



HEATHSIDE SCHOOL  
HAMPSTEAD

# Relationships and Sex Education Policy

# Introduction

At Heathside we believe that Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is vital for the personal, social and emotional development of our pupils. It equips children and young people with the information, skills and values they need to have safe, respectful and enjoyable relationships and empowers them to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.

Heathside School believes that all children and young people have a right to holistic, inclusive and needs-led RSE. We believe that through providing high quality RSE, we are upholding the ethos and values of our school and its commitment to equity and celebration of difference.

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. It will have due regard for the DfE's statutory Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education Guidance and other relevant guidance.

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

- PSHEE Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy,
- Science Curriculum Policy,
- e-Safety Policy
- School Visitors Policy

## What is Relationships Education?

We define relationships education as learning about the physical, social, legal and emotional aspects of human relationships including friendships, intimate, sexual and committed relationships and family life.

We define sex education as learning about the physical, social, legal and emotional aspects of human sexuality and behaviour, including human reproduction. This includes conception and contraception, consent, safer sex, sexually transmitted infections and sexual health.

We take the approach that Relationships and Sex Education are best approached in an integrated way that is respectful of gender equity and human rights. We will seek to nurture children's curiosity about the world around them, supporting their development and their respect for themselves and each other.

## Content and benefits of RSE

Central to Heathside is the belief that the education provided is not only about the gaining of knowledge and the acquiring of essential skills, important though they are, but that it is also about the personal development of each pupil, in its fullest sense.

In successive pieces of legislation since the 1992 Education Reform Act, the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been a focus of attention. An implication of this Act is that adults and young people alike should show, and be entitled to expect from others, good standards of behaviour, marked by respect, courtesy and freedom from harassment. All staff have a responsibility to make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development.

## Aims

At Heathside we aim to not only cover the curriculum content outlined in the RSE Guidance, but to equip our pupils with the necessary knowledge and skills to build positive and respectful relationships online and in person. We seek to ensure that our curriculum gives pupils the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will help them to: *f*

- realise their health (including sexual health), wellbeing and dignity *f*
- build self-esteem and self-worth *f*
- explore and value their personal and sexual identity and the personal/sexual identities of others *f*
- understand family structures, committed relationships and the legal status of different types of long-term relationships *f*
- understand and make sense of the real-life issues they are experiencing in the world around them *f*
- manage and explore difficult feelings and emotions *f*
- consider how their choices affect their own wellbeing and that of others *f*
- develop as informed and responsible citizens *f*
- understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.

We believe that high quality, comprehensive RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation but in fact builds young people's confidence and self-esteem and helps them understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity. Evidence shows that effective RSE plays a role in behaviour change, including reducing unprotected or unwanted sex and reducing harmful behaviour, including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

## Curriculum

RSE is delivered through a range of assemblies and curriculum areas but is specifically addressed through the schools PSHEE curriculum. This curriculum is developed by the PSHEE group in conjunction with the views of teachers, pupils and parents. In School we will meet the learning objectives and content outlined in the Relationships Education, Relationships & Sex Education and Health Education Guidance. All content will be delivered through a range of subjects including Science and PSHEE in a timely way and will be age and developmentally appropriate to meet the needs of our pupils, including those pupils with SEND.

Our scheme of work delivers the RSE curriculum in accordance with the the RSE Mapping document (Annexe A) which identifies the topics that are statutory and that parents cannot withdraw their child from and which lessons parents can withdraw their children from.

## Delivery

RSE will be delivered by the PSHEE teachers and form tutors who will work closely with colleagues in related curriculum areas (Science, computing, PE) to ensure a holistic and joined up approach to what is taught in RSE. We also supplement learning through using a whole school approach and utilising time outside of the classroom, such as topics explored in school assemblies, through art and drama, school celebrations or events. RSE will address aspects of relationships and sex in an integrated way within a single topic. We also use external agencies where appropriate to deliver aspects of Relationships and Sex Education (see section below). The programme will be delivered in a non judgemental, factual way, using the correct medical terms where appropriate (for example when teaching about external body parts). School staff are expected to behave professionally at all times and are not expected to express their personal views or beliefs when teaching RSE.

## Pupil voice

*Listening and responding to the views of young people will strengthen the policy, ensuring that it meets the needs of all pupils. (DfE Guidance, p12)*

Pupil voice is central to the culture and ethos of Heathside. We use pupil voice to evaluate how relevant and engaging RSE is to children's lives. Throughout our RSE scheme of work we embed pupil voice practices to enable students to express their views on the range of topics and issues that RSE covers and to ensure that they listen to other opinions and evidence, reflect on their own perspectives and take a broader view. We want to ensure that all pupil voices are heard but that those views that are hurtful, offensive or exclusionary do not dominate and are addressed. We want to ensure a culture where human rights, social justice, inclusion and diversity are promoted and our teachers will use a range of strategies to promote open thoughts and dialogue such as the use of a thoughts box, or with older pupils perhaps big questions.

## Answering pupil questions

*The school's policy should cover how the school handles [difficult] questions. Given ease of access to the internet, children whose questions go unanswered may turn to inappropriate sources of information. (RSHE Guidance, p23)*

RSE explores a range of issues that may provoke questions from pupils. We view questions as a positive sign that pupils are engaged with what is being taught and feel able to express natural curiosities about themselves, their bodies and relationships with others. As much as possible, where a question is relevant to the whole class, we will answer it to the whole group. There may occasionally be the need to deal with a question outside of the classroom if it is not suitable for the entire class. Questions will always be answered in an age and developmentally appropriate way and take into account whether a parent/carer has requested their child to be removed from sex education lessons. School staff will not be expected to answer personal questions about themselves or to ask direct personal questions of their students that could make either party vulnerable. We believe that an open approach to answering questions prevents pupils from learning inaccurate or harmful information online or from peers and older students. We believe exploring issues with the whole class helps to reduce the stigma and shame that can surround some of the issues explored in RSE. Importantly, we believe that children are better protected from harm and abuse when they are able to discuss issues openly with trained professionals and in a safe environment.

## Working with parents/carers

*All schools should work closely with parents when planning and delivering these subjects. Schools should ensure that parents know what will be taught and when. (RSHE Guidance, p17) All schools must have in place a written policy for [...] RSE. Schools must consult parents in developing and reviewing their policy. (RSHE Guidance, p11)*

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:

- Presentations and open meetings with parents to outline the different aspects of the curriculum.
- School surveys are carried out to identify what are the best ways to engage with parents/carers and highlight where there is misinformation/ lack of clarity/ questions about the curriculum as well as to identify barriers to engagement.
- Curriculum guides
- Headteacher surgeries

We may also share examples of some of the key resources we use with parents/carers to reassure them of the content and to enable them to continue the conversations started in class at home.

# The right to withdraw from RSE

*All schools should work closely with parents [...] and clearly communicate the fact that parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. (RSHE Guidance, p17)*

- As outlined within the Statutory Guidance, parents/carers have the right to request their child be withdrawn from all or part of sex education lessons that are delivered as part of PSHEE.
- Parents/carers do not have a right to withdraw their child from Relationships Education.
- Parents/carers do not have the right to withdraw their child from any sex education delivered as part of the Science curriculum.
- Parents do not have the right to withdraw their child from Health Education.
- All children will have the right to opt into sex education three terms before they turn 16 and the school will make arrangements for this to happen. In practice, this means that when a child turns 15 they have the right to be taught sex education if they want to.

Although parents/carers have the right to request to withdraw their child from any or all of sex education as part of Relationships Education, it is our aim to encourage parents to see the value of RSE learning and its contribution to keeping children safe, developing their emotional, social and physical wellbeing and for promoting equality and social justice. Should a parent decide that they do not wish their child to take part in any of these lessons, we would ask that they first speak to the headteacher to discuss their concerns. The headteacher will discuss the request with the parent/carer to fully understand and address any concerns/objections to the content of the curriculum. If parents/carers do decide to withdraw their child, they should inform the headteacher in writing and the school will keep a record of this. Except in exceptional circumstances, we will respect the parents' request to withdraw their 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 will make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms. We will remind parents annually that the request to withdraw is still in place and invite them to confirm whether they still want it.

To identify which areas of the curriculum fall within each of the above categories, Please see Annexe A.

## Working with visitors and external agencies

*Working with external organisations can enhance delivery of these subjects, bringing in specialist knowledge and different ways of engaging with young people [...] It is important to agree how confidentiality will work in any lesson and that the visitor understands how safeguarding reports should be dealt with in line with school policy. (RSHE Guidance, p18)*

From time-to-time the school 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 by bringing particular skills, methods and expertise to the classroom and the whole school. External visitors may include First aid trainers, representatives of charities and support bodies and other experts. A teacher will always be present throughout these lessons so as to build on the pupil's learning after the session/s as well as answer any questions the pupils may subsequently have. Any external visitor will be expected to comply with this policy and other related policies, including the school's Safeguarding and child protection policy.

We will also ensure that: *f*

- There is appropriate planning, preparatory and follow up work for the session. *f*
- 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

*At the heart of these subjects there is a focus on keeping children safe, and schools can play an important role in preventative education [...] Good practice allows children an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues. Such discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. (RSHE Guidance, p42)*

Heathside 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. 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 pupils could disclose abuse or other harmful experiences. In cases of a 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 in RSE 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.