

# Relationships and Sex Education Policy



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# Reading School

## Relationships and Sex Education Policy

### Responsibilities:

**Policy Owner:** Lizzie Ayres, Deputy Headteacher  
Governors Committee EXPC

### Audit Control

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# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

## Document Control and Approval

### Version Control

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### Responsibilities

Job title	Responsible for;
Deputy Headteacher	Policy Owner
Headteacher	Policy Overview
	Committee Responsible

### Policies Linked

Policy name
Child Protection Policy
Curriculum Policy



# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Statutory requirements</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Policy development</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Definition</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Delivery of RSE</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Content</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Key Stage 3 .....	9
Key Stage 4 .....	9
<b>Roles and responsibilities</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Parents’ right to withdraw</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Monitoring arrangements</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix – Student Outcomes</b> .....	<b>12</b>



# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

## Introduction

At Reading School, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is an essential part of our commitment to developing students' character, wellbeing and understanding of the world. RSE is not solely about intimate relationships; it encompasses physical, moral and emotional development, the importance of stable and loving relationships, and the values of respect, care and responsibility.

Our curriculum supports students to enact the four pillars of a Reading School education — **Excellence, Integrity, Leadership and Community** — and equips them with the knowledge and skills to form healthy, respectful relationships both on and offline.

We recognise the complex world our students are growing up in, including the influence of social media, online culture and emerging technologies. Therefore, our curriculum includes teaching on:

- The links between sexism, misogyny and violence against women and girls
- How to identify and learn from positive male role models
- Ethical behaviour in relationships, beyond boundaries and consent
- How pornography can distort expectations and influence behaviour
- The influence of harmful online subcultures, including 'incels'
- The prevalence and risks of AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes
- Consent, power dynamics and respectful communication

Our programme is informed by the PSHE Association, the Sex Education Forum and the Department for Education (DfE), and is structured around three core themes: **Health and Wellbeing, Relationships, and Living in the Wider World.**

## Statutory requirements

Today's children and young people grow up in an increasingly complex world both on and off-line. This presents many opportunities, but also challenges and risks. In today's environment they must learn to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way both on and off-line.

Under the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, and the Children and Social Work Act 2017, RSE is compulsory for all secondary-aged students.

In December 2025, the DfE published updated statutory guidance for RSHE, replacing the 2019 guidance. All schools must comply with this guidance from September 2026. This policy reflects those updated requirements.

Schools must:

- Actively challenge everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes



# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

- Teach age-appropriate content by the end of secondary school
- Ensure parents/carers can view all curriculum materials on request
- Consult parents/carers when developing or reviewing the RSHE policy

Health Education is compulsory and delivered through the wider PSHE curriculum.

Research published by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) in 2025, and summarised by the National Governance Association (NGA) in 2026, shows that RSHE is already having a positive impact, with significantly more young people reporting that they felt well prepared for sex and relationships.

## Policy development

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, students and parents. The consultation and policy development process involves all stakeholders and is reviewed annually:

1. Review – a working group analyses relevant information including relevant national and local guidance.
2. Staff consultation – staff are requested to make recommendations.
3. Parent/stakeholder consultation – parents are invited to feedback about the policy.
4. Student consultation – formal and informal consultation to review and develop the curriculum.
5. Ratification – annual review with governors.

This policy also highlights that parents have the right to see all RSE curriculum material and resources on request. Reading School welcomes feedback from parents in order to continually improve RSE provision for our students.

## Definition

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of students, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity. RSE involves a combination of sharing information, and exploring issues and values.

It includes learning about:

- Relationships and healthy communication
- Sexual health and sexuality
- Diversity and identity
- Ethical behaviour and respect
- Online influences and harmful content

RSE aims to:

- Provide accurate, factual information



# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

- Challenge myths and stereotypes
- Develop respect, empathy and self-esteem
- Equip students with decision-making and risk-management skills
- Promote safe, healthy and fulfilling relationships

RSE does **not** promote sexual activity.

## Delivery of RSE

RSE is taught primarily within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum, online safety aspects are covered in computer science and PSHE and other aspects are included in religious education (RE). The sessions are well planned and delivered through a variety of techniques including small class sessions and whole year group assemblies. Ground rules are established in all lessons.

Relationships Education focuses on friendships, families, respect, consent, online behaviour and personal safety. Sex Education covers human reproduction, sexual health, contraception, pregnancy and intimate relationships. Biological content taught in science is compulsory and cannot be withdrawn from.

Across all Key Stages, students will be supported with developing the following skills:

- Communication and emotional literacy
- Recognising, assessing and managing potential risks
- Assertiveness
- Seeking help and support when required
- Informed decision-making
- Self-respect and empathy for others
- Recognising and maximising a healthy lifestyle
- Conflict resolution
- Respecting boundaries and consent
- Discussion and group work

These skills are taught within the context of family life.

RSE at Reading 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.

The religious background of all students will be considered when planning teaching, so that those sensitive topics that need to be taught are appropriately handled.

Teaching will explain relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are covered so that students clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the wider legal implications of decisions they may make

## Use of External Visitors



# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Visitors may enhance RSE delivery. The school ensures:

- Content aligns with the curriculum
- Materials are age-appropriate and inclusive
- Visitors understand safeguarding and confidentiality
- All materials are available to parents/carers

## Content

### Suicide Prevention

In line with DfE guidance, the curriculum includes safe, age-appropriate teaching on suicide prevention, supported by staff training and safeguarding protocols.

### 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, friendships and conflict resolution

Students learn about:

- Characteristics of healthy relationships and friendship (including on-line, 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 eg 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.
- Practical conflict-resolution strategies, including de-escalation, communication skills and recognising unsafe situations

### LGBTQ+ Content

In line with DfE guidance, Reading School:

- Includes same-sex parents/carers when teaching about families
- Teaches the facts and the law relating to biological sex and gender reassignment



## Relationships and Sex Education Policy

- Integrates LGBTQ+ content throughout the curriculum
- Ensures equal opportunity to explore healthy same-sex relationships
- Avoids materials that oversimplify gender identity or reinforce stereotypes
- Does not teach as fact that all people have a gender identity

### Online safety, social media and potential harms:

Students are taught:

- That their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online and on social media do not differ from those experienced elsewhere and the same expectations of good behaviour apply and are expected.
- That sharing material on-line can be fraught with risk as sharers can disseminate material widely and much further than anticipated; that it may be extremely difficult to remove such on-line material and can cause much distress as a consequence.
- The impact of viewing harmful content on-line:
- 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.
- About knife crime, including the law, risks, and how to seek help if they or others feel unsafe.

### 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 is 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.



# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

- 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.
- About menstrual and gynaecological health, including conditions such as endometriosis, and how to recognise symptoms that may require medical support.
- How to develop the skills and confidence to access healthcare services when needed, including sexual health clinics, GP services and online NHS resources.

**The following biological aspects RSE are included in the science curriculum**

## Key Stage 3

The following aspects of RSE are included in the science curriculum:

- That living things have structures that enable life processes to take place
- The ways in which some cell types including sperm and ovum are adapted to their functions
- The human reproductive system, menstrual cycle, and fertilisation
- How the foetus develops in the uterus
- The physical and emotional changes that take place during adolescence
- That bacteria and viruses can affect health

## Key Stage 4

The following aspects of RSE are included in the science curriculum:

- The way in which hormonal control occurs, including the effect of insulin and sexual hormones
- The medical uses of hormones including the control and promotion of fertility
- That sexual reproduction is a source of genetic variation
- How gender is determined in humans

We occasionally use external visitors 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.
- 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.



# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

They are fully aware of the relevant provisions of The Equality Act 2010.

- The lead teacher will also discuss with the visitor aspects of confidentiality and reporting any safeguarding issues.

## Roles and responsibilities

### The governing board

The governing board will approve the RSE policy, hold the headteacher to account for its implementation and ensure that the policy is available on the school's website.

### The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw students from non-statutory components of RSE (see section Parents' right to withdraw).

### PSHE Coordinator

The PSHE coordinator will:

- Ensure a smooth transition between primary and secondary school by checking with students their knowledge gained in Relationships education at primary school.
- Ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010, and be mindful not to discriminate against any students because of any "protected characteristics" 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 PSHE curriculum eg drug education and student substance, or areas or the wider curriculum eg science, ICT and RE and 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, prior to the session taking 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.

### Teaching Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive and inclusive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Actively challenging sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes
- Monitoring progress



## Relationships and Sex Education Policy

- Responding to the needs of individual students
- Responding appropriately to students whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory components of RSE

Teachers will answer questions from students in an age-appropriate, factual and sensitive manner. If a student asks a question outside the planned curriculum, teachers will respond in line with safeguarding procedures and the school's values.

### Students

Students are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

### Parents' right to withdraw

Parents of students at Reading School may request to withdraw their children from sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE up until the third term before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. However, parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction necessary under national curriculum science, nor can they withdraw their child from the Relationships Education or Health Education as part of RSE.

Parents must first discuss with the Headteacher, who will respect the parents' wishes if they continue to hold that view after discussion. Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the Headteacher. The Headteacher may refuse this request in "exceptional circumstances", such as because of safeguarding concerns.

Parents also have the right to see all RSE curriculum material and resources on request.

After turning 15 years of age, if the student wishes to receive sex education then the school will make arrangements to provide it within the next three terms and the parents have no right to appeal against that decision.

Alternative, appropriate and purposeful work will be given to students who are withdrawn from sex education as part of RSE.

If a student who has been withdrawn from sex education asks a question related to sex during a Relationships lesson, teachers will provide a brief, factual response appropriate to the context, without providing additional sex-education content.

### Monitoring arrangements

The delivery of RSE is monitored by the PSHE coordinator, SLT and Pastoral teams through learning walks and student surveys. Students' development in RSE is informally monitored by class teachers as part of formative feedback, along with formal reporting on their progress.

Monitoring includes evaluation of teaching on:

- Misogyny and harmful sexual behaviours



# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

- Online harms and pornography
- AI-generated imagery
- LGBTQ+ inclusion
- Consent and power dynamics

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body.

## Appendix – Student Outcomes

Appendix: By the end of secondary school students should know

TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• That there are different types of committed, stable relationships</li><li>• How these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children</li><li>• 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</li><li>• Why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into</li><li>• The characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships</li><li>• The roles and responsibilities of parents/carers with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting</li><li>• 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</li></ul>



## Relationships and Sex Education Policy

TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW
Respectful relationships, including friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help</li> <li>• That some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control</li> <li>• What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>
Online and media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them</li> <li>• What to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online</li> <li>• The impact of viewing harmful content</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• That sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail</li> <li>• How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online</li> </ul>



## Relationships and Sex Education Policy

TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW
Being safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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</li><li>• 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)</li></ul>
Students will also know:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How everyday sexism and misogyny contribute to violence against women and girls</li><li>• How pornography can distort expectations and influence behaviour</li><li>• The risks and prevalence of AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes</li><li>• How harmful online subcultures (e.g., incels) influence attitudes</li><li>• How to identify positive male role models</li><li>• Ethical behaviour in relationships, beyond consent</li></ul>



## Relationships and Sex Education Policy

TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW
Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• The facts about reproductive health, including fertility and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women</li> <li>• That there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others</li> <li>• That they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex</li> <li>• The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available</li> <li>• The facts around pregnancy including miscarriage</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• About the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment</li> <li>• How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour</li> <li>• How to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment</li> </ul>

