

Relationships and Sex Education Policy (RSE) – Senior School

This policy was drawn up with guidance from 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:

Rationale

RSE makes an essential and significant contribution to safeguarding children and young people during their school-age years and into the future. RSE should enable young people to develop skills and confidence to access professional advice and appropriate health services. It enables students to understand their physical and emotional development and enable young people to take increasing responsibility for their own health and well-being and that of others.

Health education is not covered within this policy because it is covered elsewhere in the school's curriculum and policies.

Parents/carers of students at St Mary's School may request to withdraw their children from all or part of any sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE, but only after discussion with the Principal or Director of Senior School, who will respect the parents/carers' wishes if they continue to hold that view after discussion.

However, parents/carers do not have the right to withdraw their children from the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction necessary under National Curriculum Science.

While the school chooses how to deliver the subject, guidance offered by the Department for Education (DfE) has been considered.

When planning the teaching of RSE the school has considered the religious background of all students and reflects what the law allows and does not allow.

The school is mindful to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage or vulnerability of any of our students under the SEND code of practice when planning RSE lessons. Also, teachers try hard not to discriminate against any students because of any 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010 (ie age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity or sexual orientation).

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the Senior school. RSE is carried out principally within the personal, social and health and economic education (PSHEE) programme (see PSHEE Policy).

Objectives

The overall aims of the School's RSE curriculum are:

- To provide accurate information about, and understanding of, RSE issues
- To create an atmosphere where questions and discussion on RSE matters take place without embarrassment
- To develop respect for each other as individuals, and to encourage both genders to understand one another
- Pupils develop the confidence to communicate and reflect on their feelings about RSE
- Understand the importance of respect, trust, love and intimacy in relationships
- To appreciate the value of family life, marriage and the implications of parenthood
- Understand about different types of families
- Develop positive attitudes, values, integrity, self-respect and self esteem
- Explore other people's attitudes and values
- Challenge and reduce discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender
- Address sexist, sexual, homophobic and transphobic bullying
- Gain knowledge and understanding about puberty and the changes that will take place
- Gain knowledge and understanding about reproduction and sexuality
- To counteract myths: correct misunderstanding they may have gained from the media and peers
- To be aware of the law on sexual behaviour, consent and abuse
- Seek information and advice when they need help

School

The school will:

- Ensure a smooth transition between primary and secondary school. RSE is taught primarily as part of PSHEE by a team of specialist teachers. Certain aspects are also taught as part of the RE and Science Curriculum. The RSE coordinator is responsible for arranging input from external agencies to enhance RSE.
- Be aware of the Equality Act 2010, and be mindful not to discriminate against any students because of any 'protected characteristics' (age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation) when planning for RSE.
- Be aware of and make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage or vulnerability under the SEND code of practice when planning for RSE.
- Set out the subject content, ensuring that it is always age appropriate.
- Advise on how RSE is taught, eg lesson planning for differentiation, and who is responsible for teaching it.
- Ensure that RSE will link with, but not duplicate, other aspects of the PSHEE curriculum eg drug education and student substance abuse, or areas of the wider curriculum, eg science, ICT and RE. Also ensure it will be set in the context of the school's general ethos (social, moral, spiritual and cultural) and promote the well-being of the students in general.
- Discuss with any visiting agencies, before the session takes place, the details of all aspects, including resources, of what will be covered in any session that they are being invited to provide, as well as confidentiality and reporting any safeguarding issues.
- Be aware of how any safeguarding issue in the context of RSE will be dealt with at the school.

Success Criteria

- That pupils feel informed by the education they receive
- That staff delivering RSE have clarity as to what is expected of them by the school
- That parents are aware of the policy and their right to withdraw their daughters from RSE lessons if they feel appropriate

Methodology

Implementation

- RSE is taught primarily as part of PSHEE by a team of specialist teachers. The Head of PSHEE will keep tutors and Heads of Year informed about the curriculum so they are able to support pupils and are aware who to refer pupils to for expert help. The Head of PSHEE is responsible for arranging input from external agencies to enhance RSE.
- A wide range of teaching methods are utilised, that enable pupil's to actively participate in their own learning and personal development. This includes use of academic research, quizzes, case studies, roleplay, film and documentaries, small group discussion and use of appropriate guest speakers. Teaching is conducted in a safe designated PSHEE learning environment through the use of respectful ground rules and dialogue so that pupils are not expected to discuss their own personal issues in class. Teaching resources are selected on the basis of their appropriateness to pupils.
- The School believes that pupils should have opportunities to have their genuine questions and curiosity answered in an approachable and matter-of-fact manner. However, occasionally a pupil may ask a particularly explicit or embarrassing question in class. If a question is too explicit or inappropriate to answer in class at that moment, it will be acknowledged and responded to later with the pupil who asked it. The Head of PSHEE will use their skill and discretion to decide about whether to answer questions in class and, if so, how. They will establish clear parameters of what is appropriate and inappropriate in class by discussing ground rules and create a Code of Conduct with each set of pupils at the start of each academic year. This approach ensures that pupils are respectful, mature and sensible.

External agencies

External visitors may be used to deliver certain topics within RSE because they can enhance delivery of the subject and bring specialist knowledge and different ways of engaging with young people. The school checks in advance:

- That the teaching delivered by visitors fits with the planned programme for teaching RSE.
- The details of what will be covered by the visitor, the materials that the visitor will use in the sessions, a session plan, and how the session will be delivered to ensure age appropriateness for our students and inclusivity.
- That the lead teacher will also discuss with the visitor aspects of confidentiality and reporting any safeguarding issues.

Ethnic and Cultural Groups

- We intend our policy to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic groups. For some young people it may be felt that it is not culturally appropriate for them to be taught particular items. We will respond to parental requests and concerns.

Pupils with Additional Needs

- We will ensure that all young people receive relationships and sex education, and we will offer provision appropriate to the particular needs to all our pupils, taking specialist advice if necessary.

Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation

- Some of our pupils will define themselves as gay, lesbian or bi-sexual, some pupils may consider themselves transgender. Pupils may also have gay, lesbian or bi-sexual or transgender parents/guardians, brothers or sisters, other family members and/or friends. Our approach to RSE will include sensitive, honest and balanced consideration of sexuality. Our pastoral, and counselling support will take account of the needs of LGBTQ+ students. We shall also actively tackle homophobic bullying.
- 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 relationships and sex education is relevant to them.

Evaluation

Evaluation of RSE is an ongoing process. Internal evaluation takes place within the department on an annual basis. Pupils are given an opportunity to evaluate the schools' RSE provision. This will be undertaken by Head of PSHEE who will report any concerns to the Director of Senior School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding Children Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- ICT Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- Pastoral Protocol
- SEND Policy
- PSHEE Policy

First reviewed: Autumn 2020
Next review: Summer 2021

RSE Curriculum

- RSE at St Mary's School builds on the foundations of relationships education our students will have received at their primary schools and on the age-appropriate sex education that they may have already received.
- Throughout the school the following topics are covered in an age-appropriate way.

Families

Students learn about:

- Different types of committed, stable relationships and how these relationships contribute to happiness; their importance in bringing up children.
- What marriage is, its legal status, what rights and protections it offers and how the legal rights and protections differ between marriage and other types of long-term partnerships; why marriage should be entered into willingly.

Respectful relationships and friendships

Students learn about:

- Characteristics of healthy relationships and friendship (including online, sexual and non-sexual relationships):
- Trust, honesty, respect, kindness, generosity.
- Respect of privacy, boundaries and consent or the lack of it.
- Management of conflict, reconciliation and the ending of relationships of all types.
- Characteristics of unhealthy relationships and friendships:
- How to distinguish whether other children or adults are trustworthy or even safe to be with.
- To recognise unhealthy types of behaviour within relationships of their own or in others e.g. criminal behaviour, violent behaviour, coercive behaviour, sexual harassment or sexual violence.
- How to seek advice and report concerns where necessary.
- Being respectful of others however different they may be from themselves and not being led by stereotypes, which may be negative, unfair or destructive.

The legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, particularly with regard to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Online and media safety and harm

Students are taught:

- That their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online do not differ from those experienced elsewhere and the same expectations of good behaviour apply and are expected.
- That sharing material online can be fraught with risk because sharers can disseminate material widely and much further than anticipated; that it may be extremely difficult to remove such online material and can cause much distress as a consequence.
- The impact of viewing harmful content online:
- Particularly that sexually explicit material can be very damaging to self-respect.

- That viewing and sharing indecent images of children, including those viewed and shared by children, is a serious criminal offence carrying severe penalties.

Being safe

Students are taught:

- The subjects and laws that relate to the age of sexual consent, consent beyond the age of consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse.
- About how people can be affected by such relationships.
- How to communicate and recognise consent from others, including in a sexual context. They also learn how and when such consent can be withdrawn.

Forced marriages, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation

Students are taught:

- The subjects and laws that relate to forced marriage, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation.
- About how people can be physically and emotionally affected by such practices and how to access support.

Intimate and sexual relationships, sexual health

Students are taught:

- The nature of healthy one-to-one positive intimate relationships (mutual respect, loyalty, consent, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship).
- That choices made in relationships and friendships can affect health (physical, emotional, mental well-being, sexual and reproductive) in both a positive and a negative manner.
- That there are a range of strategies to identify and manage sexual pressure, including peer pressure; how to resist pressure and how not to pressure others.
- That they have a choice to delay sex or enjoy intimacy without sex.
- The facts about reproductive health, including fertility and the potential impact of lifestyle choices on fertility in men and women.
- How the effects of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour.
- The range of methods of contraception and their efficacies.
- The facts about pregnancy and miscarriage.
- The facts about abortion, adoption or keeping a baby, with guidance in obtaining further help.
- The facts about sexually transmitted infections (STI) and HIV/AIDS; their prevalence; how they are transmitted; methods of treatment and prevention via safer sex; their potential impact on health.