# Relationship & Sex Education Policy

***Related Documents: Curriculum Policy, What We Do & How We Do It Policy***

**Published: March 2020**

## OUR VISION

Our vision is to provide pupils with the confidence, skills and ambition to achieve a successful and productive life. We aim to ensure they leave the school with a 'new day, new opportunity' ethos and are capable of becoming positive members of their communities. To do this, we have 3 principles that underpin our policies, practices and everything we do:

- Everyone can learn, achieve and has the potential to be successful
- Positive relationships are key to success and are underpinned by mutual trust, respect and caring for one another
- We have high expectations in everything we do

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| **Policy owner** | WhiteTrees School | **Last review** | September 2026 |
| **Date Created** | March 2020 | **Next review** | September 2027 |

# Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy has been drawn up with regard to:

- The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance (DfE, July 2025), which replaced the 2019 guidance and became mandatory for all schools, including independent schools, from 1 September 2026.
- The Equality Act 2010.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, including its statutory provisions on children who are questioning their gender.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This policy should be read alongside our Curriculum Policy, What We Do & How We Do It Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Responding to Incidents of Self-Harm Policy, and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy.

# Introduction

This policy reflects the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance published by the DfE, and guidance from the PSHE Association, the Sex Education Forum and the local authority.

All school personnel, parents and carers have been made aware of this policy. This policy will be made available to view via the schools' website. Hard copies will also be available at the schools' offices.

## Definition of RSE

RSE is learning accurate and age-appropriate skills, attitudes and knowledge about the body, reproduction, sex and sexual health. RSE also gives children and young people essential skills for building positive, enjoyable, respectful and non-exploitative relationships and staying safe both on and offline. Some aspects are taught in science, and others are taught as part of personal, social, health education (PSHE).

# Aims and Outcomes of RSE in the Curriculum

The overall aim of RSE is to foster a positive notion of lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development, including how to look after physical and mental health. It aims to support the development of self-respect and empathy for others and promotes the development of skills and understanding necessary to manage conflict peaceably and learn how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse.

RSE provides opportunities for pupils to:

- Better understand the nature of human relationships.
- Learn about relationships, the importance of communication and assertiveness skills, including the importance of values such as respect (for self and others), equality, responsibility, care and compassion.

- Reflect upon the importance of stable and loving relationships for family life, including the bringing up of children, this also includes marriage and civil partnerships.
- Consider and understand the changes that occur to their bodies, minds and emotions as a consequence of growth from childhood to adulthood.
- Reflect upon how to make good, informed and safe choices concerning relationships and healthy lifestyles.

## Morals, Values, Equalities and Safeguarding

The RSE programme at WhiteTrees reflects our ethos, and demonstrates and promotes the following:

- Learn the value of respect, care and love.
- Valuing family life within stable, loving and committed relationships.
- Acceptance of same sex unions as also offering stable, loving and committed relationships to nurture children.
- Respect for self and others.
- Respect for rights and responsibilities within relationships.
- Appreciate that different, successful family structures exist.
- Understanding diversity regarding religion, gender, culture and sexual orientation.
- Importance of striving to reduce intolerance and discrimination based on sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion and gender.
- Acceptance of difference and diversity.
- Promote gender equality and equality in relationships.
- Challenge gender stereotypes and inequality.
- Develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness in line with the Equality Act and the schools' safeguarding and child protection protocols.

## Teaching About Biological Sex and Gender Reassignment

In line with the RSHE statutory guidance, where our curriculum covers sex and gender, pupils are taught what the law says about biological sex and about gender reassignment, and that gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Staff are mindful that, beyond the facts and the law, there is significant debate about gender identity, and are careful not to endorse a particular view or present contested beliefs, for example that everyone has a gender identity, as fact. Resources and external materials are chosen carefully, and the school does not use materials from organisations that take a strong partisan view on this contested topic, or that oversimplify these issues through diagrams or teaching aids.

Pastoral support for any pupil who is questioning their gender is provided in line with our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, which sets out the school's statutory framework for responding sensitively and appropriately to individual pupils. This RSE Policy governs what is taught to all pupils as part of the curriculum; individual pastoral support sits separately under our safeguarding arrangements.

## Content of the School's RSE Programme

- Families

- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online and media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health
- The law
- Identifying and challenging online misogyny and unhealthy attitudes towards relationships
- Sexual ethics, appropriate to pupils' age and understanding
- Awareness of artificial intelligence and its role in online relationships, image sharing and misinformation

## How Relationships and Sex Education is Organised in the Curriculum

RSE is not delivered in isolation, but firmly embedded in all curriculum areas including PSHE, Focus weeks/days and Science. At WhiteTrees, the main RSE content is delivered as part of a wider topic to provide a context for learning. Many aspects of RSE are taught throughout the year, whilst some specific age-related aspects are delivered at a pre-planned point during the year in order that parents are informed and can be involved in supporting their child.

- RSE is normally delivered by class teachers in mixed gender groups other than when it is deemed more appropriate for topics to be covered in single sex groups.
- PSHE ground rules are used in all PSHE and RSE lessons.
- Pupils are able to ask anonymous questions by writing a note for the class teacher.
- Resources used are flexible in order to meet the needs of the pupils and curriculum. A selection of these can be viewed during parents/open days and also at our celebration assemblies.
- Correct medical vocabulary will be used throughout the RSE and PSHE curriculum.
- RSE is delivered through a varied range of activities which promote dialogue and understanding. These include active teaching and learning, role play/scenarios, activities during focus weeks, and question and answer sessions with the local school nurse.
- External agencies can be invited to support the delivery of RSE. These include the school nurse and the police.
- External agencies and visitors are familiar with and understand the school's RSE policy and safeguarding policy, and work within these documents.
- All input to RSE lessons is part of a planned programme and negotiated and agreed with staff in advance.
- All visitors are supervised or supported by a member of staff at all times.
- The input of visitors is monitored and evaluated by staff. This evaluation informs future planning.

## Parental Involvement

The school is committed to working with parents/carers and believes that it is important to have the support of them and the wider community for the PSHE and RSE programme. Parents are provided with the opportunity to find out about and discuss the school's programme through curriculum meetings, parents' open days, in policy development, the school website and prospectus, displays and an open-door policy.

To promote effective communication and discussion between parents and their children, we notify parents through information evenings, termly newsletters and the school website about when particular aspects of RSE will be taught. We also encourage an open-door policy to help ensure that parents can discuss issues with school staff in a positive, sensitive and proactive manner.

In line with the RSHE statutory guidance, we are open and transparent with parents about the resources and materials used to teach RSE, and parents may ask to see these on request.

## Parental Right to Withdraw Their Children

Relationships Education and Health Education are compulsory for all pupils and cannot be withdrawn from. Parents have the right to withdraw their child from some or all of Sex Education, other than the elements that form part of the statutory National Curriculum for Science, which all pupils must be taught regardless of any withdrawal request.

A pupil has the right to opt back into sex education themselves, even against their parents' wishes, from three terms before their 16th birthday onwards; where this happens, the school will make arrangements for the pupil to receive sex education during one of those three terms.

Effective methods to communicate the school's approach to RSE, including the parental right to withdraw from sex education, are through the school's website and this policy. Parents are invited to open day meetings where they are welcome to discuss any concerns or issues.

Parents are also informed that the RSE curriculum is an essential vehicle in supporting the school's statutory duty to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
- Meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.
- Promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Actively promote fundamental British values.
- Prepare pupils for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of adult life.
- Deliver the sex education content of the National Curriculum for Science, which applies to all pupils and cannot be withdrawn from.

Parents/carers wishing to withdraw their child from sex education should discuss this with the Deputy at the site, who will explore any concerns and discuss the purpose, content and benefits of the curriculum, and any impact withdrawal may have on the child. If a child has been withdrawn, they will not take part in sex education lessons until the request is withdrawn, or until the pupil exercises their own right to opt back in from three terms before their 16th birthday. It remains the responsibility of parents/carers to deliver any withdrawn content to their child as they see fit; information and support materials are available from staff on request. Pupils withdrawn from sex education continue with individual learning tasks for other curriculum areas, carried out in another classroom or in the library.

If a conversation arises about sexual health issues in a non-RSE lesson with pupils present who have been withdrawn from sex education, the teacher must pause the conversation and find an appropriate time to continue it when the withdrawn pupil is not present.

## Pupil Involvement

We involve pupils in the development of the RSE curriculum through the Teaching and Learning approach, which promotes dialogue about feedback and learning, enabling teachers to monitor

pupils' views. Pupils are able to present their views at regular 'Pupil Voice' meetings as part of the monitoring and evaluation process.

# How the School Responds to Specific Issues Related to Relationship and Sex Education

## Answering Difficult Questions

Staff are aware that views around RSE related issues are varied. However, while personal views are respected, all RSE issues are taught without bias. Topics are presented using a variety of views and beliefs so that pupils are able to form their own, informed opinions but also respect others who may have a different opinion. Both formal and informal RSE arising from pupils' questions are answered according to the age and maturity of the pupil(s) concerned and the limits of the year group topics. The school believes that individual teachers must use their skill and discretion in this area and refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they are concerned or believe any pupil to be at risk.

## Ground Rules

RSE is taught in a safe, non-judgmental environment where adults and children are confident that they will be respected. Specific ground rules will be established at the beginning of the RSE work, in addition to those already used in the classroom.

## Sensitive Content: Suicide Prevention

Where RSE or wider PSHE content touches on suicide prevention, this is planned and delivered carefully, in consultation with trained mental health professionals, and avoids graphic material. Given the needs of our pupils, this content is closely coordinated with our Head of Safeguarding and delivered alongside, not instead of, the individual support set out in our Responding to Incidents of Self-Harm Policy. Staff who are not confident delivering this content are supported and do not deliver it alone.

# Inclusion

The RSE policy reflects and is in line with the school's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, and the school ensures that the RSE teaching programme is an inclusive one and is appropriate and relevant to all pupils. Teachers ensure that the content, approach and use of inclusive language reflect the diversity of the school community, and help all pupils feel valued and included, regardless of their gender, ability, disability, experiences and family background.

RSE strives to meet the needs of all pupils regardless of their developing sexuality, and deals honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation, answers appropriate questions and offers support. Homophobic and transphobic references, actions and bullying are not tolerated at WhiteTrees and are challenged and dealt with as part of our commitment to promoting inclusion, gender equality and preventing bullying.

# Confidentiality and Child Protection Issues

As a general rule, a child's confidentiality is maintained by the teacher or member of staff concerned. RSE discussions may prompt a pupil to disclose related incidents, for example FGM, forced marriage, child exploitation or abuse. If the member of staff believes that the child is at risk or in danger, or has concerns about any information disclosed, they log any concerns on CPOMS and talk to the named Designated Safeguarding Lead, who acts as laid down in the Safeguarding Policy. All staff are familiar with the policy and know the identity of the member of staff with responsibility for child protection issues.

The child concerned will be informed that confidentiality is being breached and the reasons why. The child will be supported by staff throughout the process.

## How the Relationship and Sex Education Programme is Monitored, Evaluated and Assessed

We ensure that all pupils have equal access to the RSE programme through a thorough process of monitoring, evaluation and assessment, which takes into consideration pupils' needs, maturity, age, ability and personal circumstances.

Staff assess pupils' understanding and progress through formative and summative processes. These include pre- and post-topic work, drawings, task outcomes, questioning and observation. At the end of the year, each pupil reviews the RSE programme they have taken part in and passes on any comments to staff as part of the monitoring cycle. The RSE policy is reviewed on an annual basis, considering feedback from teaching staff, pupils and parents. Governors consider evaluations and recommendations before amending the policy. Governors remain ultimately responsible for the policy.

## Professional Development for Staff

Staff are kept informed of developments in key aspects of RSE, including links with safeguarding, inclusion, equality, child protection and anti-bullying, through regular training provided at staff meetings and INSET days.

## Link to Other Policies and Advice

This RSE Policy is supported by, but not limited to:

- PSHE Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance (DfE)

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