



Mercia School



Relationship and Sex Education Policy

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Date of issue	09/2025
Date ratified	09/2025
Date for review	09/2026

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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

1. Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.1. Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. This policy has been equality impact assessed, and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil, and it helps to promote equality at this school.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Sex and relationship education (RSE) is compulsory for all secondary schools. It builds upon RSE that is taught at primary school (where it is compulsory to teach relationship education, and recommended to teach sex education beyond the existing national curriculum for Science). At secondary school, this involves teaching children about reproduction, sexuality and sexual health. It doesn't promote early sexual activity or any particular sexual orientation or gender, nor does it discriminate against any sexual orientation or gender. It is designed and delivered to ensure pupils are safe in their later lives.

3. The Legal Framework

- 3.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:
 - 3.1.1. Equality Act 2010
 - 3.1.2. DfE's 'Keeping children safe in education'
 - 3.1.3. DfE's 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education'
 - 3.1.4. DfE's 'National curriculum in England: science programmes of study'
 - 3.1.5. Children and Social Work Act 2017

4. Definitions

- 4.1. For the purpose of this policy, "relationships and sex education" (RSE) is defined as teaching pupils about developing healthy, safe, nurturing relationships of all kinds, including with oneself and in intimate relationships with others.
- 4.2. For the purpose of this policy, "health education" is defined as teaching pupils about how they can make informed decisions about their own health and wellbeing, and how physical health and mental wellbeing are interlinked.

5. Aims

- 5.1. The broad aim of RSE is to provide balanced, factual information about human reproduction together with careful consideration of the broader emotional, physical, sexual, moral and ethical dimensions of sexual health.
- 5.2. Our RSE programme aims to prepare students for adult life in which they can:
 - 5.2.1. make informed and personal decisions about their present and future lifestyles
 - 5.2.2. have the confidence and self-esteem to value themselves and others while respecting individual choices.
 - 5.2.3. impart accurate knowledge and information.
 - 5.2.4. understand their own sexual development and view it as a positive aspect of their whole development.
 - 5.2.5. develop the range of personal skills needed for healthy relationships, including:
 - 5.2.5.1. negotiation, decision making, listening and assertiveness skills.
 - 5.2.5.2. exercising respect for oneself and others
 - 5.2.5.3. the skills needed to build trusting relationships, such as openness and honesty

- 5.2.5.4. taking decisions about their own sexual activity.
- 5.2.5.5. understanding the consequences of their actions and behaving responsibly within sexual and platonic relationships.
- 5.2.5.6. communicating effectively by using appropriate terminology for sex and relationship issues.
- 5.2.5.7. challenging discriminatory behaviour related to homophobia, sexual identity, gender identity, sexism and prejudice in order to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 5.2.5.8. having a critical awareness of messages about gender, appearance and sexuality within the media and elsewhere.
- 5.2.5.9. understanding the significance and prevention of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.
- 5.2.5.10. being aware of information sources and developing the skills and confidence to access confidential health services, advice, support and treatment if necessary.
- 5.2.5.11. understanding and abiding by the law in relation to sexual relationships.
- 5.2.5.12. understanding the term consent and being able to articulate their consent in a variety of situations.
- 5.2.5.13. understanding how consent is granted by others and how this is protected within the UK's law.
- 5.2.5.14. knowing the protected characteristics and understanding the law in relation to these.

6. Core Principles

- 6.1. The foundations of our RSE and health education curriculum will be knowledge based and will be built on our core principles of academia, inclusivity and respect for all.
- 6.2. Subject content will be age appropriate and developmentally appropriate. It will be taught sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of pupils and parents while always with the aim of providing pupils with the knowledge they need of the law.
- 6.3. Parents will be informed of the specific timing of RSE and health education sessions and can access a summary of all curriculum content.

7. Commitment to RSE and health education knowledge

- 7.1. We recognise the importance of providing excellent personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education to all pupils. RSE and health education forms an important part of the PSHE education provided.
- 7.2. Early teaching focuses on foundations of relationships, such as respect, boundaries and consent. As pupils go through the year groups, this moves into more complex and mature areas, such as power dynamics and exploitation. All areas are continually revisited through the curriculum and become progressively more complex as students get older. For example, early teaching may focus on respecting boundaries in friendships, while in later years the focus is on romantic and sexual relationships, such as abiding by the law on consent.
- 7.3. The majority of the RSE and health education curriculum will be delivered during dedicated time. Some statutory elements will be taught in science lessons as part of the science curriculum. Pupils will cover the following five topics in a way that is accepted as age-appropriate for students. The following are summaries, with full topic lists available in the government's statutory RSE guidance:
 - 7.3.1. **Families** - the diversity of families in modern Britain, the law around marriage, and parental responsibilities.
 - 7.3.2. **Respectful relationships** - the role of honesty, tolerance, kindness and respect in developing healthy relationships with oneself and others.
 - 7.3.3. **Online safety and awareness** - understanding the opportunities online, the characteristics of social media, keeping safe and learning how to manage the dangers of the online world. In addition, online relationships and pornography. This includes knowledge around expectations and online distortion of reality.

- 7.3.4. **Being safe** - safety and responsibility in terms of sexual health, understanding who is trustworthy and who is not, understanding sexual harassment and violence, the concepts of sexual exploitation and FGM. Crucially, how the law relates to consent and sexual violence, including rape.
- 7.3.5. **Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health** - the age of consent and the law, the impact of all types of sexual relationships, both positive and negative. The curriculum includes teaching on contraceptive choices, pregnancy and STIs, and how/where to seek support.
- 7.3.6. The curriculum also includes broader discussions and teaching on healthy lifestyles. This includes the role of drugs and alcohol in causing harm to our health, as well as discussion around mental health and wellbeing. The curriculum covers where help can be found and the support in schools available.

8. Commitment to Parental Engagement

- 8.1. Parents, school leaders, teachers and governors all have a role to play in ensuring that all voices have been heard and that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils.
- 8.2. The school will ensure that:
 - 8.2.1.1. the context and views of the wider local community are considered when developing the curriculum so that it is reflective of issues in the local area, where appropriate.
 - 8.2.1.2. the religious background of all pupils is considered when planning teaching, to ensure all topics are appropriately and sensitively handled.
 - 8.2.1.3. parents are given the opportunity to understand the purpose and content of RSE and health education sessions.
- 8.3. We understand that the teaching of some aspects of the curriculum may be of interest to parents and believes that ongoing open discussion between all parties is essential. Such discussions allow for clarification of any misconceptions and the emergence of mutual understanding that will strengthen the curriculum.
- 8.4. If parents have comments, questions or concerns regarding RSE and health education they should contact the school directly.

9. Right of withdrawal of students from RSE

- 9.1. Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. However, this does not include any sex education that is part of the science curriculum or any element of the relationships and health education topics stated in the RSE guidance. Broadly, withdrawal only pertains to certain aspects of topic 7.3.5 set out in this policy.
- 9.2. Parents do not have a right to withdraw their child from the relationships or health elements of the programmes. Requests to withdraw a child from sex education must be made in writing to the headteacher. Before granting any such request it is essential that the school is able to clarify the nature and concerns of the parent.
- 9.3. The headteacher will discuss the request with the parent and, as appropriate, the pupil, to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. The headteacher will inform the parent of the benefits of their child receiving RSE and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have. This could include any social and emotional effects of missing the sessions, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly taught by the teacher. By not attending these crucial lessons, it is possible students will seek information from untrustworthy and likely harmful sources which would further risk their safety and wellbeing.
- 9.4. All discussions with parents will be documented and the records will be held securely. Once any discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, we would respect the parent's request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16.
- 9.5. After that point, if the pupil wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms. This is a legal obligation. Pupils who are withdrawn from RSE will receive appropriate, purposeful education during the full period of withdrawal.

- 9.6. For requests concerning the withdrawal of a pupil with SEND, the headteacher may take the pupil specific needs into account when making their decision.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

10.1. The headteacher is responsible for:

- 10.1.1. the overall implementation of this policy.
- 10.1.2. ensuring parent/carers are fully informed of this policy.
- 10.1.3. reviewing all requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory elements of the RSE and health education curriculum.
- 10.1.4. discussing withdrawal requests with parents, and the child if appropriate, to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum, including the benefits of receiving the education.
- 10.1.5. ensuring withdrawn pupils receive appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.
- 10.1.6. reviewing this policy on an annual basis.
- 10.1.7. reporting to the governing board on the effectiveness of this policy and the curriculum.
- 10.1.8. Making sure there is access to the curriculum materials on request for families.
- 10.1.9. All content is delivered in line with the Equality Act 2010.

10.2. The senior team is responsible for:

- 10.2.1. overseeing the delivery of RSE and health education.
- 10.2.2. ensuring the curriculum is age-appropriate and of high-quality.
- 10.2.3. monitoring the learning and teaching of RSE and health education, providing support to staff where necessary.
- 10.2.4. ensuring teachers are provided with adequate resources to support teaching of the curriculum.
- 10.2.5. organising, providing and monitoring CPD opportunities in the subject.
- 10.2.6. ensuring the correct standards are met for recording and assessing pupil understanding.
- 10.2.7. using pupils voice to gather feedback on the programme.
- 10.2.8. monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the subject and providing reports to the headteacher and governors.

10.3. Teaching staff are responsible for:

- 10.3.1. acting in accordance with, and promoting, this policy by receiving training and embracing the opportunity to deliver quality knowledge teaching.
- 10.3.2. delivering RSE and health education in a sensitive way and that is of a high-quality and appropriate for each year group.
- 10.3.3. modelling positive attitudes to RSE and health education and working with parents to support the aims of the curriculum
- 10.3.4. liaising with the SENCO about identifying and responding to the individual needs of pupils with SEND
- 10.3.5. reporting any safeguarding concerns or disclosures that pupils may make as a result of the subject content to the DSL.
- 10.3.6. reporting any concerns regarding the teaching of RSE or health education to the RSE and health education curriculum leader.

- 10.4. We believe the parents' role in the development of their child's understanding about relationships and health is vital. Parents are responsible for:
- 10.4.1. encouraging and supporting their child in all areas of their school education.
 - 10.4.2. understanding the statutory requirements placed on the school in relation to RSE and health education and informing themselves of the school's safeguarding and legal responsibilities.
 - 10.4.3. respecting the school and its curriculum aims by immediately raising any queries or concerns directly with the school.
- 10.5. The governing body is committed to ensuring the delivery of an effective RSE and health education curriculum. It is responsible for:
- 10.5.1. ensuring RSE and health education is resourced, staffed and timetabled in a way that ensures the school can fulfil its legal obligations.
 - 10.5.2. ensuring the quality of provision through regular and effective evaluation.
 - 10.5.3. ensuring that teaching is delivered in ways that are accessible to all pupils including those with special educational needs.
 - 10.5.4. ensuring parents are provided with clear information on the subject content and their right to request that their child is withdrawn.

