

## RSE Policy

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## **Policy Aims and Objectives**

We believe that relationships and sex education (RSE) is vital for the personal, social, and emotional development of our students. It equips children and young people with the information, skills, and values that they need to have safe, respectful, and enjoyable relationships and empowers them to take responsibility for their sexual health and wellbeing.

At Mulberry Academy Woodside, we believe that all children and young people have a right to holistic, inclusive, and needs-led RSE. By providing high-quality RSE, we uphold the ethos and shared values of our school and its commitment to equality and celebration of difference.

This policy was produced in consultation with our staff, board of governors, students, and parents. We will ensure the policy is effectively communicated to staff and parents, including through publishing the policy on our school website. The information below complies with our statutory obligations to deliver RSE under sections 34 & 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and aligns with the DfE's statutory Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education, and Health Education guidance.

We will review the policy regularly to ensure it is in line with current government guidance and legislation and to ensure our RSE program continues to meet the needs of our pupils.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies:

- Anti-bullying policy
- Behaviour for Learning policy
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Online safety policy

### **Aims of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)**

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place within the school community
- Prepare students for puberty and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Help students develop feelings of self-respect, confidence, and empathy
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships; facilitating opportunities for concerns to be raised and addressed
- Teach students the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies
- Empower all members of the school community by cultivating a positive and inclusive environment around physical, emotional, and sexual health and delivering a broad and ambitious curriculum that facilitates learning for all

### **Statutory Requirements**

#### **National Curriculum for Science**

- At key stage 3 and key stage 4, the national curriculum for science includes teaching about reproduction in humans, including the structure and function of the male and female reproductive systems, the menstrual cycle, gametes, fertilisation, gestation, birth, and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS.
- There is no right to withdraw from content delivered through the national curriculum for science.

#### **Health Education (Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing)**

- The aim is to enable pupils to understand how their bodies are changing, how they are feeling and why, and to further develop the language they use to talk about their bodies, health, and emotions. Lessons support pupils in recognising that there are normal variations in emotions and physical health, and in identifying the early signs of physical or mental wellbeing concerns.
- Pupils are taught practical self-care strategies to protect and support their physical and mental health and wellbeing. This includes:
  - Building resilience through physical activity, hobbies, good nutrition, adequate sleep, and positive outward-facing activities
  - Recognising when someone they know may need support and how and where to seek help
- Pupils learn the key facts about puberty, the changing adolescent body, and menstrual wellbeing through Health Education. This builds on learning from primary school and includes both the physical and emotional changes associated with adolescence, and the impact on wider health and wellbeing.
- There is no right to withdraw from Health Education.

### **Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)**

- RSE within secondary school should provide clear progression from the lessons taught in primary school.
- The focus in secondary school should be to provide young people with the knowledge and skills to identify and develop healthy relationships (including family, friendships, intimate and committed relationships, marriage, and other legally recognised partnerships; teaching will ensure that pupils cover contraception, learn about sexual health, and manage pressure around sexual activity safely and respectfully, without applying pressure to others).

Pupils will also learn to:

- Recognise acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in relationships, both offline and online, understand their impact on wellbeing, and manage situations safely
- Understand the link between self-respect and mental wellbeing
- Learn the facts and the law relating to sex, consent, grooming, and online safety
- Explore sexuality, gender identity, and sexual health
- Know the legal choices relating to pregnancy in an age-appropriate and inclusive way

- Understand that teaching reflects the law (including the Equality Act 2010), so that young people clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the wider legal implications of decisions they may make

## **Equality, Inclusion & Social Justice**

We believe that RSE is a key vehicle for promoting equality, inclusion, and social justice.

We seek to challenge all forms of discrimination and prejudice within our school community and to promote understanding and respect as outlined under the Equality Act 2010.

Our approach to RSE supports students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) development and promotes equality through:

- Challenging stereotypes and discrimination as part of the pastoral offer
- Embedded and targeted education across the curriculum
- Creating aspirational opportunities for all students (careers, destinations)
- Disseminating a diverse range of role models and materials to ensure that students feel reflected, valued, and included

We are committed to an inclusive curriculum and are mindful of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 when planning for this subject. We also take into account the religious and cultural background of all students.

The school takes positive action to build a culture where everyday sexism, misogyny, and homophobia are not tolerated, and any occurrences identified and tackled. Lessons on LGBT issues are fully integrated into the programme of study rather than taught as stand-alone units.

## **Definition of Relationships and Sex Education**

Relationships Education teaches about healthy lifestyles, personal identity, cultural development, and the physical, social, legal, and emotional aspects of human relationships (friendships, intimate, sexual, committed relationships, and family life).

Sex Education teaches about physical, social, legal, and emotional aspects of human sexuality and behaviour, including human reproduction, conception, contraception, safer sex, STIs, and sexual health.

We take the approach that RSE is best approached in an integrated way using a gender equity and human rights framework. Lessons that include sex education are clearly highlighted for parental withdrawal purposes.

RSE gives pupils the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to:

- Realise their health (including sexual health), wellbeing, and dignity
- Build self-esteem and self-worth
- Explore and value their personal identity and the personal identities of others
- Understand family structures, committed relationships, and legal status of long-term relationships
- Manage and explore difficult feelings and emotions
- Consider how their choices affect their own wellbeing and that of others
- Develop as informed and responsible citizens
- Protect their rights throughout life

Evidence shows that effective RSE reduces unprotected or unwanted sex and harmful behaviour, including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

## **Curriculum**

Our curriculum is set out on our website but this may be adapted as and when necessary.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The delivery of RSE is monitored as part of the formal line management system. We regularly monitor our RSE scheme of work to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistent and that the curriculum is meeting the needs of our school community as well as the national requirements.

This policy will be reviewed by the school's leadership team and Governing Body annually.

If changes are needed, members of staff, parents/carers and students will be consulted and any subsequent changes made clearly communicated.

The School's Leadership Team monitors the implementation of the programme through:

- Learning walks
- Our coaching programme
- Planning scrutiny
- Looking at samples of students' work
- Analysing student attendance in lessons
- End of module assessment scrutiny
- Pupil voice

Student development in RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of the school's internal assessment systems.

**RSE lesson breakdown (Years 7-11):**

**Year 7 - Friends, Respect & Relationships**

Week	Topic
1	Consent and Boundaries & Being Positive
2	Respect and Relationships & What Makes a Good Friend
3	Friendships & Online Relationships & Pressure and Influence

**Year 8 - Identity, Relationships & Sex Education**

Week	Topic
1	Relationships & Self-Love
2	Healthy Respectful Relationships & Love
3	Dealing with Conflict & Periods

**Note:** Years 7-8 focus on relationships and personal development. From Year 9, students receive age-appropriate sex education alongside relationships education.

**Year 9 - Sex, the Law & Consent**

Week	Topic
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1	Healthy relationships
2	Sexual Consent & Relationships and Partners
3	Domestic Abuse & Why Have Sex + Delaying Sexual Activity
4	Sexual Harassment and Stalking

### Year 9 - Contraception & STIs

Week	Topic
1	STIs & Treating STIs
2	Contraception & Condoms Explored Further
3	HIV and AIDS, Prejudice and Discrimination

In the summer term the Year 9 RSE curriculum also includes a FGM awareness workshop delivered external agency

### Year 10 - Risk, Relationships & Sex Education

	Topic
1	The role of Intimacy & The Impact of Pornography
2	Pressure & Persuasion
3	Managing Relationship Conflict & Relationship Abuse

### Year 11 - RSE (Drop-down sessions)

	Topic
1	Power dynamics, pressure and influence (on and offline)
2	Understanding consent
3	Staying safe online

4	Deepfakes and reporting
5	Recognising unhealthy or abusive behaviours
6	Decision making under pressure, substances and support
7	Relationships and Sexual Health

### **Right to Withdraw**

We recognise that parents and carers play a vital role in their child’s education and development. We are committed to working in partnership with families and being transparent about the content delivered within our RSE curriculum.

In line with statutory guidance, parents and carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from the non-statutory components of sex education delivered as part of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), up to and until three terms before the child turns 16.

If a parent or carer wishes to request withdrawal, they should discuss this with the Headteacher, who will explore the concerns and explain the content and purpose of the curriculum before confirming the decision. The school will respect a request for withdrawal, except in exceptional circumstances in line with statutory guidance.

Withdrawal may only be requested from specific elements of sex education that fall outside of the National Curriculum for Science and statutory Relationships Education. In Years 7-11, this may include:

- Teaching about sexual relationships and intimacy that is not part of the National Curriculum for Science or statutory Relationships Education
- Contraception methods taught outside of the Science curriculum

Sex education content will be clearly identified in advance. Where a parent or carer chooses to withdraw their child from these specific elements, alternative supervised learning will be provided for the duration of those sessions.

After three terms before a pupil turns 16, if the pupil wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will make arrangements for them to receive this teaching in line with statutory guidance.

In accordance with statutory guidance, parents and carers cannot withdraw their child from:

- Relationships Education
- Health Education
- Any content delivered through the National Curriculum for Science

This includes teaching about:

- Consent and personal boundaries
- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Friendships, including online friendships
- Pressure and influence
- Self-esteem and identity
- Bullying and harassment
- Menstrual wellbeing and puberty education
- Safeguarding, exploitation, and abuse awareness

This process applies equally to pupils with SEND. Where a pupil has additional needs, the school will work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that teaching is accessible, appropriately adapted, and developmentally suitable, in line with statutory guidance.

A reminder communication will be sent at the end of the Spring Term each year to allow time for any discussions prior to delivery of the programme.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

**Governing Board:** Hold the headteacher accountable for policy implementation

**Headteacher:** Ensure RSE is taught consistently and manage withdrawal requests

**Staff:**

- Deliver RSE sensitively
- Model positive attitudes
- Monitor progress
- Respond to individual needs and withdrawal requests

**Students:** Engage fully and treat others with respect

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Monitored via learning walks, coaching, planning scrutiny, work samples, attendance, assessments, and pupil voice
- Reviewed annually by leadership and governing body
- Adjustments communicated to staff, parents, and students

## **Working with Parents/Carers**

We believe that the successful teaching of RSE involves parents/ carers and schools working together. We also believe that parents/ carers can play an important role in the RSE of their children through exploring discussions at home that have taken place in school.

Our RSE policy has been developed through consulting parents and carers.

We work with parents/carers to ensure that they are aware of what we teach and when through the following methods:

- Inductions, parents' evenings, newsletters, website, and Curriculum map
- Encouraging discussions at home
- Supporting understanding of RSE and safeguarding

## **Working with Visitors/External Agencies**

From time-to-time Mulberry Academy Woodside may invite external experts and visitors to deliver parts of our RSE scheme of work.

External visitors will be selected in order to enrich and supplement our RSE curriculum by bringing particular skills, methods and expertise to the classroom and the whole school.

A teacher will always be present throughout these lessons so as to build on the students' learning after the session/s as well as answer any questions they may subsequently have.

Any external visitor will be expected to comply with this policy and other related policies, including the school's confidentiality and child protection policy.

We will also ensure that:

- There is appropriate planning, preparatory and follow up work for the session
- The visitor understands the cohort of children involved, including the different ability levels and diversities in identities across protected characteristics. They will also be made aware of any specific issues relating to child protection.

## **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

Mulberry Academy Woodside acknowledges that RSE is crucial for creating a culture of safeguarding within the school and for meeting our statutory obligations as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

RSE helps children to understand the difference between healthy and abusive relationships and to understand how to get help if they are experiencing abuse or have experienced abuse.

We recognise that when discussing some of the issues RSE covers some students could disclose abuse or other harmful experiences. In cases of disclosure, all staff have statutory training around child protection and will follow the schools safeguarding policy and procedures.

We also recognise that some children may be vulnerable to some of the content delivered due to a previous safeguarding concern, ongoing concerns or changes to their personal life. For those children, additional support will be given to prevent them being affected by the scenarios or topics in their planned lessons.

While Mulberry Academy Woodside wants to create a learning space that feels safe for children and young people to disclose, we also want to protect children's privacy. At Mulberry Academy Woodside we do this by using a number of teaching techniques including the use of a working agreement, where rights respecting ground rules are created with students on what makes a safe and welcoming environment for all.

Once ground rules have been set, we will check they are in place throughout the scheme of work and actively referred to. Through the use of ground rules and other approaches, such as distancing techniques, we believe the school can create a supportive environment for discussions that can be sensitive or difficult.

## **Appendix 1 - Statutory RSE Outcomes (DfE 2019 Guidance)**

### **Families**

- 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**

- 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**

- 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**

- 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**

- 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

- 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
- How to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment

## References

- DfE (2019) RSE Statutory Guidance
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010
- KCSIE 2025