



## Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education Policy (RSHE)

### Policy for Alternative Provision Providers used by County Durham Schools

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### 1. This policy was developed in response to:

- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Guidance, DfE September 2020
- Research commentary: teaching about sex, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment, (Chris Jones, Ofsted's Director, July 2021)
- Children and Social Work Act, 2017
- Equality Act, 2010 and schools
- Not Yet Good Enough: Personal, social health and economic education in schools, Ofsted 2013
- Special Educational Needs and Disability code of practice: 0-25 years, updated 2020
- Life Lessons: PSHE and SRE in schools: Fifth Report, House of Commons Education Committee, 2015
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2024)
- Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision, Green Paper, July 2018
- Review of Sexual abuse in schools and colleges, Ofsted June 2021

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Anti-bullying/Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy (including child sexual exploitation and harmful sexualised behaviours)
- Equality and Inclusion Policy
- PSHE Policy
- Personal Development
- Promoting Mental health and Resilience Policy
- Drugs and Alcohol Policy

## 2. The engagement and consultation process has involved:

- Consultation and engagement with parents / carers - remote or in person
- Review of RSE curriculum content with staff, students, and parents/carers
- Consultation with wider school community e.g., family health nurse, counsellor, Education Psychology, Education Durham

## 3. Define your RSHE Programme

**Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)** is lifelong learning about physical, sexual, moral, and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of stable and loving relationships both on and offline, respect, love, and care for family life. It involves acquiring information, developing essential skills, and forming positive beliefs, values, and attitudes.

RSE gives young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. RSE gives children and young people the essential skills to build positive, enjoyable, and non-exploitative relationships.

**Health Education - Physical Health and Wellbeing** builds on the primary content to enable students to understand their changing bodies, including menstrual wellbeing and their feelings to further the language they use to talk about their bodies, health, and emotional norms. In addition to understanding variations in emotions and physical complaints and where health, wellbeing issues and concerns begin. Health education enables making the connections between physical and emotional changes for all students (regardless of gender and identity), the impact on physical health and wellbeing, their capacity to learn and maintain their mental health and wellbeing.

All RSHE sits within the wider programme of Personal Development and key links should be made to the other key areas.

There will be a clear progression of what is **Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education (RSHE) at primary school** through to RSHE in secondary school.

## 4. Principles and Values

Education Plus believes that RSE should:

- Be an integral part of the lifelong learning process, beginning in early childhood and continue into adult life.
- Be an entitlement for all young people.
- Encourage every student to contribute to make our community and aims to support each individual as they grow and learn.
- Be set within this wider school context and supports family commitment and love, respect and affection, knowledge, and openness. It includes acceptance of families in all their forms.
- Encourage students and teachers to share and listen to each other's views and the right to hold/ express views. We are aware of different values and opinions to sexual orientation and gender identity, without promotion of a

particular family make up. The important values are love, respect, kindness, generosity, and care for each other.

- Generate an atmosphere where questions and discussion on personal or sexual matters can take place, free from stigma or embarrassment.
- Recognise that parents/carers are the prime educators in teaching their children about relationships, growing up, health, wellbeing, and sex. We aim to work in partnership with parents, carers, and students, consulting them about the content and most effective approach to programmes.
- Recognise that the wider community has much to offer, and we aim to work in partnership with other health and education professionals.

**RSHE has three main elements:**

### **Attitudes and Values**

- Learning the importance of values, individual conscience, and moral choices
- Learning the value and valuing family life, stable and loving relationships, and marriage/civil partnerships
- Learning about the nurture of children and successful parenting
- Learning the value of and demonstrating respect, kindness, love, and care
- Exploring, considering, and understanding moral dilemmas
- Developing critical thinking, including negotiation as part of decision making
- The importance of permission seeking/consent and giving, in relationships including online with friends, peers and adults
- Challenging myths, misconceptions, and false assumptions about 'normal' behaviour
- Learning the importance of rights, responsibilities, and opportunities online, including the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online.

### **Personal and Social Skills**

- Learning to manage and managing emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively including online.
- Developing self-respect and empathy for others
- Developing positive self-esteem and confidence
- Making informed choices with an absence of prejudice and discrimination
- Pupils show respect for those who share the protected characteristics.
- Developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made
- Managing conflict resolution
- Empower students with the skills to be able to recognise and avoid inappropriate pressures or advances (both as exploited or exploiter)
- How to report concerns of abuse including 'child on child' abuse and sexual harassment, and the vocabulary and confidence to do so.
- Explore societal norms and the use/misuse of alcohol and drugs and the impact on relationships.
- Learning to actively seek, ask and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent. Developing the skills necessary to communicate effectively in

a range of scenarios involving consent and understand that consent can be withdrawn.

## **Knowledge and Understanding**

- Should know that their bodies belong to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other contact.
- Know and understanding physical, emotional, and spiritual development at appropriate stages and throughout puberty.
- All students will learn about menstrual wellbeing including facts about the menstrual cycle. (Health Education)
- Learn and understand relationships, including friendships are meant to be positive, healthy, and pleasurable.
- Understand human sexuality, identity, human reproduction, sexual health, emotions, and relationships.
- Learn about contraception, sexually transmitted infections and the range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception, and support services.
- Learn the reasons for delaying sexual activity, and the benefits to be gained from such a delay.
- The avoidance of an unintended pregnancy
- The impact of viewing harmful content through online and media
- 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 (Female Genital Mutilation), and how these can affect current and future relationships.
- All students, regardless of gender orientation should know the key facts about puberty, the changes in the adolescent body (including physical and emotional) and menstrual wellbeing (Health Education)
- Learn where to go for help and advice and how to access local and national services, including online

## **5. Aims and Objectives**

The aim of RSHE is to provide balanced information about human reproduction, together with consideration of the broader emotional, ethical, religious, and moral dimensions of sexual health. Our RSHE programme aims to prepare all students for an adult life in which they can:

- Develop positive values and a moral framework that will guide their decisions, judgements, and behaviour
- Have the confidence and self-esteem to value themselves and others and respect for individual conscience and the skills to judge what kind of relationship they want
- Understand the consequences of their actions and behave responsibly within sexual and non-sexual relationships
- Avoid being exploited or exploiting others or being pressured into unwanted or unprotected sex including violence in teenage relationships
- Understand the true meaning of consent, permission seeking and refusal.

- Communicate and behave in a respectful manner towards people around them which contributes to a safe, inclusive environment/community
- Communicate effectively by developing appropriate terminology/language for sex and relationship issues
- Develop awareness and understanding of their evolving sexuality and the spectrum of gender identity
- Challenge discrimination, sexism, and all forms of prejudice, be an 'upstander' and not a 'bystander'
- Understand the arguments for delaying sexual activity
- Understand the reasons for having protected sex
- Have sufficient information and skills to protect themselves in a variety of situations including from sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse, unintended conceptions and sexually transmitted infections including HIV
- Be aware of sources of help for all young people, acquire the skills and confidence to access confidential health advice, support, and treatment if necessary
- Know how the law applies to sexual relationships enthusiastic consent, gaslighting, sexting/nudes and online safety

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

Education Plus Directors will approve the RSHE policy. PSHE staff are responsible for the delivery of RHSE in a sensitive way as well as modelling attitudes to RHSE. They will need to respond to the needs of individuals and monitor their progress. They also need to respond appropriately to students whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the components of RSHE.

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSHE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSHE are encouraged to discuss this with the management team.

## **7. Organisation and Content of RSHE**

Education Plus specifically delivers Relationship and Sex Education through its PSHE Programme in lessons at KS3, and KS4.

Much of the RSHE at Education Plus takes place within PSHE lessons. Teachers deliver the PSHE curriculum with support from professionals where appropriate.

RSHE will be representative and inclusive of LGBTQIA+ young people.

Any RSHE lesson may consider questions or issues that some students will find sensitive. Before embarking on these lessons, a group/class agreement, formerly known as ground rules, are established which prohibit inappropriate personal information being requested or disclosed by those taking part in the lesson.

When students ask questions, we aim to answer them honestly, within the group agreement established at the start of the lessons. When it is felt that answering a specific question would involve information at a level inappropriate to the

development of the rest of the students, the question may be dealt with individually at another time. We aim to avoid, questions going unanswered as young people may turn to inappropriate sources of information.

At Education Plus all staff will use scientifically correct terminology for the body parts including the genitals, breasts, and pubic hair, to avoid misunderstandings and to ambiguity. Using the correct language strengthens our approach to safeguarding students and links strongly to RSHE.

More expert or specialist teachers and other professionals may support staff who are uncomfortable with teaching certain aspects of the curriculum. Support and professional development will be provided for staff, so that they can develop the confidence and skills in delivering the RSHE programme.

Topics that may be included but not limited to are:

- Puberty
- Healthy relationships and friendships
- Harmful sexualised behaviour
- Resilience
- Risk taking behaviour
- Contraception
- Sexually transmitted infection
- Online safety
- CSE
- LGBTQIA+

## **Open and positive school culture**

Education Plus has a responsibility to help create and nurture an open and positive school culture. It is vital this is reflected in our teaching and that our students experience positive healthy relationships with their peers and school staff. We recognise the importance of role modelling appropriate language and respectful behaviour and how this contributes to a safe inclusive environment for all, including those with a protected characteristic.

## **‘Child on Child’ abuse/sexual harassment and violence and RSHE**

Education Plus recognises that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers, including sexually. ‘Child to child’ abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as part of ‘banter’ or ‘growing up.’ **Please see our Safeguarding Policy and part five of the KCSIE 2024** for further information on reporting and safeguarding procedures. Education Plus committed to taking a proactive and preventative approach to all abuse in schools, and protect pupils from serious harm. Teaching staff will maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’. In an age and stage

appropriate way topics include, but are not limited to, consent and permission seeking (both on and offline), safe touch and privacy, respectful relationships and appropriate language, communication and behaviour are covered through a spiral curriculum. This school recognises the key links between these important topic areas and supporting our children to gain the skills and confidence to say no, speak up and report abuse.

## **8. Inclusion**

Education Plus wants to ensure young people from a range of backgrounds and those with diverse needs feel they belong in this school. We recognise this is bigger than just in the classroom. The school community, the environment and the interactions and relationships within our school must be considered for a true inclusive environment. Please see our Equality policy for further information.

### **Ethnic, Cultural and Religious Groups**

We intend our policy to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic groups. For some young people it is not culturally appropriate for them to be taught subjects in mixed groups. We will respond to parental requests and concerns.

### **Students with Special Needs**

We will ensure that all young people receive RSHE, and we will offer provision appropriate to the needs of all our students, taking specialist advice where necessary. It is important the SEND pupils receive the knowledge they need to build up their independence. Where possible the RSHE curriculum will be adapted to suit, 'not changed' to ensure all pupils can have access to the same curriculum.

### **Gender, Identity and Sexual Orientation**

The RSHE lead will ensure that LGBTQIA+ content is fully integrated into the programme of study and threads across the curriculum. Schools are free to determine how they do this; all pupils will be taught LGBTQIA+ content at a timely point. We aim to deal sensitively and honestly regarding gender, sexual orientation, and identity, and to answer appropriate questions and offer support. Young people, whatever their developing identity and sexuality need to feel that RSHE is relevant to them.

No-one is treated in any way less favourably on the grounds of age, race, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, sex, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, religion/ belief, or political/ other personal beliefs.

## **9. Parents/carers and the wider community**

Here at Education Plus we believe the role of parents in the development of the children's understanding of relationships is vital. We will engage with parents/carers to ensure they have an understanding of the RSHE provision. This policy and information on what will be taught and when will be freely available on the school website. We encourage parents to view resources and access the links provided on



the website to support their child's learning and development, for example NHS choices page.

## **10. Pupils right to be excused from sex education**

Parents have the right to request that their child can be withdrawn from some parts of sex education, delivered as part of the RSHE programme, however there is no right to withdraw from the statutory relationships or health education. Education Plus will discuss any requests from a parent/carer and as appropriate, with the child to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum, the benefits of receiving the valuable information, and possible detrimental effects that the withdrawal might have. Education Plus will document the process and outcome.

If parents propose to educate their child at home, Education Plus will honour the parent's wishes up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. From this point if the student wishes they can choose to attend RSHE.

## **11. Safeguarding, reports of abuse and confidentiality**

It is made clear to students that all adults in school cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality if they have any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child.

### **Young people under the age of 13 years**

A child under 13 is not legally capable of consenting to sexual activity. Any offence under The Sexual Offences Act 2003 involving a child under 13 is serious and should be taken to indicate a risk of significant harm to the child. Cases involving under 13's should always be discussed with the nominated child protection lead.

Under the Sexual Offences Act, penetrative sex with a child under the age of 13 is classed as rape. Therefore, in all cases where the sexually active young person is under 13, a referral should be made to First Contact naming the young person, and the sexual partner if known. Following this, a Strategy Meeting or discussion will be held. The meeting will involve a Team Manager, Social Worker, Police, Health Worker, Education and Welfare and other relevant agencies, to discuss next steps.

Where the allegation concerns penetrative sex, or other intimate sexual activity occurs, there would always be reasonable cause to suspect that a child, whether girl or boy, is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. All cases involving under 13's should be fully documented and reported.

### **Young people between 13 – 16 years**

Sexual Activity with a young person in this age group is a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The Act reinforces that whilst mutually agreed, non-exploitive, nor coercive sexual activity between teenagers does take place and that often no harm comes from it, the legal age of consent remains 16. This acknowledges that this group of young people is still vulnerable, even when they do

not view themselves as such. Recent changes in law around consent places the emphasis on proving that consent is secured by the person initiating sex, and not the assumption that it has been obtained from the other person. This is based on them being free, able, has capacity to give consent, and that on each occasion it is negotiated and agreed.

Consideration will be given in every case of sexual activity involving 13–15-year-olds as to whether a discussion with other agencies and a referral is required.

*These procedures should be read in conjunction with the Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership procedures <https://durham-scp.org.uk>*

## **12. Monitoring and Evaluation of RSHE**

Assessment is carried out, where appropriate, at the start to gather the baseline knowledge and end of every module and involves teacher, student and peer assessment of knowledge and understanding, interpersonal skills, and attitudes. The school will monitor progress and impact through the delivery of RSHE.

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher/Leadership Team RSHE/PSHE Co-ordinator to oversee and organise the monitoring and evaluation of RSHE/PSHE, in the context of the overall school plans for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The PSHE programme will be treated as a subject department in this exercise, under which all departments undertake yearly self-evaluation and a twice-yearly monitoring and evaluation exercise led by the School Management Group.

The Governors body is responsible for overseeing, reviewing, and organising the revision of the RSHE policy and curriculum.

Ofsted is required to evaluate and report personal development, behaviour, and welfare as well as spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development (SMSC) of students. This may include evaluating and commenting on the school's RSHE policy, curriculum, staff development and quality of provision.

## **13. Appendices**

To add and update frequently a sample or simplified Scheme of Learning - A request for resources or curriculum can be requested from parents and carers.