



RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION POLICY

THIS POLICY IS REVIEWED ON AN ANNUAL BASIS

Policy reviewed by: Christopher Sanderson – Director of School Compliance and Policy


Review date: 30/06/2023

Submission: 11/07/2023

Version: v6.0

Policy actioned from: 1 September 2023

Next review date: 31/08/2024

Reviewer's Signature: 

Please note: 'School' refers to Chatsworth Schools; 'parents' refers to parents, guardians and carers.

This is a whole school policy, which also applies to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Introduction and Definition

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is embedded in the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and, when considered across the whole educational age range from Early Years to Year 13, involves learning at an age-appropriate level about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, consent, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity. It involves both sharing information and exploring issues and values in an objective environment which promotes respect, tolerance and understanding. RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

In primary education, the subject is generally known as 'Relationships Education'. At this level, Sex Education is not statutory, although the DfE recommends that certain aspects are embraced, including the changes at puberty and the understanding of how babies are conceived and born. In secondary education, the subject is known as 'Relationships and Sex Education'. For the purposes of this policy, the subject is referred to throughout as 'Relationships and Sex Education' (RSE).

In year 6 at The London Acorn School we teach children about the changes at puberty and the understanding of how babies are conceived and born, as recommended. We do this in Summer term and advise parents beforehand.

References and Statutory Requirements

The school's duty to provide Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) arises from the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Specific information is found in the 2019 DfE guidance 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education', to which the school must have regard. Additional guidance which informs the school's approach includes:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Working together to safeguard children
- The Equality Act 2010
- Preventing and tackling bullying
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges
- Promoting fundamental British values
- The PSHE Association Curriculum and Resources guidance

Aims

The aims of RSE are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- Prepare pupils for the changes brought about by puberty and adolescence, as part of an understanding of how the human body changes from birth to old age
- Give pupils an age-appropriate understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies
- Help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- Teach pupils about protected characteristics
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships, including the importance of family for the care and support of children
- Understand how babies are conceived and born.

The school considers that RSE is an integral part of the PSHE curriculum and aims to provide a carefully planned programme on human development, relationships, sexuality and family life within a safe,

comfortable atmosphere and through a relaxed relationship between teacher and pupil. The programme is set within a moral framework and matched to the pupils' level of maturity.

Role of Governors, Head and Staff

The proprietors and governors of Chatsworth Schools have overall responsibility for ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory obligations. They are responsible for the approval of this policy. They provide support and undertake a range of monitoring strategies to ensure that obligations are met, including the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum and facilitating the safeguarding and well-being of the pupils.

The proprietors and governors have assigned to the head the responsibility for ensuring that a suitable programme for RSE is provided, that it is appropriately resourced and successfully, objectively and sensitively led by staff who have undertaken relevant training. The head is also responsible for liaising, as appropriate with external agencies, monitoring the consistency of teaching and learning in RSE and for managing any parental requests for their child to be withdrawn from the sex education component of RSE, in accordance with this policy.

Staff are responsible for providing RSE in an informed, objective and sensitive manner, for monitoring progress and responding to individual needs and for modelling positive attitudes in relation to the content of RSE and the issues it raises.

Staff will respond to pupils' questions objectively, sensitively and openly. It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. They may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. They need to be aware that questions relating to RSE will not arise only during RSE lessons but may be triggered by topics discussed in other lessons or by events which occur at or outside school. A teacher who becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised should seek advice from the PSHE co-ordinator or, if the matter raises a safeguarding concern, the DSL. When deciding whether or not to answer questions, the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the pupils, the RSE policy and programme content, and the ethos of the school.

The school's role is to provide an age-appropriate general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception. However, sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide pupils with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE. Any member of staff who has concerns about teaching RSE should discuss these with the head or the head of PSHE.

The RSE Curriculum

High quality, evidence-based and age-appropriate teaching of RSE helps to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. It also enables schools to promote the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, at school and in society. Effective RSE makes a significant contribution to the development of the personal skills needed by pupils if they are to establish and maintain relationships. It also enables children and young people to make responsible and informed decisions about their health and well-being.

RSE is taught using the ‘What’s happening to me’ books by Alex Frith (there are different books for boys and for girls). Staff teaching yr6 students, who have already established a rapport will teach this material. A list of items that will be used in lessons (ie: sanitary pads, washable pants, illustration of a razor, anatomical model of baby, twinkl slides) will be circulated to parents.

Monitoring and Review

The school is committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its RSE Programme and uses a range of approaches, including assessment of the pupils’ knowledge and understanding, pupil feedback, staff review and feedback and gathering the views of parents. As part of the school’s commitment to listening to and responding appropriately to the views of its pupils, and enabling them to evaluate the quality of their learning experiences, the school takes into account the voice of the pupils about teaching and learning in RSE. The policy is reviewed on an annual basis.

Equality Legislation, Fundamental British Values and the Protected Characteristics

The provision of RSE intends to ensure equality of access for all pupils, regardless of gender, race or disability, so providing equal opportunities and avoiding discrimination. The school makes reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage and is mindful of the SEND Code of Practice when planning RSE. (see ‘Pupils with SEND’ section, below).

Under the provisions of the Equality Act, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation. Such attributes are collectively known as the ‘*protected characteristics*’. With due regard to the nature of the pupils on the school roll at any given time, in its presentation of RSE, the school will provide proportionate support to any individual or group of pupils with a protected characteristic to alleviate any particular disadvantages. Staff are aware that a pupil with a protected characteristic is potentially more vulnerable to teasing and bullying and will take the opportunities provided by RSE to promote respect and tolerance towards those in the school community and beyond with a protected characteristic, in accordance with the school’s commitment to promote fundamental British values.

The school has a duty to promote equality and combat bullying. Through the teaching of RSE, staff work to foster healthy and respectful peer-to-peer communication and behaviour between boys and girls, and provide an environment, which challenges perceived limits on pupils, based on their gender or any other characteristic. The teaching of RSE is a cornerstone in the school’s development of a culture in which issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled.

Pupils with SEND

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given the opportunity to participate fully in RSE lessons. A differentiated programme is provided where necessary, to facilitate all pupils gaining a full understanding. The school recognises that pupils with SEND may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable. Staff understand that certain aspects of SEND may make a pupil more vulnerable to abuse and, in this context, will take care to ensure that, in a manner commensurate with their understanding, pupils are warned about abuse and develop their resilience against it.

Working with Parents

The school recognises that parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is very important. This policy has been designed in consultation with parents and their views will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. The DfE guidance on RSE emphasises the importance of schools working in partnership with parents. Parents need to be aware that the school is legally required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes RSE. It is expected that topics related to RSE can arise incidentally in other subjects, such as Science, Geography, History, RE, and PE. Teachers will address such issues professionally as they arise, usually through relatively limited and often unplanned discussions.

The school seeks to facilitate good communication and opportunities for parents to understand and ask questions about the school's approach to RSE, to ensure parental confidence in the curriculum. The head and staff seek to build positive and supportive relationships with the parents through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective, the school aims to:

- Inform parents about the school's RSE policy and practice; this includes providing a copy of the policy on the school's website and informing parents in advance of the teaching of units of the discrete RSE curriculum.
- Answer any questions that parents may have about the RSE of their child; this includes providing opportunities for parents to view the resources that are used in lessons
- Take seriously any issue that parents raise with the school about this policy or the arrangements for RSE.

Withdrawal from Lessons

As with much of the school's approach to PSHE, RSE cannot be provided uniquely in isolation through discrete lessons. Whilst the subject material will generally be presented in this way, the approach to the topic is cross-curricular and elements of RSE will feature in several subjects. The biological aspects of reproduction, for example, will be primarily covered in the science curriculum and issues such as over-population and birth control are likely to feature in subjects such as Geography and RE. Related aspects of health education are a feature of the PE curriculum.

The head has the right to withdraw a child from some or all of the school's lessons on sex education. Parents have the right, therefore, to request that the headteacher withdraws their child from the lesson(s). This right extends only to sex education and not, for example, to relationships education, health education or science lessons. In practice, withdrawal from lessons rarely happens since, by working in partnership with parents, the school enables them to recognise the importance of this aspect of their child's education. Any such request will be treated sensitively. It will result in an invitation for the parent(s) to attend a meeting with the head, who will listen to the parents' concerns and explain the school's approach and its statutory obligations. It is hoped that, in this way, (i) reassurance will be provided, and parents' anxieties can be alleviated, (ii) the school can, if necessary, make adjustments to its programme and (iii) an agreement can be reached which enables the child to attend the lesson(s). Should the parent(s) continue to wish that their child is withdrawn from sex education lessons, the head will, after due consideration, come to a decision and inform the parents without delay. The head will also decide what alternative course of action will be taken. This may involve the following considerations;

- Aiming to ensure that there is no disruption to other areas of the child's education
- Alerting parents to the possibility that a child who is withdrawn may be vulnerable to teasing and that the school will attempt to minimise any embarrassment to the child and ensure minimal disruption to the RSE programme

- Alerting parents to the risk that the child may subsequently receive inaccurate information from his or her peers
- Offering the parents support and access to appropriate information and resources.

Safeguarding and Confidentiality

As a general rule, a child's confidentiality is maintained by the member of staff concerned. However, it is school policy that, if a member of staff has concerns about the safeguarding or well-being of a pupil, this must be referred immediately to the DSL. The DSL will decide what action should be taken, in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy. If the behaviour or comments of a pupil, made in the context of RSE, give rise to such concerns, including the possibility of abuse, exploitation or a breach of the law, safeguarding procedures must be followed. If a child makes a reference to being involved, or likely to be involved in sexual activity, the teacher will take the matter seriously and deal with it as outlined in the safeguarding policy. Disclosure of female genital mutilation must be reported to the police, as noted in the safeguarding policy.

In relation to any safeguarding concern:

- teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality; they must use their professional judgement and knowledge of safeguarding procedures to decide whether confidence can be maintained, having heard the information; they must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential
- pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DSL or the head, and possibly to parents, if it is decided that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents.

Teaching Sensitive and Controversial Issues

Sensitive and controversial issues are certain to arise in learning from real-life experience. Teachers are trained and prepared to handle personal issues arising from studies in RSE, to deal sensitively with, and to follow up appropriately, disclosures made in a group or individual setting. Issues are likely to be sensitive and controversial because they have a political, social or personal impact or deal with values and beliefs. This may 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 teacher or their peers.

The school will give due consideration as to whether some aspects of the RSE curriculum, menstruation being a case in point, will be more effectively and sensitively provided with the pupils divided into single-sex groupings.

Menstruation

The onset of menstruation can be confusing or even alarming for girls if they are not prepared. RSE provides pupils with key facts about the menstrual cycle including what is an average period, the range of menstrual products and the implications for emotional and physical health. The school also makes suitable and sensitive arrangements to help girls prepare for and manage menstruation, including accessing and the safe disposal of sanitary products. The school is aware that period poverty can be an issue for some pupils, and aims to ensure that girls have access to appropriate sanitary products during school time.

Recognising Religious and Cultural Beliefs

The school aims to develop a good understanding of pupils' faith and cultural backgrounds and promotes positive relationships between the school and local faith communities, with the intention of ensuring a constructive context for the teaching of RSE. In planning teaching, the religious background of all pupils is taken into account, so that RSE topics are appropriately handled. The school is mindful of its obligations under The Equality Act, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics (see 'Equality Legislation, Fundamental British Values and the Protected Characteristics' paragraph, above).

When appropriate, staff will teach about faith perspectives in the context of RSE. In a climate of respect, and to develop understanding, a balanced debate will be encouraged about issues that are seen as contentious. Staff may enable pupils to reflect on faith teachings about certain topics as well as how faith institutions may support people in matters of relationships and sex. In line with the school's safeguarding procedures, teaching will reflect the law, 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.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

In the teaching of RSE, staff are aware of the requirement to ensure that the needs of all pupils are appropriately met, and that all pupils understand the importance of equality and respect. Staff are also aware that, under the terms of the Equality Act, sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics. Teachers present the RSE curriculum with an objective and respectful approach. They are aware of the school's duty to promote fundamental British values, notably in this context, respect and tolerance. Teachers do not, therefore, promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society. It is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed in an age-appropriate manner during a programme of RSE. At primary level, for example, pupils may be aware of classmates who have same-sex parents. It is important, therefore, that they understand, and are respectful of, those concerned. The exploration of issues concerning homosexuality provides the opportunity to correct false ideas and assumptions and address prejudice.

Contraception

Topics such as contraception will be considered in a matter-of-fact, respectful and age-appropriate manner. Staff recognise that some cultures and religions do not condone contraception and that there may be pupils from such backgrounds in the class or the school as a whole. Their views will be respected as part of an objective approach which considers all aspects of the issues in a non-directive manner.

Staff Training and Development

The school facilitates teachers to obtain expertise in the presentation of RSE. This may be through external providers or undertaken in-house or online. Teachers do not necessarily have to become experts in all aspects of RSE, but they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly and honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice, if necessary. Some teachers may have trained to a higher level in related areas, for example in counselling, well-being or mindfulness, and share their expertise with their colleagues. In reviewing this policy and the school's scheme of work for RSE, the school gives due consideration to the views of the staff.

Resources

The school has invested in resources appropriate to the teaching of RSE and provides staff with training, as appropriate in the use of such resources.

Visiting Speakers

The school considers that, for the most part, the RSE programme is best presented by, and discussed with, teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However, the school also recognises that specialist visiting speakers can enhance the provision in this area. In such cases, the choice of speaker and subject matter will be carefully planned in advance and vetting will take place in accordance with the school's policy on the vetting of visiting speakers. Clear guidance will be given to the speaker, particularly in relation to the degree of explicitness of the content in relation to the age and maturity of the pupils, the expected outcomes for the presentation and the manner in which pupils' questions can be handled.

Links to Other School Policies and Documents

The teaching of RSE is accomplished through both discrete lessons within the overall scheme for PSHE and a cross-curricular approach which embraces other curricular areas, as well as assemblies, tutor time, circle time and extra-curricular activities, as relevant. In this respect, this policy should be considered with due reference to other school documentation, including;

- Safeguarding policy
- Online safety policy
- Subjects policies and schemes of work, including those for science, PE and PSHE
- Anti-bullying policy
- Schools can edit or add to this list

Interpretation

In this policy, the term "senior manager" means the School Head and their designated deputies.

This policy applies to all employees in all Schools (save for Schools with their own procedure which shall prevail) and other work environments within Chatsworth Schools.

This policy applies within all companies, which are wholly owned subsidiaries of Chatsworth Schools Ltd, a company registered in England, registered number 11552579.

The registered office of all companies is Crimea Office, The Great Tew Estate, Great Tew, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, OX7 4AH. Any enquiries regarding the application of this policy should be addressed to the Director of Information at the above address.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.