



Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex and Health Education Policy

Author	S Orumlu	Source	Previous policy
Review Body	Local Governing Body	Status	Statutory
Last Review	May 2026	Next review	May 2027

Details of policy updates

Date	Details
10/06/24	Policy now reflects students needing to be able to describe their bodies – S Orumlu
03/06/25	Policy now includes updates regarding issues arising within society like misogyny, and challenging them. The DfE guidance has been updated.
13/05/26	Revised for 2025 DfE RSHE guidance: biological-sex clarity, enhanced safeguarding, and updated digital-harms content.

1. Introduction

All schools must provide a curriculum that is broadly based, balanced and meets the needs of all pupils. Under section 78 of the Education Act 2002 and the Academies Act 2010, a curriculum “promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life”.

At the North Star Academy Trust, we value Relationships Education and Relationships, Sex and Health Education as a way to support students’ development as human beings, to enable them to understand and respect who they are, to empower them with a voice and to equip them for life and learning. In line with updated DfE guidance (2025), our curriculum ensures pupils are taught biological facts clearly and sensitively, including the correct scientific terminology for body parts, puberty, reproduction and sexual health.

2. Aims

The aims of the Relationships Education (RE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education at our Trust are to:

- provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- prepare pupils for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships
- teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies and those of others
- ensure pupils can recognise and challenge misogyny, sexism, homophobia, racism, online harms and harmful sexual behaviours, in line with updated national expectations
- ensure pupils understand the difference between biological sex and gender expression, and that teaching on biological sex is factual, accurate and not based on contested ideology
- support pupils to navigate modern risks including pornography, image-based abuse, online misogyny, coercion, and unhealthy relationship norms

3. Statutory requirements

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education. Health Education is compulsory in all state-funded schools except independent schools.

This policy is informed by the following statutory and advisory guidance:

- Relationships, Sex and Health Education Statutory Guidance (DfE 2025)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), including guidance on child-on-child abuse, harmful sexual behaviours, sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Behaviour and Discipline in Schools
- Equality Act 2010
- SEND Code of Practice
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying, including cyberbullying
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools
- Alternative Provision guidance
- Respectful School Communities: Self-Review and Signposting Tool
- Promoting Fundamental British Values
- SMSC requirements
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Advice and Guidance
- National Citizen Service guidance
- Online Safety Teaching Guidance (DfE)
- Filtering and Monitoring Standards (DfE)
- Harmful Sexual Behaviours Framework (NSPCC/Contextual Safeguarding Network)

We include the statutory Relationships Education, Relationships, Sex and Health Education within our whole-Trust PSHE programme. All teaching is factual, age-appropriate and aligned with the updated DfE expectations, including clarity around biological sex, online safety, harmful sexual behaviours, misogyny, and digital safeguarding.

4. Definition of Relationships Education and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

Relationships Education is about the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity. Effective RSHE supports pupils to develop the personal skills needed to establish and maintain healthy relationships and to make responsible, informed decisions about their wellbeing.

RSHE involves a combination of sharing information, exploring issues and values, and developing the skills needed to navigate modern life. RSHE is **not** about the promotion of sexual activity or any viewpoint on contested political or social issues.

In line with updated DfE guidance (2025), RSHE also includes teaching pupils to recognise:

- harmful sexual behaviours, including coercion, pressure, sexual harassment, and online grooming
- the influence of pornography, online misogyny and unrealistic representations of relationships
- the importance of consent, personal boundaries, and respectful communication
- the difference between biological sex (a factual, scientific and legally protected characteristic) and gender expression, ensuring clarity and factual accuracy
- how to critically evaluate online content, including harmful narratives, stereotypes and digital risks

RSHE ensures pupils are taught accurate biological facts, including the correct scientific vocabulary for body parts, puberty, reproduction and sexual health. Teaching is age-appropriate, evidence-based and delivered within a safeguarding framework.

5. PSHE/RSE Curriculum

At Primary, our curriculum focuses on the key building blocks of healthy, respectful relationships, with an emphasis on family, friendships and the development of emotional literacy. This sits alongside essential understanding of how to be healthy, including mental wellbeing, physical health, and the early foundations of safeguarding.

At Secondary, teaching builds on the knowledge acquired at Primary and develops pupils' understanding of health, relationships and personal identity in greater depth. There is an increased focus on risk areas such as drugs, alcohol, online harms, harmful sexual behaviours, and the development of safe, respectful intimate relationships.

Our PSHE/RSE curriculum at Secondary supports the development of the skills, attitudes, values and behaviours necessary for life. Across Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils are supported to develop:

- communication skills, including how to manage changing relationships and emotions
- the ability to recognise and assess potential risks, both offline and online
- the ability to identify and challenge sexism, misogyny, homophobia, racism and gender stereotypes
- assertiveness and confidence in setting personal boundaries
- the ability to seek help and support when required
- informed decision-making
- self-respect and empathy for others
- understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle
- conflict-management skills
- discussion and group-work skills

In line with updated DfE guidance (2025), the curriculum also ensures pupils learn:

- factual, accurate information about biological sex, puberty, reproduction and sexual health
- how to recognise harmful sexual behaviours, including coercion, pressure, harassment and online grooming
- the impact of pornography, including unrealistic expectations, objectification and online misogyny
- how to critically evaluate online content, including influencers, algorithms and harmful narratives
- the importance of consent, personal boundaries and respectful communication
- how to recognise and respond to image-based abuse, including the sharing or requesting of nude images
- how to navigate digital risks, including exposure to misogynistic content, incel ideology, and online radicalisation

At Secondary we use the Jigsaw Programme across the whole school. It covers all areas of PSHE for the secondary phase, including statutory RSE and Health Education. The table below outlines the learning theme of each of the six Puzzles (units), which are taught across the school; learning deepens and broadens each year.

Term	Puzzle (Unit)	Content
Autumn 1	Being me in my world	Includes understanding my own identity and how I fit well in the class, school and global community. Jigsaw Charter established.
Autumn 2	Celebrating difference	Includes anti-bullying (cyber and homophobic bullying included) and understanding difference, Equality Act.
Spring 1	Dreams and Goals	Includes goal-setting, aspirations, who do I want to become and what would I like to do for work and to contribute to society.
Spring 2	Healthy me	Includes drugs and alcohol education, self esteem and confidence as well as healthy lifestyle choices, sleep, nutrition, rest and exercise.
Summer 1	Relationships	Includes understanding friendship, family, intimate relationships and other relationships, conflict resolution and communication skills, bereavement and loss.
Summer 2	Changing me	Includes Relationships and Sex Education in the context of coping positively with change.

These explicit lessons across the Trust are reinforced and enhanced in many ways:

- assemblies,
- praise and reward system,
- learning charter,
- through relationships student to student, adult to student and adult to adult across the school, • We aim to 'live' what is learnt and apply it to everyday situations in the school community.
- Class tutors/ a dedicated PSHE team deliver the weekly lessons.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 The governing board

The governing board will approve the Relationships Education and RSE policy and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation. Governors ensure that the curriculum is compliant with statutory requirements, reflects updated DfE guidance (2024–2025), and is delivered in a way that safeguards pupils and promotes equality.

6.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that PSHE/RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory components of RSE (see section 7).

6.3 Staff

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 wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory 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.

6.4 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- engage fully in PSHE/RSE lessons
- treat others with respect, sensitivity and kindness
- contribute to a safe and supportive learning environment
- apply what they learn to help keep themselves and others safe, both offline and online

7. Withdrawal from RSE lessons

Parents/carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of the non-statutory components of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. This right does not apply to any content that forms part of the National Curriculum for Science.

Requests for withdrawal must be put in writing and addressed to the headteacher. Parents/carers wishing to exercise this right will be invited to meet with the headteacher to discuss the request, explore any concerns, and consider the potential impact of withdrawal on the child's learning and wellbeing. The school will document all discussions and decisions.

Once a child has been withdrawn, they will not take part in the specific sex education lessons until the request for withdrawal is removed. Alternative, appropriate work will be provided.

Parents/carers cannot withdraw their child from:

- Relationships Education
- Health Education
- Any teaching about the changing adolescent body (puberty)
- Any factual teaching about biological sex, reproduction or anatomy
- Any safeguarding-related content, including online safety, harmful sexual behaviours, misogyny, peer-on-peer abuse, or digital risks
- Incidental or unplanned discussions that arise in other curriculum subjects (e.g., Science, PE, RE, English, Humanities)

Materials used in RSE lessons are available for parents/carers to view on request. Parents who wish to supplement the school's programme or deliver sex education at home may request copies or summaries of resources where copyright permits.

The school remains committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that pupils receive high-quality, age-appropriate and factual education that supports their safety, wellbeing and development.

8. Working with parents and carers

The government guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (DfE, 2025) emphasises the importance of schools working in partnership with parents and carers. Parents/carers should be aware that schools are legally required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Sex and relationships topics can arise incidentally in other subjects, such as Science, Geography, History, RE, and it is not possible to withdraw pupils from these relatively limited and often unplanned discussions. Parents should be given every opportunity to understand the purpose and content of Relationships Education and RSHE. Good communication and opportunities for parents to understand and ask questions about the school's approach can help increase confidence in the curriculum.

9. Safeguarding

Teachers need to be aware that sometimes disclosures may be made during PSHE/RSE lessons; in which case, safeguarding procedures must be followed immediately. Sometimes it is clear that certain children may need time to talk one-to-one after the lesson closes. It is important to allow the time and appropriate staffing for this to happen. If disclosures occur, the school's disclosure and/or confidentiality policy is followed.

10. Training

Staff are trained on the delivery of PSHE and RSE as part of their induction and it is included in our continuing professional development calendar.

The headteacher/PSHE Lead will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching PSHE/RSE.

11. Monitoring and evaluation

The PSHE Lead will monitor delivery of the programme through observation and discussion with teaching staff to ensure consistent and coherent curriculum provision.

Evaluation of the programme's effectiveness will be conducted on the basis of:

- Deep dive process
- Medium Term Planning
- Learning walks
- Book looks
- Pupil and teacher evaluation of the content and learning processes
- Staff meetings to review and share experience
- Staff CPD
- Improvement in attendance (attendance data)
- Improvement in behaviour (behaviour data)
- Positive trends in SNAP B data
- Positive stakeholder data (pupil, parent, and staff questionnaires)
- Reduction in bullying incidents
- A broad range of evidence, that indicates a full coverage of the SMSC strands

12. The Learning Environment

Establishing a safe, open and positive learning environment based on trusting relationships between all members of the class, adults and children alike, is vital.

- We take turns to speak
- We use kind and positive words

- We listen to each other
- We have the right to pass
- We only use names when giving compliments or when being positive
- We respect each other's privacy (confidentiality)

13. Teaching Sensitive and Controversial Issues

Sensitive and controversial issues are certain to arise in learning from real-life experience. Teachers will be prepared to handle personal issues arising from the work, to deal sensitively with, and to follow up appropriately, disclosures made in a group or individual setting. Issues that we address that are likely to be sensitive and controversial because they have a political, social or personal impact or deal with values and beliefs include: family lifestyles and values, physical and medical issues, financial issues, bullying and bereavement.

Teachers will take all reasonable, practical steps to ensure that, where political or controversial issues are brought to pupils' attention, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views. Teachers will adopt strategies that seek to avoid bias on their part and will teach pupils how to recognise bias and evaluate evidence. Teachers will seek to establish a classroom climate in which all pupils are free from any fear of expressing reasonable points of view that contradict those held either by their class teachers or their peers.

14. Answering Difficult and Sensitive Questions

Staff members are aware that views around PSHE/RSE-related issues are varied. However, while personal views are respected, all issues are taught without bias throughout the curriculum. Topics are presented using a variety of views and beliefs so that pupils are able to form their own, informed opinions but also respect that others have the right to a different opinion.

Both formal and informal PSHE/RSE arising from pupils' questions are answered according to the age and maturity of the pupil(s) concerned. Questions do not have to be answered directly, and can be addressed individually later. Individual teachers will use their skills and discretion in this area and refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they are concerned.

We believe that PSHE/RSE should meet the needs of all pupils, answer appropriate questions and offer support. In lessons that cover RSE provision, this should be regardless of their developing sexuality and be able to deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation and gender diversity, answer appropriate questions and offer support. LGBT+ bullying is dealt with strongly yet sensitively. Our schools liaise with parents/carers on this issue to reassure them of the content and context.

15. Dissemination

This policy is available on our schools' website where it can be accessed by the community. Copies are available from the school office on request from parents/carers. Training is regularly delivered to staff on the policy content.

Appendix 1: Parents'/Carers' Right to Withdrawal Letter



Dear parents and carers,

As a part of your child's education at the North Star Academy Trust, we promote personal wellbeing and development through a comprehensive Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education programme. PSHE is the curriculum subject that gives young people the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and practical skills to live safe, healthy, productive lives and meet their full potential.

I am writing to let you know that, over this academic year, starting from _____, your child's class will be taking part in lessons which will focus on the relationships and sex education (RSE) aspect of this programme. RSE lessons will include teaching about: healthy relationships, including friendships and intimate relationships; families; growing and changing, including puberty; personal hygiene; changing feelings; becoming more independent; keeping safe and consent; developing self-esteem and confidence. Pupils will also have opportunities to ask questions that help prepare them for relationships of all kinds in the modern world. We will of course be sensitive to the children's feelings at all times, not expecting any child to answer any questions verbally if they do not wish to do so.

PSHE education is taught throughout the school in every year group and is monitored and reviewed regularly by the staff and governing body. Please visit the school's website for more detail about our PSHE curriculum. All PSHE teaching takes place in a safe learning environment and is underpinned by our school ethos and values.

As a school community, we are committed to working in partnership with parents. If you would like to find out more or discuss any concerns, we would like you to contact the Headteacher, PSHE Lead or your tutor in writing.

Yours sincerely,

PSHE Lead