



**Merchant Taylors'**  
School

## RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) and HEALTH EDUCATION POLICY (MTGS)

Policy owner:	Curriculum Lead for RSE and Assistant Head Pastoral
Type of policy:	Regulatory
Regulatory Body:	Department for Education / Independent Schools Inspectorate
Relevant Legislation / Guidance:	(Independent School Standards) Regulations 2019  Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019  SEND Code of Practice 2014
Last reviewed by / date:	September 2023
Last approved by / date:	September 2023
Next review due:	September 2024
This version published:	4
Circulation:	✓All Staff & Governors ✓Inspection Portal ✓School Website ✓Parent Portal ✓Senior & Sixth Pupils
Linked Policies:	PSHE Policy Safeguarding Policy KCSIE 2023

This policy is applicable to all MTGS pupils.

The Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education policy has been written with reference to the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers, July 2019 (Updated September 2021). A copy of this policy is available on the school website and a hard copy can be obtained by contacting the school.

We are clear that parents and carers are the prime educators for children on many of these matters and that the school should complement and reinforce this role.

To embrace the challenges of creating a happy and successful adult life, pupils need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships and to build their self-efficacy. Pupils can also put this knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts. Everyone faces difficult situations in their lives. These subjects can support young people to develop resilience, to know how and when to ask for help, and to know where to access support.

We believe that RSE is a key vehicle for promoting equality, inclusion and social justice. The school's RSE is designed to promote gender equality through challenging gender stereotypes, sexism and sexual harassment in schools. We take these issues seriously and ensure that we embed content on gender equality throughout the curriculum. We are also committed to an RSE that makes every pupil feel valued and included and is relevant to them. This means we are committed to an LGBT+ inclusive and SEND inclusive curriculum and are mindful of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 when planning for this subject. We will also ensure that we take into account the religious and cultural background of all pupils when teaching RSE.

High quality, evidence-based and age-appropriate teaching of these subjects can help prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. They can also enable schools to promote the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, at school and in society. The duties on schools in this area are set out in legislation. Every pupil of secondary school age is provided with relationships and sex education, except so far as the pupil is excused (right to withdraw).

MTGS' policy should be read in conjunction with the MTGS' *PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic)* Policy and curriculum, MTS Safeguarding Policy (2022) and:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (statutory guidance) (September (2023))
- Department for Education (DfE) (2019) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships- and sex-education-rse-and-health-education>
- PSHE Association Guidance on Writing Your Relationships and Sex Education Policy(2023)
- Respectful School Communities: Self Review and Signposting Tool (a tool to support a whole school approach that promotes respect and discipline)
- Behaviour and Discipline in Schools (advice for schools, including advice for appropriate behaviour between pupils) (Updated October 2022)
- Equality Act 2010 and schools (January 2022)

- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (statutory guidance) (Updated April 2020)
- Alternative Provision (statutory guidance) (updated June 2016)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (advice for schools) (November 2018)
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (advice for schools, including advice on cyberbullying) (July 2017)
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools (advice for schools) (Sept 2021)  
SMSC requirements for independent schools (guidance for independent schools on how they should support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development). Department for Education (DfE) (2019) Relationships, sex and health education: guides for schools. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-sex-and-healtheducation-guides-for-schools> London: Department for Education.
- The Ofsted Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges, June 2021
- ISI Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements September 2022

## The Governors have approved the following Relationships and Sex Education Policy statement for the Whole School:

*Sex education will be provided in such a way as to encourage pupils to have regard to moral considerations and the value of family life, while having regard to the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (please see The Equality Act 2010 and schools: Departmental advice), under which sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics. LGBT content is fully integrated into the School's programmes of study and not as a standalone unit or lesson.*

*Under the 1993 Education Act, parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE but not from the elements of the Statutory National Curriculum (biological aspects of the human growth and reproduction). Before granting any such request the Head or Deputy Head Pastoral will discuss the request with parents and, as appropriate, with the child to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. A record will be kept of the process.*

*The Head or Deputy Head Pastoral will discuss with parents the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child. This could include any social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly said by the teacher (although the detrimental effects may be mitigated if the parents propose to deliver sex education to their child at home instead).*

*Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, the school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.*

*Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, the school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms. The school will ensure that where a pupil's parent requests that the pupil is wholly or partly excused from sex education provided as part of relationships and sex education, the pupil is so excused until the request is withdrawn, unless or to the extent that the Headmistress considers that the pupil should not be so excused. Relationships education does not apply to a pupil who is under compulsory school age.*

*This process is the same for pupils with SEND. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where the Headmistress may want to take a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision.*

*If a pupil is excused from sex education, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education or Health Education.*

*Sex education forms part of the core Science curriculum within the School. Issues relating to sex education may also be discussed in ethics and health education lessons or may be debated as part of the English curriculum.*

At the heart of Relationships Education, there is a focus on keeping children safe (including online) and the role that schools can play in preventative education.

When teaching these subjects, the religious background of all pupils is taken into account when planning teaching, so that the topics that are included in the core content in this guidance are appropriately handled, with due regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.

Our teaching reflects the law (including the Equality Act 2010) as it applies to relationships, so that young people clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the wider legal implications of decisions they may make.

Good practice allows children an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues. Such discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. Pupils are aware of how to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This includes processes when they have a concern about a friend or peer. All content is discussed in an age-appropriate way and in line with those that are developmentally expected.

### **Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**

Relationships Education, RSE must be accessible for all pupils. This is particularly important when planning teaching for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities who represent a large minority of pupils. High quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised will be the starting point to ensure accessibility. Schools should also be mindful of the preparing for adulthood outcomes, as set out in the SEND code of practice, when teaching these subjects to those with SEND.

We are aware that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND. Relationships Education and RSE can also be particularly important subjects for some pupils; for example, those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs or learning disabilities. Such factors are taken into consideration in designing and teaching these subjects, with advice from the school SENCO.

### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer plus (LGBTQ+)

In teaching Relationships Education and RSE, we ensure that the needs of all pupils are appropriately met, and that all pupils understand the importance of equality and respect. Schools must ensure that they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, (please see The Equality Act 2010 and schools: Departmental advice), under which sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics.

We ensure that all our teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content. LGBT content is fully integrated into our programmes of study for this area of the curriculum, in an age-appropriate way, rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson. The expectation is that all pupils will have been taught LGBT content at a timely point as part of this area of the curriculum.

### Speakers

There are PSHE lessons provided mainly by RSE specialists within the teaching staff who are specifically trained on delivering challenging and sensitive subjects as well as outside speakers for specific year groups covering RSE topics. The topics are age-appropriate and are reviewed annually by the Head of PSHE and the Deputy Head, Pastoral. All external speakers are carefully selected to complement and extend the teaching of our RSE content. Speakers are briefed on the needs and varied backgrounds of our students and are asked to work within the framework of our RSE policy. School teaching staff are present throughout these talks. This is an enrichment of our programme and not a substitute for our core provision which is based upon the strong relationships between teachers and pupils. Where visiting speakers are used to support the RSE programme, appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that the visitor's ethos aligns with that of the school.

## Relationships and Sex Education (RSE):

### Senior School

Specialist PSHE teachers deliver the RSE curriculum, overseen by the Head of PSHE and the Deputy Head, Pastoral.

The aim of RSE is to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship. It should also cover contraception, developing intimate relationships and resisting pressure to have sex (and not applying pressure). It should teach what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships. This will help pupils understand the positive effects that good relationships have on their mental wellbeing, identify when relationships are not right and understand how such situations can be managed.

Effective RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation. It should teach young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. It enables young people to mature, build their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity. Effective RSE also supports people, throughout life, to develop safe, fulfilling and healthy sexual relationships, at the appropriate time.

Knowledge about safer sex and sexual health remains important to ensure that young people are equipped to make safe, informed and healthy choices as they progress through adult life. This should be delivered in a non-judgemental, factual way and allow scope for young people to ask questions in a safe environment. Many teachers use approaches such as distancing techniques, setting ground rules with the class to help manage sensitive discussion and using question boxes to allow pupils to raise issues anonymously.

## 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 e.g. 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); and, 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) including: 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 (e.g. 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 e.g. 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, e.g. 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/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.

## 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/radicalisation
- criminal exploitation (for example, through gang involvement or 'county lines' drugs operations)
- hate crime
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

## Consultation & Review

Pupils, parents and staff have been involved in the writing of this policy. Pupils' views have been sought through end of topic and year surveys and questionnaires, parents' views through consultation evenings and staff views in devising the schemes of work. We write to parents each year (The term prior to the delivery of RSE) to inform them of the RSE curriculum and we welcome any comments to help us review the policy.

The Parent Talk website, which gives support and advice for parents in managing conversations with their children on these issues. This is an important opportunity to talk about how these subjects contribute to wider support in terms of pupil wellbeing and keeping children safe.

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Curriculum Leader of PSHE, the Assistant Head, Pastoral and with the Head, liaising with stakeholders as above.

The policy is approved by the Board of Governors.

Monitoring is an ongoing process, checking the schemes of work is being effectively implemented. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and the programme reflects national guidance, local priorities and pupils' needs. There are systems in place to record pupil attendance in RSE lessons and effective PSHE leadership which includes lesson observations and peer support and a system for regular review of the RSE policy and programme, including half-termly RSE pupil feedback and evaluation, as well as rotational PSHE focus group feedback.

Evaluation measures whether the lessons or units of work are effective. The assessment of pupil learning will contribute to the lesson/unit evaluation. Our evaluation helps to identify any issues for development and can prompt a review process which may result in changes to the RSE programme or policy.