Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Review Date:	July 2026
Next Review Date:	September 2027

Guiding principles for relationships, sex and health education

We have developed our curriculum with the following key principles in mind:

a. Engagement with pupils

Our inclusive and well-sequenced RSHE curriculum is informed by meaningful engagement with pupils to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and engaging.

b. Engagement and transparency with parents

We will engage with parents on the content of RSHE and be transparent with parents about all materials used in RSHE. Materials will be available to parents upon request. Parents have a right to request that their children are withdrawn from sex education (pupils can opt back in from three terms before they turn 16) and we will inform parents that we will be covering sex education content in lessons in advance.

c. Positivity

We will focus on building positive attitudes and skills, promoting healthy norms about relationships, including sexual relationships where relevant, and about health, including mental health. We will avoid language which might normalise harmful behaviour among young people – for example gendered language which might normalise male violence or stigmatise boys.

d. Careful sequencing.

We will cover all statutory topics, taking into account the special needs of our students, and recognising that young people can start developing healthy behaviour and relationship skills as soon as they start school. We will sequence and re-visit topics so that pupils are supported and equipped with the knowledge to navigate different experiences in a positive way before they occur, and to prevent harms.

e. Relevant and responsive.

We will develop our curriculum to be relevant, age and stage appropriate and accessible to pupils in their area, where appropriate working with local partners and other bodies to understand specific local issues and ensure needs are met. We will address emerging local issues as appropriate and inform parents should we have to do so.

f. Skilled delivery of participative education.

The curriculum will be delivered by school staff who will facilitate participative and interactive education which aims to support and not to alarm pupils. Staff are be trained in safeguarding and offering support, recognising the increased possibility of disclosures.

g. Whole school approach.

Our curriculum will be delivered as part of our whole-school approach to wellbeing and positive relationships, supported by other school policies, including behaviour and safeguarding policies. PSHE is on the timetable for all classes for one lesson per week.

Aims

The aims of relationships and sex education (RSE) at our school are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place.
- Prepare pupils for puberty and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene.
- Help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy.
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships.
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies.
- Ensure that pupils have the knowledge they need to make informed decisions and responsible choices about relationships as they grow up.
- Empower students to access information or support, should they need it, both during their time at The Coppice and into adulthood.

The Academy wants parents and pupils to feel assured that sex education will be delivered at a level appropriate to **the age, cognitive ability and development of pupils.**

Statutory requirements

As a secondary academy we must provide RSE to all pupils as per section 34 of the Children and Social work act 2017.

In teaching RSE, we are required to have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

The RSE Policy was reviewed in line with government guidance in 2020.

At The Coppice Academy we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

Policy development

All school staff were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations in September 2020.

At that time, we also investigated what pupils want from their RSE.

Once amendments were finalised, the policy was shared with academy councilors and ratified.

The curriculum has been taught successfully since September 2020.

The revised guidance for September 2026 includes change of wording and some additional vocabulary, but no major changes on what should be taught.

As a special academy, we have autonomy over what we teach in line with the needs and understanding of our students; there are a few areas that are not covered in detail for this reason.

We will engage with parents, pupils, staff and the academy council regarding changes to our RSE policy.

Definition

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity.

RSE involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values.

Relationships education will also include topics related to preventing sexual abuse, for example, or sharing inappropriate material online. This can be done without describing the detail of any sexual activity involved. RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is set out as per Appendix 1 but we may need to adapt it as and when necessary, in order to respond to local trends or other issues.

We originally developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, taking into account the age, needs and feelings of pupils. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so they are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

Delivery of RSE

RSE is taught by form tutors within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum, and other aspects may be included in religious education (RE). Where appropriate, some topics may be taught in single-sex groups. Lessons will be planned taking into account students' emotional development as well as their special education needs.

Pupils will also receive stand-alone sex education sessions delivered by a trained health professional – usually our school nurse, Tina.

RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds including:

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online and media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life, taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances. We are aware that families can include single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers and many other structures, and our teaching will reflect sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example: looked after children or young carers).

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendices 1 and 2.

Roles and responsibilities

The Academy Council approved the RSE policy and will hold the Principal to account for its implementation.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory components of RSE (see section 8).

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from components of RSE

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

RSE will be delivered by the following form tutors: Mrs L Shevket, Miss O Ward, Mrs J Wells, Mrs C Barton-Blake, Mrs J Jones, Ms R Watkin, Miss R Meakin, Mr L Threadgold, Miss D Russell & Mrs K Woolley.

Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from some areas of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in Appendix 3 of this policy and addressed to the principal.

A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The principal will discuss the request with parents and, as appropriate, with the child to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. The Academy will document this process to ensure a record is kept.

There may be exceptional circumstances where the principal may want to take a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision.

Alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education.

Staff are trained on the delivery of RSE as part of our continuing professional development calendar.

The principal or PSHE subject lead may also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE.

The delivery of RSE is monitored by SLT, the PSHE Lead and the Teaching & Learning Lead through our QA schedule of learning walks, book scrutinies and lesson observations. There may also be informal drop-ins to lessons.

Pupils' development in RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems and data entered into SOLAR at 3 data drops throughout the academic year.

Appendix 1: Curriculum map

PSHE Curriculum Overview 2026-27

Staff in Sycamore class will follow the Y7 curriculum content below but will structure their PSHE & RSE lessons around the needs of the individual students.

Class		Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Y7 Elm & Birch (Sept 2025)		Health & wellbeing, including transition	Changing adolescent body	Online & media	Criminal Exploitation	KS3 RSE A: Respectful relationships – friends & families	Drugs, alcohol & tobacco
Y 8 & 9 Ash, Oak & Rose-wood Sept 2026	2-year rolling programme	**2026-27**					
		Mental health & emotional wellbeing	Drugs, tobacco & alcohol	Changing adolescent body / puberty	Staying Safe/ Respecting me, you, us	KS3 RSE B Healthy relationships	Health & prevention, including basic first aid
		2027-28					
		Health & physical fitness	Online & media	Changing adolescent body	Criminal Exploitation	KS3 RSE C Making positive choices	Identity, diversity & bullying
KS4 Sept 2026	Using ASDAN short course as a guide but non-accredited	Emotional wellbeing	Alcohol	Drugs & tobacco	Social Media	Respectful relationships & Sexual health	
KS4 Sept 2027		Keeping safe & healthy including Criminal Exploitation		Cyber-safety	Financial choices	Families & parenting	Sexual health
KS4 Spruce Sept 2026	2 year rolling programme	Mental health & emotional wellbeing	Diversity, stereotypes & prejudice	Aspirations, work & career	Families, parenting & the community	Staying healthy including sexual health if appropriate	Rights & responsibilities
KS4 Spruce Sept 2027		Mental health & emotional wellbeing	Online & media	Hygiene & the body	Respectful relationships	Citizenship & being a good citizen	Alcohol, drugs & tobacco

Appendix 2

The DfE statutory guidance states that students should know the following by the end of secondary school:

Topic	Curriculum content
Families	1. That there are different types of committed, stable relationships.
	2. How these relationships might contribute to wellbeing, and their importance for bringing up children.
	3. Why marriage or civil partnership is an important relationship choice for many couples. The legal status of marriage and civil partnership, including that they carry legal rights, benefits and protections that are not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have, for example, undergone a non-legally binding religious ceremony.
	4. That 'common-law marriage' is a myth and cohabitants do not obtain marriage-like status or rights from living together or by having children.
	5. That forced marriage and marrying before the age of 18 are illegal.
	6. How families and relationships change over time, including through birth, death, separation and new relationships.
	7. The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting and the importance of the early years of a child's life for brain development.
	8. How to judge when a relationship is unsafe and where to seek help when needed, including when pupils are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust.

Respectful relationships	1. The characteristics of positive relationships of all kinds, online and offline, including romantic relationships. For example, pupils should understand the role of consent, trust, mutual respect, honesty, kindness, loyalty, shared interests and outlooks, generosity, boundaries, tolerance, privacy, and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships.
	2. How to evaluate their impact on other people and treat others with kindness and respect, including in public spaces and including strangers. Pupils should understand the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, and that everyone is unique and equal.
	3. The importance of self-esteem, independence and having a positive relationship with oneself, and how these characteristics support healthy relationships with others. This includes developing one's own interests, hobbies, friendship groups, and skills. Pupils should understand what it means to be treated with respect by others.
	4. What tolerance requires, including the importance of tolerance of other people's beliefs.
	5. The practical steps pupils can take and skills they can develop to support respectful and kind relationships. This includes skills for communicating respectfully within relationships and with strangers, including in situations of conflict.
	6. The different types of bullying (including online bullying), the impact of bullying, the responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help.
	7. Skills for ending relationships or friendships with kindness and managing the difficult feelings that endings might bring, including disappointment, hurt or frustration.
	8. The role of consent, including in romantic and sexual relationships. Pupils should understand that ethical behaviour goes beyond consent and involves kindness, care, attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of the other person, as well as an awareness of power dynamics. Pupils should understand that just because someone says yes to doing something, that doesn't automatically make it ethically ok.
	9. How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender reassignment, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). Pupils should be equipped to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice.

Respectful relationships continued	10. How inequalities of power can impact behaviour within relationships, including sexual relationships. For example, how people who are disempowered can feel they are not entitled to be treated with respect by others or how those who enjoy an unequal amount of power might, with or without realising it, impose their preferences on others.
	11. How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, including by normalising harmful sexual behaviours and by disempowering some people, especially women, to feel a sense of autonomy over their own body and providing some people with a sense of sexual entitlement to the bodies of others.
	12. Pupils should have an opportunity to discuss how some sub-cultures might influence our understanding of sexual ethics, including the sexual norms endorsed by so-called “involuntary celibates” (incels) or online influencers.

Online safety and awareness	1. Rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online.
	2. Online risks, including the importance of being cautious about sharing personal information online and of using privacy and location settings appropriately to protect information online. Pupils should also understand the difference between public and private online spaces and related safety issues.
	3. The characteristics of social media, including that some social media accounts are fake, and / or may post things which aren't real / have been created with AI. That social media users may say things in more extreme ways than they might in face-to-face situations, and that some users present highly exaggerated or idealised profiles of themselves online.
	4. Not to provide material to others that they would not want to be distributed further and not to pass on personal material which is sent to them. Pupils should understand that any material provided online might be circulated, and that once this has happened there is no way of controlling where it ends up. Pupils should understand the serious risks of sending material to others, including the law concerning the sharing of images.
	5. That keeping or forwarding indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime, even if the photo is of themselves or of someone who has consented, and even if the image was created by the child and/or using AI generated imagery. Pupils should understand the potentially serious consequences of acquiring or generating indecent or sexual images of someone under 18, including the potential for criminal charges and severe penalties including imprisonment. Pupils should know how to seek support and should understand that they will not be in trouble for asking for help, either at school or with the police, if an image of themselves has been shared. Pupils should also understand that sharing indecent images of people over 18 without consent is a crime.
	6. What to do and how to report when they are concerned about material that has been circulated, including personal information, images or videos, and how to manage issues online.
	7. About the prevalence of deepfakes including videos and photos, how deepfakes can be used maliciously as well as for entertainment, the harms that can be caused by deepfakes and how to identify them.

Online safety and awareness continued	8. That the internet contains inappropriate and upsetting content, some of which is illegal, including unacceptable content that encourages misogyny, violence or use of weapons. Pupils should be taught where to go for advice and support about something they have seen online. Pupils should understand that online content can present a distorted picture of the world and normalise or glamorise behaviours which are unhealthy and wrong.
	9. That social media can lead to escalations in conflicts, how to avoid these escalations and where to go for help and advice.
	10. How to identify when technology and social media is used as part of bullying, harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and other forms of abusive and/or illegal behaviour and how to seek support about concerns.
	11.That pornography, and other online content, often presents a distorted picture of people and their sexual behaviours and can negatively affect how people behave towards sexual partners. This can affect pupils who see pornographic content accidentally as well as those who see it deliberately. Pornography can also portray misogynistic behaviours and attitudes which can negatively influence those who see it.
	12. How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online.
	13.That websites may share personal data about their users, and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes (e.g. to enable targeted advertising).
	14. That criminals can operate online scams, for example using fake websites or emails to extort money or valuable personal information. This information can be used to the detriment of the person or wider society. About risks of sextortion, how to identify online scams relating to sex, and how to seek support if they have been scammed or involved in sextortion.
	15.That AI chatbots are an example of how AI is rapidly developing, and that these can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice. It is important to be able to critically think about new types of technology as they appear online and how they might pose a risk.

Being safe	1. How to recognise, respect and communicate consent and boundaries in relationships, including in early romantic relationships (in all contexts, including online) and early sexual relationships that might involve kissing or touching. That kindness and care for others requires more than just consent.
	2. That there are a range of strategies for identifying, resisting and understanding pressure in relationships from peers or others, including sexual pressure, and how to avoid putting pressure on others.
	3. How to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, how to judge when a relationship is unsafe (and recognise this in the relationships of others); how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.
	4. How to increase their personal safety in public spaces, including when socialising with friends, family, the wider community or strangers. Pupils should learn ways of seeking help when needed and how to report harmful behaviour. Pupils should understand that there are strategies they can use to increase their safety, and that this does not mean they will be blamed if they are victims of harmful behaviour. Pupils might reflect on the importance of trusting their instincts when something doesn't feel right and should understand that in some situations a person might appear trustworthy but have harmful intentions.
	5. What constitutes sexual harassment or sexual violence, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it.
	6. That sexual harassment includes unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching, taking and/or sharing intimate or sexual images without consent, public sexual harassment, pressuring other people to do sexual things, and upskirting.
	7. The concepts and laws relating to sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault.
	8. The concepts and laws relating to harmful sexual behaviour, which includes all types of sexual harassment and sexual violence among young people but also includes other forms of concerning behaviour like using age-inappropriate sexual language.
	9. The concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour.

Being safe continued	10.That fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviours can be criminal, and where to get help if needed.
	11.The concepts and laws relating to harms which are exploitative, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and abuse, grooming, and financial exploitation.
	12.The concepts and laws relating to forced marriage.
	13. The physical and emotional damage which can be caused by female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty, where to find support, and the law around these areas. This should include that it is a criminal offence for anyone to perform or assist in the performance of FGM, virginity testing or hymenoplasty, in the UK or abroad, or to fail to protect a person under 16 for whom they are responsible.
	14.That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences, and that strangulation (applying pressure to the neck) is an offence, regardless of whether it causes injury. That any activity that involves applying force or pressure to someone's neck or covering someone's mouth and nose is dangerous and can lead to serious injury or death.
	15.That pornography presents some activities as normal which many people do not and will never engage in, some of which can be emotionally and/or physically harmful.
	16.How to seek support for their own worrying or abusive behaviour or for worrying or abusive behaviour they have experienced from others, including information on where to report abuse, and where to seek medical attention when required, for example after an assault.

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	1. That sex, for people who feel ready and are over the age of consent, can and should be enjoyable and positive.
	2. The law about the age of consent, that they have a choice about whether to have sex, that many young people wait until they are older, and that people of all ages can enjoy intimate and romantic relationships without sex.
	3. Sexual consent and their capacity to give, withhold or remove consent at any time, even if initially given, as well as the considerations that people might take into account prior to sexual activity, e.g. the law, faith and family values. That kindness and care for others require more than just consent.
	4. That all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing.
	5. That some sexual behaviours can be harmful.
	6. The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available, including male and female condoms, and signposting towards medically accurate online information about sexual and reproductive health to support contraceptive decision making.
	7. That there are choices in relation to pregnancy. Pupils should be given medically and legally accurate and impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help.
	8. How the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted. How risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use). The use and availability of the HIV prevention drugs Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and how and where to access them. The importance of, and facts about, regular testing and the role of stigma.

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health continued	9. The prevalence of STIs, the short and long term impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment.
	10. How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead people to take risks in their sexual behaviour.
	11.How and where to seek support for concerns around sexual relationships including sexual violence or harms.
	12.How to counter misinformation, including signposting towards medically accurate information and further advice, and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

The Law: Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, including for example, those relating to:	marriage, including forced marriage and civil partnerships
	consent, including the age of consent
	domestic abuse, stalking, rape, sexual offences, female genital mutilation (FGM), 'virginity testing' and hymenoplasty
	sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation, including public sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour
	the Online Safety Act
	online behaviours including image and information sharing (including sexual imagery, youth-produced sexual imagery, nudes, etc, and including AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes). Pupils should understand the law about online sexual harassment and online sexual abuse including grooming and sextortion
	pornography
	abortion
	protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation)
	alcohol, smoking, vaping and nicotine products and illicit drug use
	gambling
	carrying knives and weapons
	extremism/radicalisation
	grooming or exploiting children into criminal activity, which can include gang involvement and county lines drug running
	hate crime

	the age of criminal responsibility
	medical consent, Gillick competence and parental responsibility

Appendix 3: Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within RSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS			
Name of child		Class	
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 THE SCHOOL	
Agreed actions from discussion with parents	