

**RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION
(RSE)
POLICY 2021 (DRAFT)**

Ratified by the Governors Curriculum Committee:
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This Policy is due for review

'Making a positive difference to students' achievements and experiences, maintaining the highest expectations and inspiring self-belief'

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Introduction

Relationships and Sex Education is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, about relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It is about understanding the importance of stable, loving, mutually respectful, trusting relationships within the context of families (in the broadest sense) and issues of privacy and consent in the context of personal safety exploitation and abuse. RSE should provide young people with the skills for building positive, enjoyable, respectful and non-exploitative relationships, a knowledge of the legal framework that exist to protect them and the availability of support services to help them if things go wrong.

At Highgate Wood School we recognise that children, as well as their parents and teachers, may need support to navigate an increasingly complex and digital world. Whilst the internet is an overwhelmingly positive development in our lives, it also presents significant challenges, particularly for young people. The dominance of social media, the prevalence of misinformation and the misrepresentations of reality found on-line, coupled with wider on-line threats, mean children can develop misunderstandings and misconceptions about relationships from sources that are untrustworthy or dangerous. A component of Relationships and Sex Education is to address these concerns and make students critical and resilient digital users, empowering them to make the right decisions and keep themselves happy and safe.

Highgate Wood School was an early adopter of the [Relationships education, relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education](#) that became compulsory in England from September 2020 and which schools are required to implement by at least the start of the summer term 2021. We have had to adapt the delivery of RSE due to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, school closure and remote learning and this adaptation will continue to be required as things return to a new normal and we are able to identify and address issues that arise.

Statutory Requirements

- Under section 3.6 of the National Curriculum, RSE is compulsory for year 7 onwards and we must provide RSE to all students as per section 34 of the Children and Social work act 2017.
- Secondary schools must have regard to the guidance issued by the DfE in 2000, as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act.
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education guidance (published by DfE on 25th June 2019) sets out the statutory requirements through which RSE should equip students with the information needed to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds and equip them make safe, informed and healthy choices as they progress through adult life.
- The government also endorsed the supplementary advice for schools, “Sex and relationships education for the 21st century” which was published by the PSHE Association in February 2014.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE) stipulates that it is essential that children are taught about online safeguarding and are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material

- Schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that teaching is accessible to all children and young people, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT). Inclusive RSE will foster good relations between students, tackle all types of prejudice – including homophobia – and promote understanding and respect, enabling schools to meet the requirements, and live the intended spirit, of the Equality Act 2010

Policy Development

The consultation process for this policy has involved

- Consultation with student focus groups, including the school council, through the piloting of “Positive Choices” and the consequent discussion workshops with students.
- Consultation with parents\carers via the PSA steering group and through parent workshops with the Sex Education Forum.
- Consultation with staff (teaching and support) via RSE working group
- Consultation with the school governors via the Curriculum Committee

Principles and Aims

The following principles and aims underpin Relationships and Sex Education at Highgate Wood School:

- Effective Relationships and Sex Education is a partnership between home and school;
- Relationships and Sex Education is relevant to all students at every stage of their development and should support each individual as they grow and mature, helping them to keep themselves safe from harm, both on-line and offline, enjoy their relationships with others and build confidence in accessing services if they need help and advice;
- Relationships and Sex Education should be set within the wider school context and the diverse context of students’ own cultures and beliefs, diversity of family types and circumstance;
- Relationships and Sex Education should encourage students and teachers to share and respect each other’s views and different sexual orientation and identity, without the promotion of any particular view point;
- Relationships and Sex Education should generate an atmosphere where questions and discussion can take place without stigma or embarrassment;
- Relationships and Sex Education recognises that the wider community has much to offer and we aim to work in partnership with health professionals, social workers, peer educators and other mentors or advisers and educational providers;
- Through Parent Information Evenings we aim to advise, inform and students’ families on issues around digital safety and personal well-being that connect with the RSE programme their children are following in school.

The RSE Policy has three main learning elements:

Attitudes and Values

- learning about different types of relationships, including friendships, family relationships, romantic and intimate relationships;
- appreciating the value of commitment and of stable and loving relationships (including within marriage and civil partnership);
- understanding safe online behaviours and encouraging the use of digital communications to promote well-being, respect and consideration;
- maintaining a questioning approach to information, particularly online content, and challenging myths, misconceptions and false assumptions about “normal” behaviour;
- promoting equality in relationships, recognising and challenging inequalities, particular those linked to a person’s gender and sexual orientation;
- appreciating the different experiences and needs of different individuals, including those between boys and girls

Personal and Social Skills

- learning to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively;
- learning how relationships may affect health and well-being, including the importance of good mental health and resilience;
- learning how to recognise and build healthy relationships, including self-respect and respect for others, commitment, boundaries and consent, tolerance, and empathy;
- learning how to manage conflict, and also how to recognise unhealthy relationships, including bullying, coercion and exploitation;
- developing an appreciation and acceptance of the consequences of choices made;
- developing body-confidence and general self-esteem;
- developing the self-knowledge and strength of character to avoid, resist and manage inappropriate pressures or advances (both as exploited or exploiter)
- learning how to safely navigate and occupy the on-line space of social media and treat those they encounter with caution as well as respect and tolerance.

Knowledge and Understanding

- learning about the physical and emotional changes that happen with puberty and understanding the way our bodies and feelings change as we grow and develop;
- learning about human sexuality, reproduction, sexual health and contraception;
- learning about contraception and the range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception and support services;
- developing awareness of the realities and impact of sexual exploitation and abuse, pornography, domestic violence and sexual bullying, the associated legal frameworks and the support systems available;
- learning about peer pressure and the pressures from digital technologies, including photo-manipulation, on body confidence, consent and expectations around sex and relationships;
- understanding the legal framework around RSE topics, including consent, prejudice, hate-crime, pornography and child pornography, malicious communications, bullying and coercion;

- risks associated with digital technologies, including cyberbully, the misuse of social media, including harassment, cyber-bullying, sexting and life-streaming, and the solutions and support that is available for when things go wrong

Outcomes

The RSE programme aims to provide balanced factual information about human reproduction, together with consideration of the broader emotional, ethical, religious, and moral dimensions of sexual health.

It is designed to help students keep themselves safe from harm, both on-line and offline, enjoy their relationship and build confidence in accessing relevant services if they need help or advice. It will provide the information and guidance that will help reduce early sexual activity, teenage conceptions, sexually transmitted infections and the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, domestic violence and bullying.

Relationships and Sex Education should build self-esteem and self-awareness, promote emotional well-being and improving students' ability to achieve in school. It should provide all students with a better understanding of diversity and inclusion, a reduction in gender-based and sexual-orientation based bullying and violence and a firm grasp of the difference between consenting and exploitative relationships.

The delivery of RSE should also promote the partnership between home and school, providing a source of support and advice for parents and families.

Our RSE programme aims to deliver the following outcomes for students

- positive values and a moral framework that will guide their decisions, judgements and behaviour;
- the self-esteem, confidence and knowledge to allow them to value themselves and respect others, accepting and understanding diversity and difference.
- the ability to judge what kind of relationship they want and the self-confidence to be able to reconsider and change their mind.
- an understanding of the risks presented by the internet, the knowledge that people online may not be who say they are and content may be inaccurate, mischievous or malicious.
- A strong awareness of the risks that can be presented by their online profiles and digital footprints and the importance of keeping all personal digital content secure.
- an awareness of the sources of help and the skill for issues around sex and relationships both online and in actuality, and the confidence to access confidential health advice (including mental and emotional health and advice regarding sexual identity), support, guidance and treatment if necessary or appropriate.
- an understanding of the systems that can be used to report online concerns, and the knowledge and confidence to use them when required, including reporting inappropriate online content, cyber bullying and harassment, sexting, grooming and exploiting.
- the skills to communicate effectively using appropriate terminology for sex and relationship issues;
- an understanding and appreciation of the arguments for delaying sexual activity and for sex to be part of a long term, loving, consensual and equal relationship.

- a knowledge of laws that relate to sex and relationships, particular with regard to consent, prejudice and “hate crimes” and online activity, including malicious communications and the possession, transmission and distribution of pornographic content online.
- sufficient information and skills to protect themselves and, where they have one, their partner from uninvited/unwanted conceptions and sexually transmitted infections including HIV;
- an understanding of how to behave responsibly in their social, emotional and romantic relationships with others;
- an awareness of their sexuality and understand human sexuality, challenge sexism and prejudice, and accept LGBTQ+ and gender fluidity in themselves and others;

Curriculum

Our curriculum overview is set out in the Year-by-Year summary below. This requires regular adjustment and modification due to the impact of the current situation on the RSE experiences of our students, and the need to adapt content and schedule to the means of delivery, with sensitive content not being appropriate to remote teaching.

Delivery of RSE

RSE is taught within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum, and other aspects are included in religion, ethics and philosophy education (REP). There is also significant coverage through assemblies, registration activities and special events (including drop down days)

We draw significantly on the expertise of outside experts and agencies, often financially supported by the PSA, to broaden the scope and content of delivery.

Recent (2016-2018) outside visitors have included:

1. **Sex FM** – a drama production for Year 9s on healthy relationships, consent and contraception
2. **Betty Bus** – a Year 7 event for both boys and girls to build understanding of periods and puberty
3. **RAP Project** – visiting speakers to Year 9 raising awareness of personal safety, rape and sexual assault.
4. **Positive Choices** – research project with Year 8\9 with London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and the National Children’s Bureau Sex Education Forum (NCB SEF) to develop and evaluate new relationships and sex education (RSE) programme

RSE delivery year by year:

Year 7 – Understanding changes at puberty, including menstruation and issues around adolescence and growing up; gender differences; feelings and mood changes; exercise, sleep and personal hygiene and aspects of internet safety relating to RSE. Issues around consent, peer pressure and bodily autonomy.

Year 8 – Human rights; Peer pressure; stereotypes; talking about puberty, falling in love, sexuality, healthy (and unhealthy) relationships, consent, sexual bullying. LGBTQ+ and the

LGBT+ community. Continued work around internet safety and appropriate use of the internet in relation to RSE issues (including sexting, live streaming and privacy), FGM, Forced Marriage, “Digital Citizenship”.

Year 9 - The law regarding sexual activity; sexually transmitted infections; information about sexual health services; contraception and internet safety (including pornography, sexting and the legal framework), body confidence, mental health and well-being, healthy (and unhealthy) relationships, consent and sexual exploitation. Parenthood and different lifestyles.

Year 10 – Communication skills, assessing risk, sexism and double standards and positive sexual attitudes, pornography and understanding its influence and how this relates to internet safety, what is a relationship and qualities in a partner. Sex in the Digital Age (pornography, sexting, body image, misrepresentation and “what is normal”). Contraception, fertility and parenthood (including abortion and miscarriage)

Year 11 - Equal Opportunities: domestic violence and abusive relationships, sexual identity and continued work around internet safety.

Post 16 – A comprehensive programme of RSE is delivered through the structured tutorial sessions and through planned drop days and enrichment activities.

- Most of the RSE delivery take place within PSHE lessons (with support from professionals where appropriate and available) at Key Stage 3 and Registration activities at Key Stage 4 and Post 16.
- RSE lessons are set within the wider context of the PSHE curriculum and focus on the emotional aspects of development and relationships, although the physical aspects of puberty and reproduction are also included.
- The Science National Curriculum is delivered by staff in the Science Department. These lessons are more concerned with the physical aspects of development and reproduction, although the importance of relationships is not forgotten.
- Digital Safety is a significant component of the Computer Science curriculum at Key Stage 3 and is a core element of the Computer Science drop down day at Key Stage 4. It is also included as the theme of many assemblies through the year, particular Safer Internet Day.
- With the move to online learning during the national Covid response, significant training and guidance has been provided to students and staff regarding issues of online safety and digital well-being
- Assessment is carried out during every module and involves teacher, student and peer assessment of knowledge and understanding, interpersonal skills, and attitudes.
- The school is mindful of the impact of the national Covid-19 response to the experience of RSE amongst students – particularly the loss of important sex education guidance to Year 6 students in summer 2020, and the potential risks of misinformation and misunderstandings being spread from online sources.
- Any RSE lesson may consider questions or issues that some students will find sensitive. Before embarking on these lessons ground rules are established which prohibit inappropriate personal information being requested or disclosed by those taking part in the lesson. When students ask questions, we aim to answer them honestly, within the ground rules established at the start of the sessions. When it

is felt that answering a specific question would involve information at a level inappropriate to the development of the rest of the students, the question may be dealt with individually at another time. This presents particular challenges, and some restrictions to curriculum content, during times of remote education.

Inclusion

All children and young people – whatever their experience, background and identity – are entitled to quality Relationships and Sex education that helps them build confidence and a positive sense of self, and to stay healthy. All classes include students with different abilities and disabilities, experiences and backgrounds, gender and sexual identities. To encourage students to participate in lessons, teachers will ensure content, approach, and use of inclusive language reflect the diversity of the school community, and help each and every student to feel valued and included in the classroom.

Teachers should never assume that all intimate relationships are between opposite sexes. All sexual health information should be inclusive and should include LGBT people in case studies, scenarios and role-plays.

Boys and girls can explore topics from a different gender's point of view, and a variety of activities – including practical tasks, discussions, group activities and competitions – can provide something for everyone.

Ethnic and Cultural Groups

Highgate Wood School is a diverse community and we our policy needs to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic and religious groups. For some young people it is not culturally appropriate for them to be taught particular topics in mixed groups and we respond to these needs as appropriate. We will respond to parental requests and concerns as expressed to the school via the pastoral system or the curriculum route to respective heads of department.

Students with Special Needs

We will ensure that all young people receive sex and relationship education, and we will offer provision appropriate to the particular needs of all our students, taking specialist advice where necessary.

Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation

We aim to deal sensitively and honestly with issues of sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support. Young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body

The governing body will approve will approve the RSE policy, and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.

The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school and for managing requests to withdraw students from components of RSE.

Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way, in keeping with the spirit of this policy and the ethos of the school
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress in RSE
- Responding to the needs of individual students and responding appropriately to students whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the components of RSE.

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE but are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the subject leader for PHSE, the senior leader responsible for Personal Development or the Headteacher.

Students

Students are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect, kindness and sensitivity.

Right of Withdrawal of Students from Sex and Relationship Education

At Highgate Wood School we take the approach that Relationships and Sex Education are best approached in an integrated way. We will take care to highlight lessons that contain what we define as sex education as we are aware that some parents prefer to take the responsibility for aspects of this element of education. Parents will continue have the right to request to withdraw their child from the non-statutory\non-science aspect of sex education delivered as part of RSE up until the third term before their child's 16th birthday. Where this is the case parents are encouraged to discuss their decisions with staff at the earliest opportunity; this may be via the tutor, the pastoral team or directly to the head of department. We work closely with our parent community to ensure channels of communication are open and accessible to parents on these and other issues.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the headteacher. The headteacher will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action. A copy of the withdrawal request will be placed in the student's educational record. Where withdrawal is agreed we would make alternative arrangements for students.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education as the government believe the contents of these subjects – such as family, friendship, safety (including online safety) – are important for all children to be taught.

Confidentiality, Controversial and Sensitive Issues

Teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality in a case where a teacher learns from a student under 16 years old that they are having or contemplating sexual intercourse:

The young person will be persuaded, wherever possible, to talk to parent/carer and if necessary, to seek medical advice.

Child Protection issues will be considered, and referred if necessary, to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

The young person will be properly counselled about contraception, including precise information about where young people can access contraception and advice services.

In any case where child protection procedures are followed, the teacher will ensure that the young person understands that if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed.

Health professionals in school are bound by their codes of conduct in a one-to-one situation with an individual student, but in a classroom situation they must follow the school's confidentiality policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Relationships and Sex Education

It is the responsibility of the SLT member line managing the coordination of PSHE to oversee and organise the monitoring and evaluation of the PSHE programme, in the context of the overall school plans for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The success of the RSE Policy can be evaluated by reference to the outcomes at section 5 above.

The delivery of the RSE programme will form part of the curriculum of the PHSE, REP, Science and Computer Science Departments under which all departments undertake yearly self-evaluation and monitoring and evaluation according to the agreed parameters within the School Development Plan (SDP) led by the School Leadership Team. Delivery of RSE through registration, assembly and other activities will be one of the components of the regular pastoral review for each year group.

The Governor's Curriculum Committee is responsible for overseeing, reviewing and organising the revision of the Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Please read in conjunction with other school policies on safeguarding, internet safety, behaviour and anti-bullying policy.

Appendix A

Department for Education overview of RSE at secondary school

By the end of secondary school

Schools should continue to develop knowledge on topics specified for primary as required and in addition cover the following content by the end of secondary.

Families

Pupils should know:

- that there are different types of committed, stable relationships.
- how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children.
- what marriage is, including their legal status – for example, that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony.
- why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into.
- the characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships.
- the roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting.
- how to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships), how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed

Respectful relationships, including friendships

Pupils should know:

- the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships, in all contexts including online, such as:
 - trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict
 - reconciliation and ending relationships, this includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship
- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships
- how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (for example, how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice)
- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs
- about different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help
- that some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable
- the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal

Online and media

Pupils should know:

- their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online
- about online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online
- not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them
- what to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online
- the impact of viewing harmful content
- that specifically sexually explicit material, for example pornography, presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners
- that sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail
- how information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online

Being safe

Pupils should know:

- the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships
- how people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn, in all contexts, including online

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

Pupils should know:

- how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship
- that all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, for example physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing
- the facts about reproductive health, including fertility and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women and menopause
- that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others
- that they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex
- the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available
- the facts around pregnancy including miscarriage
- that there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, 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 and AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing
- about the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment
- how the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour
- how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment

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, including for example:

- 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)