

Ashton Community Science College

RSHE Policy

(Relationships, Sex and Health
Education)

Review Schedule:

Named Owner:	Mr J Murray Assistant Headteacher
Date Of Creation:	1 September 2026
Last Review:	N/A
Next Scheduled Review:	September 2027 (annual, or earlier following material statutory/local change)
Overview of Amendments to this Version:	Includes update in statutory guidance reference: 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' as part of the national curriculum from September 2026. Support and guidance documents list that should be read in conjunction. Names of personnel who deliver content and link governor.

Purpose and statutory status

This policy sets out Ashton Community Science College's approach to Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE). It reflects the Department for Education statutory guidance issued in July 2025 and effective from 1 September 2026. The school must have regard to that guidance and to the relevant legal duties, including the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, the Education Act 2002, the Education Act 1996 and the Equality Act 2010.

The policy is intended to give pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors clear information about what is taught, how it is taught, who is responsible, how sensitive questions and safeguarding matters are managed, how materials can be viewed, and the limited right to request withdrawal from sex education.

Our vision

Our vision is for all ACSC students to develop an understanding of the changing world in which they live, the knowledge and skills to form safe, healthy and respectful relationships, the confidence to make informed and ethical decisions, and the ability to manage their health and wellbeing effectively.

- Inclusive, evidence-informed, factual and age- and stage-appropriate;
- Positive and focused on healthy norms, respect, kindness, consent, safety and wellbeing;
- Carefully sequenced so knowledge and skills build progressively, and preventative learning is taught before pupils are likely to need it;
- Responsive to pupil need and the local context without using fear-based approaches;
- Accessible to pupils with SEND and sensitive to pupils' religious and cultural backgrounds;
- Delivered through a whole-school approach that aligns with safeguarding, behaviour, online safety and equality duties.

Aims

- Develop pupils' knowledge and skills to form and sustain healthy relationships of all kinds.
- Teach pupils to recognise unsafe, abusive, exploitative or coercive behaviour, offline and online, and know how to seek help.
- Develop a secure understanding of consent, boundaries, respect, equality, sexual health and the law.
- Enable pupils to make informed decisions about physical and mental health and to access reliable support and healthcare.
- Build digital resilience, including critical understanding of social media, pornography, AI-generated content, deepfakes, image-sharing, scams and sextortion.

- Challenge prejudice, misogyny, discrimination and harmful stereotypes while supporting respectful discussion of differing views.
- Ensure pupils understand relevant legal rights and responsibilities.
- Prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Curriculum content and sequencing

RSHE is taught principally through the planned PSHE curriculum and is reinforced through science, computing, PE, form time, assemblies, pastoral provision and other subjects where appropriate. The RSHE lead works with curriculum colleagues to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure coherent progression.

Relationships and Sex Education

- Families and different types of committed, stable relationships, including marriage, civil partnership, parenting and changes in families.
- Respectful relationships: healthy relationship characteristics, self-esteem, kindness, communication, conflict, ending relationships, consent, power, equality, bullying, prejudice, misogyny, stereotypes, pornography and the influence of online subcultures.
- Online safety and awareness: privacy, personal information, social media, AI-created material, deepfakes, intimate image-sharing, online sexual harassment and abuse, grooming, sextortion, scams, data and reporting concerns.
- Being safe: consent and boundaries, peer and sexual pressure, trustworthy relationships, personal safety, sexual harassment and violence, harmful sexual behaviour, domestic abuse, stalking, exploitation, forced marriage, FGM, virginity testing, hymenoplasty and other relevant legal protections.
- Intimate and sexual relationships and sexual health: age of consent, sexual consent, choices about sex, contraception, pregnancy options taught impartially and accurately, STIs including HIV, PrEP and PEP, effects of drugs/alcohol on decision-making, and reliable confidential advice and treatment.

Health and wellbeing

- Mental wellbeing, including emotional vocabulary, resilience, loneliness, anxiety, common mental ill health, help-seeking and the relationship between substance use and mental health.
- Wellbeing online, including excessive device use, online comparison and body image, misinformation/disinformation, gambling-related harms, harmful content, and reporting routes.
- Physical health and fitness; healthy eating and a healthy relationship with food.
- Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vaping and nicotine products, including legal and health risks.
- Health protection and prevention, including hygiene, vaccination, antimicrobial resistance, sleep, screening, pregnancy health and how to navigate local health services; medical consent and Gillick competence.

- Personal safety, including roads, railways, water, peer influence, conflict, violence, knife crime, grooming and exploitation.
- Basic first aid, CPR and defibrillators.
- Developing bodies, including puberty, brain development, menstrual and gynaecological health, fertility and menopause.

Additional PSHE content

Wider PSHE topics such as personal finance, careers and citizenship may be taught through the broader Personal Development curriculum. They are not presented in this policy as statutory RSHE categories unless they directly support statutory RSHE content. Relevant material on gangs, criminal exploitation, knife crime and managing risk is retained within personal safety because the 2026 statutory guidance specifically addresses these areas.

Teaching approach and safe learning environment

- Teachers establish and revisit ground rules for respectful discussion.
- Distancing techniques and fictional scenarios are used so pupils are not expected to share personal experiences.
- Anonymous question boxes may be used. Questions are answered factually, sensitively and in an age- and stage-appropriate way.
- No teacher can promise confidentiality. Where a question or disclosure raises a safeguarding concern, the school safeguarding policy and reporting procedure will be followed.
- Where a pupil asks about sex-education content from which they have been withdrawn, they may give an age-appropriate factual response needed for safety, correct harmful misinformation, remind the pupil of their right to opt back in when applicable, and signpost to appropriate support, with safeguarding procedures followed where necessary.
- Teaching about the law will be factual. Where legitimate differing views exist, staff will support respectful discussion and will not present contested views as settled fact.

Safeguarding and sensitive content

Effective RSHE may lead to disclosures. Staff must follow the school safeguarding and child protection policy, record and report concerns through the school's agreed system, and consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy as required. Pupils will be reminded how to report concerns in person and through Synergy.

Specialist content on self-harm, eating disorders or suicide prevention will only be taught with appropriate evidence-based materials, staff preparation and access to qualified professional advice. Teaching will avoid sensational, alarming or instructional material. Any individual concern or disclosure will be managed as a safeguarding matter.

Equality, inclusion, SEND, religion and belief

The school will comply with the Equality Act 2010. RSHE will be taught without discrimination or harassment, and pupils will learn about equality, respect and the protected characteristics by the end of secondary education. Teaching will include stable and healthy same-sex relationships within the programme rather than as a standalone topic, and sexual-health teaching will be relevant to all pupils.

Pupils will be taught the facts and law relating to biological sex and gender reassignment. Beyond facts and law, where matters are contested, the school will not endorse a particular view as fact. Teaching will avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes and will promote respectful discussion.

Content will be adapted and scaffolded for pupils with SEND, including pupils within the Specialist Educational Resource Facility, and for pupils with EAL, without removing their entitlement to RSHE. The RSHE lead will liaise with the SENDCO, Deaf Support Team, EAL staff and relevant specialists. The curriculum will be sensitive to religious backgrounds. Where faith perspectives are discussed, they will be identified as such alongside pupils' legal rights and the school's equality duties.

Parents and carers: consultation, transparency and curriculum materials

The school will proactively consult parents and carers when developing and reviewing this policy and will listen to pupil views. The policy will be published on the school website and provided free of charge on request.

Parents will receive clear information about what is taught and when. The school will make RSHE curriculum materials available to parents to view on request, subject to lawful copyright arrangements. Copyright will not be used as a reason to refuse access. Where third-party materials are used, the school will not accept contractual terms that prevent appropriate parental viewing.

Right to request withdrawal from sex education

Parents have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education, Health Education or content taught as part of the science curriculum, including relevant puberty or sexual reproduction content.

A request should be made to the RSHE Lead. Before deciding the request, it is good practice for the RSHE Lead to discuss the request with the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil, explain the nature and purpose of the curriculum and consider any potential impact of withdrawal. The process and decision will be recorded. In secondary education, a request may be refused in exceptional circumstances, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or a specific vulnerability. A pupil who has been withdrawn will receive appropriate, purposeful education during the relevant lesson.

From three terms before a pupil turns 16, the pupil may choose to receive sex education despite an earlier parental withdrawal request. The school will ensure pupils know about this right and will make arrangements for teaching to be provided.

External visitors and resources

External organisations can enhance RSHE, but the school remains accountable for what is taught. Before any visit, the school will check the provider's credentials, lesson plan and materials for accuracy, impartiality, accessibility, age and stage appropriateness, safeguarding and alignment with this policy. Safeguarding and confidentiality arrangements will be agreed in advance. Parents will be able to view materials in line with section Roles and responsibilities.

- Governing Body: approve and oversee this policy; assure itself that statutory requirements are met; ensure SEND accessibility and appropriate parental information.
- Headteacher: retain overall responsibility for statutory compliance and decisions on parental withdrawal requests.
- Assistant Headteacher Personal Development and Teacher responsible for RSHE: lead curriculum design, sequencing, implementation, consultation, staff development, quality assurance, evaluation and reporting to governors.
- PSHE/RSHE teachers: deliver the planned curriculum consistently, create a safe learning environment, assess learning appropriately and follow safeguarding procedures.
- Pastoral Team / Form Tutors: reinforce core learning through form time, assemblies and targeted support and respond to emerging pupil needs.
- All staff: model respectful relationships and follow safeguarding and equality duties.
- Pupils: engage respectfully with learning, use agreed discussion rules and know how to seek help.

Assessment, monitoring and evaluation

The school will evaluate both curriculum implementation and pupil learning. This may include lesson visits, curriculum and resource review, work scrutiny, pupil voice, parent feedback, teacher feedback, low-stakes/end-of-unit assessment and analysis of relevant safeguarding or pastoral themes. Assessment will identify misconceptions and areas requiring additional teaching or support, rather than relying solely on participation or attitude.

The RSHE lead will review curriculum sequencing and materials at least annually and after significant statutory, safeguarding or local-context changes. Governors will receive proportionate assurance on curriculum coverage, quality, inclusion, consultation and impact Policy development, approval and review

This policy has been updated following review of the previous ACSC RSHE policy and the Department for Education statutory guidance effective from 1 September 2026. Pupil and parent/carers views will inform review. The policy is approved by the Governing Body or delegated committee. It will be reviewed annually, with an earlier review where legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding learning or the needs of the school community require it.

Related policies and guidance

- Department for Education: Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, statutory guidance, effective 1 September 2026.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (current statutory guidance).
- Behaviour in Schools.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Equality Act 2010 and Equality and Human Rights Commission technical guidance for schools.
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying; Teaching Online Safety in Schools; Domestic Abuse statutory guidance.
- National curriculum programmes of study relevant to science, citizenship, computing and PE.
- ACSC Safeguarding and Child Protection, Behaviour, SEND, Equality and Online Safety policies.