will receive appropriate training to ensure lessons are age-appropriate and sensitive. Regular CPD will be provided to address emerging trends and best practices in RSE.

### Use of external visitors

- 7.7 External speakers may be invited to enrich the RSE programme. All external visitors will be vetted in line with the school's safeguarding policy, and materials will be reviewed for suitability.

## 8. RSE curriculum content

- 8.1 Although the core statutory RSE content must remain unchanged, academies can add additional topics that can be tailored to meet local needs.

- 8.2 Each academy's RSE curriculum should be tailored to meet the developmental needs of pupils and is age-appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive. It focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds. It is built around the following themes:
- Secondary Curriculum (Relationships and Sex Education):
    - Building healthy romantic relationships
    - Contraception, sexual health, and reproductive choices
    - Consent and recognising harmful relationships
    - The impact of media and online risks
- 8.3 These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life, taking care to make sure 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 and foster parents/carers, amongst other structures), along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example, looked-after children or young carers).
- 8.4 We will also be mindful of the law and legal requirements, taking care not to condone or encourage illegal political activity, such as violent action against people, criminal damage to property, hate crime, terrorism or the illegal use of drugs.
- 8.5 All lessons are underpinned by principles of respect, responsibility, and empathy.
- 8.6 For an RSE curriculum overview and topics covered, please refer to Appendix 1. We may need to adapt the curriculum as and when necessary. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so that pupils are fully informed and don't seek answers online.
- 8.7 We will share all curriculum materials with parents and carers upon request.

## 9. The role of parents

- 9.1 We wish to build a positive and supporting relationship with the parents of children at the academy through mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation.
- 9.2 In promoting this objective, we:
- Inform parents about the academy's relationship education policy and practice
  - Answer any questions that parents may have about the relationship education of their child
  - Inform parents about the best practice known regarding relationship education
- 9.3 We believe that, through this mutual exchange of knowledge and information, children will benefit from being given consistent messages about their changing bodies and their increasing responsibilities.
- 9.4 We will provide clear opportunities for all parents and carers to know what will be taught and when, and to discuss the programme of relationship education lessons so that they understand the purpose and our approach. We will explain what the issues are and how they are taught and give parents and carers the opportunity to see the materials the academy uses in its teaching. Where additional content (beyond the science curriculum) in relation to sex education is being considered for inclusion, parents/carers will be consulted prior to delivery.
- 9.5 Parents should note that there is no right to withdraw pupils from Relationships Education in secondary schools.

- 9.6 Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory relationships and sex education. Requests for withdrawal must be made in writing to the Headteacher, who will arrange a meeting to discuss the request. We will discuss any request with parents/carers (and the child if appropriate) to understand the rationale, provide clarity on the purpose, the benefits of inclusion and the detrimental effects of withdrawal. This will be recorded on CPOMS. Once those discussions have taken place, the request should normally be granted, except in exceptional circumstances, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will decide to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.
- 9.7 As part of preparation for the revised statutory guidance effective from September 2026, academies will continue to strengthen transparency and communication with parents and carers. This will include clear information about curriculum content, the approach taken to sensitive topics, and opportunities for parents and carers to view materials and discuss provision with the academy.

## 10. Training

- 10.1 Headteachers are responsible for organising the training of staff and assuring the quality of this training.
- 10.2 Staff will receive training that equips them with the knowledge and understanding to deliver our E-ACT policy and programme of relationships and sex education lessons effectively.
- 10.3 Staff wellbeing will also be always considered. Staff will discuss with their line manager if they have any personal experience or views that need to be considered to ensure delivery is appropriate and effective for all.
- 10.4 The DfE have provided useful resources to support this process:
- DfE Guidance: [Teacher Training- Being Safe](#)
  - DfE Guidance: [Teaching about relationships, sex and health](#)
- 10.5 The PSHE Association also provides a wealth of resources to support staff training: [www.pshe-association.org.uk](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk)
- 10.6 In preparation for the revised statutory guidance effective from September 2026, staff training will include updates on new statutory expectations, managing sensitive or contested issues, and delivering Relationships, Sex and Health Education in a way that is safeguarding-led, neutral and age-appropriate.

## 11. Responsibilities

- 11.1 The following responsibilities apply in relation to this policy:
- **The Education Committee** is responsible for evaluating the impact of the policy and for reviewing it annually to ensure compliance with statutory regulations.
  - **The National Directors of Education and the Education Directors** are responsible for monitoring the implementation and impact of the policy.
  - **Headteachers** (together with Personal Development Leads) are responsible for implementing the policy and assuring high quality in the teaching of relationships and sex education.
  - **Staff** are responsible for:
    - Delivering RSE in a sensitive way

- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents/carers wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory/non-science 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 headteacher.
- **Pupils** are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

#### Staff responsible for teaching RSE

- Year 7-13 Form Tutors

## 12. Inclusivity and equal opportunities

- 12.1 We are committed to providing an RSE curriculum that is inclusive of all pupils, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or family background.
- 12.2 Lessons will be tailored to meet the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ensuring accessibility and understanding.
- 12.3 Our teaching will comply with the Equality Act 2010, promoting respect for diversity and preventing discrimination.
- 12.4 Discussions around LGBT+ relationships will be fully integrated into the curriculum, ensuring that all pupils understand different family structures and relationships.
- 12.5 We will also make sure that pupils learn about these topics in an environment that's appropriate for them, for example in:
- A whole class setting
  - Small groups or targeted sessions
  - 1-to-1 discussions
  - Digital formats
  - Consider the level of differentiation needed

## 13. Safeguarding and confidentiality

- 13.1 RSE will be delivered in a safe and supportive environment where pupils feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics.
- **Confidentiality:** Teachers will respect pupils' privacy, but they will follow the school's safeguarding procedures if a disclosure indicates a risk to the child.
  - **Safe Learning Environment:** Ground rules will be established to ensure discussions remain respectful and inclusive. Pupils will be given the opportunity to ask anonymous questions to maintain privacy.

## 14. Supporting vulnerable pupils

- 14.1 We recognise that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying, and other risks, which is why we provide additional support to ensure they benefit fully from RSE.
- Pupils with SEND will have access to adapted materials and delivery methods to meet their needs. The SENCo will work closely with the RSE Lead to tailor teaching.
  - Pupils in Alternative Provision (AP) should be given personalised RSE sessions to address their unique risks and needs by the academy or provision as agreed.

- Targeted interventions will be provided where necessary, such as small group sessions on managing peer pressure or understanding consent.

## 15. Teaching sensitive and controversial issues

15.1 RSE involves the discussion of sensitive and sometimes controversial topics, such as sexuality, gender identity, and reproductive health. We will ensure that:

- Teachers receive training on how to handle sensitive discussions with professionalism and respect.
- Clear ground rules will be established to ensure respectful dialogue and the inclusion of all pupils.
- External speakers discussing sensitive topics will be thoroughly vetted, and their materials reviewed for suitability.
- Pupils will be provided with opportunities to ask questions anonymously to support open dialogue.

## 16. Relationships and online safety

16.1 RSE at E-ACT academies will prepare pupils to navigate online relationships safely and responsibly. Lessons will cover:

- Recognising and managing risks associated with social media and online interactions
- Understanding the importance of privacy, consent, and personal data protection online
- Identifying and reporting harmful behaviours, such as cyberbullying, grooming, and sexting
- Strategies to build resilience and self-esteem, reducing vulnerability to online exploitation

## 17. Responding to emerging issues

17.1 The RSE curriculum will be reviewed annually to address emerging issues affecting pupils, including but not limited to:

- Social media trends that may pose risks to safety and well-being
- Changes in national health data, such as rising concerns around sexual health or mental health
- Legislative changes affecting RSE or safeguarding
- Feedback from safeguarding teams, health professionals, or local authorities
- Pupils will be provided with opportunities to ask questions anonymously to support open dialogue

## 18. Working with external agencies

18.1 We will work with external agencies to enhance RSE with real-world expertise, ensuring all content aligns with legal requirements and British values. Agencies and materials will be age-appropriate, balanced, and compliant with relevant legislation (Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, Education Act 1996).

- Before engagement, we will:
- Vet agencies and resources for suitability and compliance
- Ensure speakers align with curriculum objectives and safeguarding standards
- Review materials in advance and seek feedback on their credibility
- Require staff presence in all external sessions
- Share resources with parents where applicable

- 18.2 We will not work with agencies that promote extreme political views or use materials from such groups.

## 19. Confidentiality and disclosures

- 19.1 Pupils may share personal information during RSE lessons. All staff will follow the school's safeguarding procedures, including:
- Maintaining confidentiality where possible but understanding when to report safeguarding concerns
  - Explaining to pupils that some information, if concerning their safety, will need to be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
  - Recording any disclosures following the school's safeguarding policy

## 20. Monitoring and compliance

- 20.1 The RSE programme will be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure that it remains effective and relevant. Evaluation will include:
- Feedback from pupils through discussions and surveys
  - Feedback from parents and carers collected during consultation sessions
  - Lesson observations and curriculum reviews by senior leaders
  - Analysis of pupil outcomes and behaviour data related to topics covered
- 20.2 This policy will be monitored during Challenge Days throughout the year.
- 20.3 The Education Directors will work with headteachers to review compliance with this policy and provide an evaluation to the Executive Leadership Team about implementation including the quality of staff training and engagement with parents/carers.
- 20.4 Monitoring and evaluation activities will also consider the academy's readiness for the revised statutory guidance effective on 1 September 2026. This will include review of curriculum provision, staff training, parental engagement and safeguarding practice, with assurance provided to the Education Directors, Executive Leadership Team and the Education Committee.

## APPENDIX 1

### RSE Curriculum Overview

Please refer to our Whole School PSHE Curriculum Overview on our website-  
<https://www.ousedale.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=1378>