RIPLEY ST THOMAS
A CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

Relationship and Sex Education Policy

Originator	A. Barnes
Reviewed	October 2026
Next Review date	October 2028

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An Education for Life

Our vision

We aim for all members of our Christian community to flourish spiritually, academically and personally so that they can live life in all its fullness.

'I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness.'
(John 10:10)

Relationship and Sex Education Policy

Rationale and ethos

As a worshipping community, witnessing to the Christian Faith in all the school's activities, we have a responsibility to ensure that whatever education pupils receive is set in the context of Christian values and based on sound moral principles. It is within this context, therefore, that Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) is provided for all pupils in a manner appropriate to their age and development. We believe that a positive understanding and attitude to the teaching of RSE within this framework can lead to a positive sense of self-esteem and self-worth. This, in turn, increases pupils' confidence in forming and maintaining relationships so that they develop a caring, considerate attitude to each other and to society.

It is important, however, that we take into account the world in which our pupils grow up. In society, sexual matters are explicitly discussed; our teaching, therefore, should also aim to inform them so that they are better able to understand the consequences of their actions. In this, the school's role is to work in partnership with parents to enable pupils' healthy, moral and spiritual growth.

As defined by the Government's statutory guidance, RSE is a programme of study designed to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships; understanding the importance and characteristics of family life is integral to the RSE curriculum, alongside the teaching of facts and laws surrounding sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity.

We recognise a real need for providing RSE in a gradual and positive manner. To cater for this need, we will design a co-ordinated programme, which has specific and regular stages that are established within the curriculum as a whole. The aim of this programme will be to help pupils to make informed judgements in the many and varied situations in which they may find themselves.

We ensure that RSE is inclusive and meets the needs of all our pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities by providing appropriate differentiation. In line with legislation, we are required to ensure that RSE teaching covers matters of equality, diversity and inclusion, ensuring that pupils understand their 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; in our distinctively Christian context, this will be underpinned by our belief that everyone is made in the image of God and that all are uniquely loved by God.

Roles and responsibilities

Responsibility for this RSE policy ultimately lies with the governing body. In school, the implementation of this policy is led by Ms A Barnes (Co- Headteacher) and Mr R Stuart (Acting Head of PSHE).

Relationship and Sex Education is taught within the framework of Personal, Social, Health, Relationships and Religious Education appropriate to the needs and maturity of the pupils in our care; it is delivered by teachers from across several subject areas, supported by clearly sequenced lesson outlines and regular in-house training. It is vital that RSE is delivered in partnership with parents as the prime educators for children in many of these matters; the RSE curriculum will support, complement and reinforce this role. RSE is taught sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of pupils and parents, whilst always upholding the aim of providing pupils with the knowledge they need of the law.

The views of parents are to be considered when developing a Relationship and Sex Education policy, and parents are invited to comment on the extent to which this policy reflects their wishes and the culture of the community served by the Academy.

A working party made up of members of staff, parents, governors and local clergy, supports the design and delivery of the programme, as well as reviewing this policy on a regular basis.

Legislation (statutory regulations and guidance)

The school follows the latest DfE statutory guidance published in July 2025. The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make relationships education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and relationships and sex education (RSE) compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education.

Parents have a right to view all curriculum materials on request. The parental right to withdraw pupils from RSE remains for aspects of sex education which are not part of the Science curriculum, up to and until three terms before the child turns sixteen. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, it is their right to make this choice for themselves. Parents are informed of the relationships and sex education programme through the school prospectus and website, and of their right to withdraw their child. Any parent wishing to exercise this right should complete Appendix 1 and will be invited to discuss the matter with one of the Co-Headteachers. It will be made possible for children to be withdrawn for specific sections of the programme only. All relevant staff will be made aware when a child is withdrawn from sex education and a record kept on the child's personal file. Ripley St Thomas will ensure that any pupil withdrawn from any aspect of RSE will receive appropriate, purposeful education during the withdrawal period.

This RSE policy, supports and complements the following policies:

- Anti-bullying policy
- Curriculum policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- SEND policy
- Teaching and Learning policy

Documents which inform this RSE policy include:

- Education Act (1996)

- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019
- Learning and Skills Act (2000)
- Education and Inspections Act (2006)
- Equality Act (2010),
- Supplementary Guidance: SRE for the 21st century (2014)
- Keeping children safe in education – Statutory safeguarding guidance (2026)
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)
- Valuing all God's children (C of E Education Office 2019)
- Department for Education's statutory guidance, July 2025

Principles

The Academy has a responsibility to guide and support young people through their physical, emotional and moral development. A well planned and effective relationships education, RSE and health education programme will help young people learn and respect themselves and others and move with confidence from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood.

The Academy recognises that the prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with parents and the key part they have in providing sex and relationship guidance to their children.

It is important also to recognise the power of the confusion caused by "informal" learning by pupils - including from television, radio, internet, magazines, newspapers, gossip, jokes, and various other sources which must be addressed in their learning and to ensure the safeguarding of pupils is paramount.

Morals and morality are essential dimensions of sexuality and relationships. All relationships education, RSE and health education will respect individual differences - inspired by cultural, religious, ethnic and family backgrounds and pupils' special educational needs - and it will promote those values of respect and dignity for human life which are common to all faiths and societies.

Curriculum design

Relationship and Sex Education at Ripley is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of any specific sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching. Instead, it seeks to help young people understand the nature of human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. By law, this requires an approach that is inclusive in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, diversity, ethnicity, culture, age, religion or belief, or other life experience. The Governors support staff in presenting a range of views on sensitive issues such as divorce, abortion, sexuality and teenage pregnancy whilst expecting that the importance of family life and personal relationships be always respected.

Relationship and Sex Education will be taught within the framework of Personal, Social, Health and Religious Education appropriate to the needs and maturity of the pupils in our care. Relationship and Sex Education has links in a number of curriculum areas: in English,

the way in which relationships between characters are discussed will be important, as will the way the human body is viewed and discussed in Art, Science or PE. As a Christian school, aspects of RSE will also be covered as part of Religious Education and collective worship. Biological sex and gender reassignment are taught factually as protected characteristics, avoiding the endorsement of contested viewpoints.

The RSE and health aspects of our PSHE curriculum, by law, must include the following components:

Relationships and Sex Education

- Families and committed, stable relationships
- Respectful relationships, including friendships and the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010)
- Online and media: rights, responsibilities and risks/harms
- Being safe, including issues surrounding consent, exploitation and abuse, AI and deep fakes
- Tackling harmful attitudes with a focus on misogyny, incel culture and the impact of pornography and sextortion.
- Intimate sexual relationships, including sexual health and contraception
- The facts about sexuality and gender identity
- The law concerning sex, relationships and young people
- Grooming, female genital mutilation (FGM) sexual exploitation and domestic abuse (including coercive and controlling behaviour)
- The importance of values including honesty, integrity, courage, humility, kindness, generosity, trustworthiness and a sense of justice
- Personal safety and conflict including knife crime prevention

Physical health and mental wellbeing

- The impact of puberty and the physical and emotional changes that it brings
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Self-care
- Internet safety and harms
- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- Health and prevention
- Basic first aid
- Changing adolescent bodies
- Menstrual and gynaecological health

In our distinctively Christian context, these topics will be covered within the framework of our Christian faith, encouraging respect for the dignity of every human being, the value of family life, marriage, and stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children, and learning the value of respect, love and care.

We recognise that there are different Christian views on sex and sexuality. As a Christian community—made up of people from different churches, other faiths and none—we should educate pupils at Ripley about the range of views expressed within Christian theology. We will enable pupils to understand why Christians hold these different views as matters of deep personal conviction, and equip pupils to discuss these differences with greater understanding and mutual respect. As a Church of England Academy, we will explain the Church of England's official inherited teaching about marriage and sexuality, and introduce pupils to the way that the Church of England is reviewing this teaching through a process of churchwide discussion and discernment through the Living in Love and Faith project, which enables a wide variety of LGBTQI+ voices to be heard more clearly.

We want our pupils to learn to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively whilst developing their self-respect and empathy for others. Learning to make choices based on an understanding of difference and with an absence of prejudice will be a key part of the curriculum. Pupils will also develop an appreciation of the consequences of choices made, learn about managing conflict, and learn how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse.

The following core knowledge and understanding will also be covered as part of the programme:

- learning and understanding physical development at appropriate key stages;
- understanding human sexuality; reproduction, sexual health, emotions and relationships;
- awareness of sexual diversity and equality;
- learning about contraception and the range of local and national health advice, contraception and support services;
- learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity, and the benefits to be gained from such delay;
- the avoidance of unplanned pregnancy.

Pupils with special educational needs will be taught alongside their peers either in mixed ability form groups or in their curriculum groupings. Where individual pupils need to be catered for separately for SEND reasons, this decision will be guided by the expertise of the SENDCO. Progress Tutors will refer any pupil they feel is having difficulty with the basic understanding or with the social/moral aspects of sex education, to the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) in the first instance. Care must also be taken with regard to groupings, depending on the topics being discussed; such consideration is an integral part of curriculum and lesson planning to enable us to maximise the impact of such lessons.

Our RSE programme will be taught through a range of teaching methods and interactive activities. Active learning methods will include extended opportunity for discussion and debate within a safe environment. High quality resources will support our RSE provision and will be regularly reviewed. Selected resources, such as books and film clips, will be used which support and promote understanding within a moral/values context and underpin the statutory curriculum content. Pupils will be encouraged to reflect on their own learning and progress by undertaking a variety of formative and summative assessed tasks, both in sessions and using the virtual learning environment, Firefly.

An overview of the learning in each year group can be found on the school website.

Delivery of the Programme

Relationship and Sex Education will be taught within the framework of Personal, Social, Health Education appropriate to the age of the pupils in our care.

The programme is taught within mixed ability and mixed gender groups in the main. Where considered appropriate, student groupings are organised to meet specific needs including the special educational needs, particularly for those pupils with an Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP) for ASD and a member of the Spectrum Centre. RSE is part of the curriculum for all pupils.

The programme of study for sex education will demonstrate:

1. progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 /5 with language, concepts and content increasing in depth and complexity as the pupils mature physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially;

2. relevance and differentiation - lead teachers have an awareness and information on the levels of development of their pupils; they are able to draw out existing knowledge and needs and to build on them appropriately; and,

3. sex education will be integrated into a programme of Personal, Social and Health Education and into other relevant areas of the Academy curriculum.

The teaching of apparently unrelated topics may occasionally lead to a discussion of aspects of sexual behaviour. Provided that such a discussion is relatively limited and set within the context of the other subject concerned, it will not necessarily form part of the school's Sex Education programme. In such cases, particularly since they may involve pupils whose parents have withdrawn them from sex education as such, teachers will need to balance the need to give proper attention to relevant issues with the need to respect pupils' and parents' views and sensibilities.

The Hidden Curriculum

The sex education programme is not just what is "taught" in the classroom. Young people learn much from the overall ethos of the school from the attitudes of staff, from relationships, from gender and other issues.

It is important that all staff, whether directly involved in the programme or not, discuss the school's approach to sex education in the broad sense. With increased understanding and support, most teachers will feel able to make some positive contribution to the "whole" curriculum.

Safe and effective practice

We will ensure a safe learning environment by ensuring that the teacher and pupils agree ground rules for conduct during RSE lessons, beyond the normal behaviour policy, given the

sensitive nature of certain aspects of the RSE curriculum. Distancing techniques will be employed to ensure that topics covered are based on hypothetical scenarios, rather than being specific to pupils' experiences. Pupils will be made aware of mechanisms for asking questions away from the classroom setting, where required. All staff teaching RSE will be supported by SLT and pastoral colleagues as appropriate, especially where potentially sensitive or controversial issues arise.

Safeguarding

Teachers are aware that effective RSE, which brings an understanding of what is and what is not appropriate in a relationship, can lead to a disclosure of a child protection issue. In such cases, teachers will follow the Academy's safeguarding policy and consult with the designated safeguarding lead or a nominated deputy where a safeguarding concern has arisen. Visitors or external agencies supporting the delivery of RSE will be made aware of, and will be required to comply with the Academy's protocols for visitors and safeguarding procedures.

Pastoral Support

Sexuality is an important part of living and learning but it may present some individuals with worries and tension at certain times in their lives. The Academy provides support for individual pupils worried or disturbed by some aspect(s) of their development, relationships or environment.

Care must be taken, however, in counselling and providing advice to individual pupils, particularly with regard to their sexual behaviour, and must not trespass on the proper exercise of parental rights and responsibilities. It will require skilled judgement to know when to counsel and when, and how, to refer for specialist counselling and support.

The "signposting" for pupils to agencies and services is undertaken in liaison with Student Support Coordinator.

Pupils

There will be expectations placed on the pupils in terms of behaviour and mutual respect. They will be encouraged to approach this type of work in a mature way and respect others opinions, beliefs and values so that topics can be addressed and explored appropriately. The manner in which they approach the work can have a direct effect on the way in which the teacher is able to proceed with the lesson.

Community and other agency involvement

Outside agencies are used to deliver aspects of the Relationship and Sex Programme. Progress Tutors are always available in the classroom. All visiting speakers will be aware of the school policy for sex education. In dealing with individuals who have specific needs for advice or questions and concerns beyond the knowledge or maturity level of their peers, individual counselling will be offered via the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral), Progress Leaders and the School Nurse and school Chaplain. In sessions with visiting speakers, Progress Tutors have the discretion to intervene to help individuals.

During and sometimes after sex education sessions individual pupils may speak to teachers or Health Service colleagues. The Health Service has a policy of confidentiality which the school respects. If matters of concern are mentioned, Health Service personnel will discuss these in the first instance with the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral). In all cases where a pupil is at risk of abuse the teacher/health service member will report directly to the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) or designated person.

Discussion of issues related to health and sex education will be handled sensitively and all those involved are asked to follow the basic ground rules.

Where a pupil asks for, or is clearly in need of advice, staff should urge pupils to consult parents, to work with their clergy or youth club leader and to seek professional help from GP and local health services. It is appropriate to refer the pupil to the PCT school nurse and to give details of local services but staff cannot give individual advice.

Engaging stakeholders

The policy will be available to parents through the school website. We work closely with parents to ensure that they are fully aware of what is being taught and provide additional resources and support through signposting parents to relevant organisations and agencies.

Parents are informed of the relationships and sex education programme through the school website and of their right to withdraw their child. If a parent/carer requests that their child be removed from relationships and sex education, we will make arrangements for such pupils to receive alternative provision.

This policy was produced in conjunction with a parental consultation, a working party made up of members of staff, parents, governors and clergy, and presented to and approved by the Senior Leadership Team and a sub-committee of the governing body. Pupil and parent voice will be used to influence future iterations of both this policy and the RSE/PSHE curriculum.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

RSE provision will be monitored and evaluated throughout the year. Teachers will critically reflect on their work in delivering RSE and pupils will have opportunities to review and reflect on their learning during lessons. Both teacher and pupil voice exercises will be influential in adapting and amending planned learning activities, along with feedback from visitors and external agencies.

RSE policy review

As part of effective RSE provision, this RSE policy should be reviewed at least every two years to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of pupils, staff and parents and that it is in line with current Department for Education advice and guidance. The date of publication and review date are specified on the cover page.

Summary

As a Church school Ripley St Thomas can make a distinctive and unique contribution to Sex and Relationship Education by placing it within a Christian context of love, faithfulness and forgiveness. A programme of Relationship and Sex Education allows pupils to explore an increasing awareness of their individual and social responsibility before God.

In this way they will become aware of their responsibility not only for themselves but also for those whom they love and the people with whom they live and work. They will become deeply aware of the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness in their own lives. Regardless of background, behaviour and sexual orientation, pupils are to be caringly accepted within the Church school.

Appendix 1 – Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within RSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS			
Name of child		Form	
Name of parent		Date	
Reason for withdrawing from sex education within Relationships and Sex Education			
Any other information you would like the school to consider			
Parent signature			

TO BE COMPLETED BY RIPLEY ST THOMAS CE ACADEMY

Agreed actions from discussion with parents	
SLT signature	