



Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

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1. Introduction / Rationale and Ethos

This policy sets out The Richmond upon Thames School's approach to Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE). RSHE is delivered as part of the school's wider PSHE, Personal Development, SMSC and safeguarding curriculum. It supports students to develop the knowledge, skills, language and confidence to make informed and ethical decisions about their wellbeing, health, safety and relationships, both online and offline.

At RTS, RSHE is rooted in the school's ethos of Excellence Through Endeavour and in the school's values of Participation, Confidence, Community, Readiness, Happiness and Effort. The curriculum is designed to help students understand themselves and others, recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships, understand consent and personal boundaries, seek help when needed, and show respect for people with different experiences, beliefs, identities and family lives.

RSHE is not about the promotion of sexual activity. It is about preparing students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, while helping them to remain safe, respectful and well-informed during adolescence.

2. Definition of RSHE

RSHE supports students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It addresses real-life issues that students face as they grow up, including relationships, families, online safety, consent, sexual health, physical health, mental wellbeing, personal safety and equality.

Relationships education focuses on the knowledge and skills students need to form and sustain positive relationships, recognise risk and harm, understand boundaries, treat others with kindness and respect, and seek help when something is not right. Sex education addresses intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health, consent, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy options and the law, in an age and stage appropriate way. Health education addresses physical health, mental wellbeing, developing bodies, and healthy lives.

3. Aims

The aims of RSHE at RTS are to:

- provide accurate, balanced and age-appropriate information;
- include all students, including those with SEND and those with protected characteristics;
- support students to make informed and ethical choices;
- develop knowledge, practical skills, confidence and positive attitudes;
- build self-respect, self-worth, empathy, resilience and personal responsibility;
- help students recognise healthy, unhealthy, unsafe and exploitative relationships;
- help students understand consent, boundaries, personal safety and how to seek support;
- prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life;
- promote respectful, inclusive and lawful attitudes towards others; and
- support the school's wider Personal Development, safeguarding, SMSC and British values work.

4. Legal Context and Statutory Requirements

As a secondary academy, RTS must provide Relationships and Sex Education to all students receiving secondary education and must provide Health Education. The school has regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, published in July 2025 for introduction from 1 September 2026.

This policy supports the school's duties and responsibilities under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, the Education Act 1996, the Education Act 2002, the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, Keeping Children Safe in Education, and relevant safeguarding and curriculum guidance.

The school will publish this policy on its website, provide a copy free of charge to anyone who asks for one, and review the policy at least annually or sooner where statutory guidance, local context or school need requires this.

5. Curriculum Organisation and Content

RSHE is taught through the PSHE curriculum from Years 7 to 11 and is supported by the wider Personal Development and SMSC curriculum, safeguarding curriculum, assembly programme, Theme of the Week, tutor programme, student leadership, external speaker input where appropriate, and wider curriculum links.

Students are taught through regular PSHE lessons within teaching groups. The detailed content and sequencing are set out in the annually reviewed PSHE curriculum overviews for Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 and in the PD and SMSC curriculum map. These documents allow the curriculum to remain responsive while keeping this policy clear and accessible.

The RSHE curriculum covers the statutory secondary content for relationships and sex education, including families; respectful relationships; online safety and awareness; being safe; and intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health. Health education content includes mental wellbeing; wellbeing online; physical health and fitness; healthy eating; drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping; health protection and prevention; understanding the healthcare system; personal safety; basic first aid; and developing bodies.

Curriculum sequencing is age and stage appropriate. The school will consider the needs, maturity and experiences of students, the local safeguarding context, student voice, parent/carer feedback, staff expertise and statutory requirements when reviewing the curriculum.

6. Teaching and Learning

RSHE is taught in a safe, respectful and purposeful learning environment. Staff use clear ground rules, distancing techniques, age-appropriate language, structured discussion and, where helpful, anonymous question routes. Students are not expected to disclose personal experiences during lessons. Where a student makes a disclosure or a member of staff has a concern, staff will follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Teaching will be factual, balanced and impartial. Staff will not allow personal beliefs to distort teaching and will not give inappropriate personal advice. Sensitive or contested matters will be taught through the facts, the law, safeguarding principles and respect for others. Teachers will challenge discriminatory, sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, racist, ableist or otherwise harmful language and behaviour in line with school policy.

Lessons will be planned to build knowledge and skills over time. Approaches may include structured discussion, scenarios, case studies, quizzes, reflection activities, practical decision-making tasks, external specialist input, and links to trusted sources of support.

7. Equality, Inclusion and SEND

RTS will ensure that RSHE is accessible to all students, including students with SEND. Teaching will be adapted where appropriate so that students can access key knowledge and develop the skills needed for safety, wellbeing and adult life.

The school will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty when planning and teaching RSHE. Students will learn about equality, respect and the law relating to the protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Teaching will recognise that families take different forms, including single-parent families, families headed by grandparents or kinship carers, adoptive and foster families, same-sex parents, young carers and other family structures. Teaching will avoid stigmatising students because of their home circumstances, faith, culture, identity, disability or personal experience.

Where the law or statutory guidance refers to contested areas, staff will teach the facts and the law in a careful, balanced and impartial way. Students will be encouraged to express views respectfully and to understand that bullying or disrespectful language or behaviour is never acceptable.

8. Involving Parents and Carers

RTS values the partnership between home and school. Parents and carers will be consulted when this policy is developed or reviewed. The school will explain the purpose of RSHE, the statutory nature of the curriculum, the way content is sequenced, and the role of RSHE in safeguarding, wellbeing and preparation for adult life.

The school will make parents and carers aware of what is taught in RSHE and will show a representative sample of resources used to teach the curriculum. Parents and carers may request to view curriculum materials used to teach RSHE. The school will respond positively to such requests and will arrange controlled access through an online portal, presentation, meeting or other suitable arrangement.

Where copyright applies, the school will respect it. Parents and carers accessing materials will be asked not to copy, download or share materials further except as authorised by copyright law. Copyright will not be used as a reason to refuse to share materials. Parents and carers may comment on the policy and curriculum approach through the school's consultation process, but they do not have a veto over statutory curriculum content.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees, through the agreed committee structure, will approve this policy and hold the Head Teacher to account for its implementation.

The Head Teacher is responsible for ensuring that RSHE is taught consistently and in line with statutory requirements, safeguarding expectations and this policy. The Head Teacher will consider requests for withdrawal from sex education in accordance with the statutory guidance and this policy.

The SLT Link for PSHE/RSHE provides strategic oversight of curriculum delivery, quality assurance, consultation, safeguarding alignment and reporting to senior leaders and trustees.

The Curriculum Leader for PSHE/RSHE is responsible for leading curriculum development and delivery, keeping up to date with statutory guidance, supporting staff, monitoring and evaluating the curriculum, liaising with parents and carers where appropriate, maintaining curriculum information, and overseeing resources and external visitors used in RSHE.

All staff delivering RSHE are responsible for teaching in line with the agreed curriculum and this policy, creating a respectful learning environment, responding to individual needs, following safeguarding procedures, and seeking advice where sensitive questions or concerns arise.

Students are expected to engage respectfully, listen to others, use appropriate language and follow agreed ground rules.

Parents and carers are encouraged to engage with the school's consultation and communication processes, discuss RSHE themes with their child where appropriate, and raise questions or concerns through the school.

10. Right to Request Withdrawal from Sex Education

Parents and carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. This right applies up to three terms before the student turns 16. From three terms before the student turns 16, the student may choose to receive sex education even where a parent or carer has previously requested withdrawal.

Parents and carers do not have the right to withdraw their child from relationships education, health education, PSHE more broadly, or content taught as part of the science curriculum, including content related to puberty or sexual reproduction.

Requests for withdrawal must be made in writing to the Head Teacher.. Before making a decision, the Head Teacher will usually meet with the parent or carer and, where appropriate, the student. The meeting will clarify the nature of the request, explain the curriculum content, discuss the benefits of sex education, consider any potential social or emotional effects of withdrawal, and explain the student's right to opt back in from three terms before turning 16.

At RTS, the Head Teacher may refuse a request in exceptional circumstances, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or where a student has a specific vulnerability. Where there are no exceptional circumstances and the parent or carer confirms their request, the school will grant it. If a student is withdrawn from sex education, the school will provide appropriate, purposeful alternative education during the period of withdrawal and will keep a written record of the decision.

11. Working with External Agencies and Visitors

RTS may use external agencies, visitors or specialist professionals to enhance RSHE. The school remains responsible for the content, quality, safety and appropriateness of any session delivered by an external provider.

Before using an external provider, the school will check the provider's suitability, credentials, materials, lesson plan, safeguarding arrangements, confidentiality approach, data or image use, and alignment with the curriculum and school values. A member of school staff will normally remain present during external sessions. Staff may stop a session if it becomes unsuitable.

The school will not use external agencies that take or promote extreme political positions, nor materials produced by such agencies. The school will not agree to contractual or copyright restrictions that prevent parents and carers from viewing RSHE materials. Where copyright applies, materials will be shared through controlled access and with appropriate no-copy/no-share conditions.

12. Safeguarding and Support

RSHE is part of the school's safeguarding curriculum. Some content may prompt questions, concerns or disclosures. All staff must follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and must report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or safeguarding team in line with school procedures.

Students will be reminded that support is available in school and outside school. Staff will make clear that victims of abuse, exploitation, harassment, bullying or sexual violence are never to blame for what has happened to them. Sensitive lessons will be planned carefully, and staff will consider timing, pastoral support and safeguarding context before delivery.

13. Managing Difficult Questions

Students may ask questions that are sensitive, personal, unexpected, beyond the planned curriculum, or related to sex education from which a student has been withdrawn. Staff will respond in a way that is factual, age and stage appropriate, safeguarding-informed and consistent with this policy.

Staff may use anonymous question boxes, defer a response to allow for advice, speak to the Curriculum Leader, SLT Link or safeguarding team, signpost students to trusted support, or encourage students to speak with parents or carers where appropriate. Staff will not give personal advice or encourage students to seek answers from unreliable or unsafe sources.

14. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The delivery and impact of RSHE will be monitored by the Curriculum Leader for PSHE/SRE and the SLT Link through appropriate quality assurance. This may include curriculum review, planning and resource review, learning walks, student voice, staff feedback, parent/carers feedback, safeguarding intelligence where relevant, and review of curriculum coverage against statutory expectations.

Findings will inform curriculum development, staff training and reporting through the school's leadership and governance structures. This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where statutory guidance, local need or school context requires this.

15. Staff Training and Professional Development

Staff involved in RSHE delivery will receive appropriate guidance, training and support. This may include induction, safeguarding updates, curriculum briefings, training on sensitive or contested topics, equality and SEND considerations, online harms, handling questions and disclosures, and use of external specialist advice where appropriate.

The Curriculum Leader for PSHE/SRE and SLT Link will review staff confidence and training needs as part of the annual curriculum and policy review cycle.

16. Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside relevant RTS policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Behaviour for Learning
- Anti-Bullying
- Equality objectives
- SEN
- Online Safety
- Curriculum Statement
- Staff Code of Conduct, and
- Any other relevant school policies or procedures.

This policy should also be read alongside the PSHE curriculum overviews for Years 7 to 11 and the Personal Development and SMSC curriculum map.

17. Appendix

[Drugs Education Policy](#)