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George Mitchell School

RSE Policy

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Rationale

The term Relationships and Sex Education – RSE – is used in this policy rather than sex education. Our approach goes beyond the provision of biological information to focus on clarifying attitudes and values, developing self-esteem and the skills to manage relationships.

The RSE curriculum aims to provide an understanding that positive, caring environments are essential for the development of a good self-image and that individuals are in charge of and responsible for their own bodies. RSE education also provides knowledge about the processes of reproduction and the nature of sexuality and relationships. The subject encourages the acquisition of skills and attitudes that will allow pupils to manage their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner.

The objectives are formed from the Government guidance for the statutory delivery of PSHE from 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-educationrse-and-health-education/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-secondary>

Further information can be found in the wider guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-social-health-and-economic-educationpshe/personal-social-health-and-economic-pshe-education>

Objectives:

Across the All-Through, the following objectives are taught at the appropriate stage of development. Some of these objectives, particularly, but not only, in relation to the biological aspects of reproduction are delivered only in the Secondary Phase:

- To teach the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and adults.
- Enable children to be taught about positive emotional and mental well-being.
- To encourage the development and practice of resilience.
- Understand the importance of self-respect and self-worth
- Give children the knowledge they need to recognise and report abuse
- To enable children to make sensible decisions to keep themselves safe (including online)
- To enable children to understand what happens to their bodies during puberty
- To enable pupils to understand the biological aspects of reproduction
- To consider the advantages and disadvantages of various methods of family planning in terms of personal preference and their social and moral implications
- To recognise and be able to discuss sensitive and controversial issues such as conception, virginity, birth, child-rearing, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases and technological developments which involve consideration of attitudes, values, beliefs and morality
- To make pupils aware of the range of sexual attitudes and behaviour in present day society and recognise the importance of personal choice in managing relationships so that they do not present risks to health and personal safety
- To make pupils aware that feeling positive about sexuality and sexual activity is important in relationships and that people have the right not to be sexually active
- To enable pupils to make informed choices about relationships
- To enable students to understand the risks that are involved with relationships and sexual relationships

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- To signpost students to agencies that can offer advice and guidance on sexual relationships
- To understand the changing nature of sexuality over time and its impact on lifestyles, e.g. the menopause
- To recognise that parenthood is a matter of choice
- To critically analyse moral values and explore those held by different cultures and groups.
- To understand the concept of stereotyping and to discuss issues such as sexual harassment in terms of their effects on individuals
- To understand aspects of legislation relating to sexual behaviour, gender and equal opportunities and to make aware the availability of statutory and voluntary organisations which offer support in human relationships
- To understand the contrast between reality and fantasy as shown across the internet at Key Stage 4
- To ensure that there is equal focus on boys and girls

Definition of RSE

The law does not give a definitive statement as to what RSE is. At George Mitchell School, RSE is regarded as education about relationships and/or sexual matters within a values framework, focusing upon responsibility within caring, safe and committed relationships. The RSE curriculum is broad and will concentrate on our knowledge of the facts of human reproductive processes and behaviour, HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, contraception and abortion, and a consideration of the broader emotional and ethical dimensions of sexual attitudes.

Delivery

RSE at George Mitchell School is taught via PSHE lessons and form time and is delivered in the following ways:

Primary - by Classroom teachers for 45-60 mins each week

Secondary – at KS3, students have a fortnightly PSHE lesson delivered within the curriculum. This is followed up in tutor sessions during the alternate week. At KS4, the statutory topics relating to Health and RSE are delivered via tutors in form time.

The provision of RSE is seen as progressive in terms of language, concepts and content which increases in depth and complexity as pupils progress through the School. The RSE curriculum is supported with assemblies, sharing circles, mindfulness session and sessions from external agencies, and bespoke lessons which have been designed to cover the new statutory requirements for Relationships and Sex Education.

Throughout the course of teaching this subject area, a variety of sensitive issues will inevitably be explored. It is recognised that an individual's sexuality is a highly personal matter. The teaching of RSE at George Mitchell School will place stress upon healthy relationships and the need for understanding and awareness of a variety of sexual preferences across the spectrum of human sexuality.

It is intended that pupils will be given up-to-date information on a wide variety of contraceptive methods and whilst general statements about the efficacy of these methods will be given, specific advice and guidance to individuals will not be made without consultation with the parents.

Aims

In the attempt to enable pupils to acquire knowledge, skills, responsible attitudes and behaviour with regard to RSE, George Mitchell School aims to:



Provide a worthwhile educational experience for all its pupils which will present opportunities:

- to help pupils to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and for others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty and fidelity;
- to enable pupils to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour and to accept that both sexes should behave responsibly in sexual matters;
- to support the personal development and social skills of the pupils;
- to ensure that pupils have an understanding of their own and others' sexuality;
- to enjoy relationships based upon mutual respect and responsibility which are free from abuse and exploitation;
- to provide information and knowledge which will counteract prejudice and ignorance;
- to develop an understanding of risk and to promote strategies for personal safety;
- to enable pupils to be aware of the sources of help and to acquire the skills and confidence to use them.

RSE in the Curriculum

Introduction:

George Mitchell School offers an education for the whole person: body, mind and spirit. Part of the makeup of all humans is that they are sexual beings. It would be irresponsible of the school to ignore this. The Relationships and Sex Education programme at George Mitchell aims to be both sensitive and responsible and is set in a moral and social framework.

Delivery of RSE aims to meet the statutory provision which has been outlined in various Government documents.

In the Primary Phase, Jigsaw is used to deliver PSHE and RSE within that at the appropriate points. At Secondary Level, the PSHE Association framework has been used to create a bespoke curriculum and set of resources which develop the following strands: Health and Wellbeing, Living in the Wider World and Relationships (RSE).

Context:

The prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with parents. Schools must recognise that parents are key figures in helping their children cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up and in preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities which sexual maturity brings. The teaching offered by schools should be seen as complementary and supportive to the role of parents. In an attempt to achieve this, the 1988 Education Reform Act (Section 1) states that all pupils should be offered the opportunity of receiving a comprehensive, well-planned programme of RSE during their school careers through a curriculum which:

- "promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at school and of society; and
- prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life."

It is recognised that RSE is a difficult issue which will place demands on schools and teachers. However, the purpose of RSE should be to provide knowledge about loving relationships, the nature of sexuality and the processes of human reproduction. At the same time, it should lead to the acquisition of understanding and attitudes which prepare pupils to view their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner.

The RSE curriculum delivered will be tailored not only to the age, but also to the understanding of pupils. It will be set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law regarding sexual behaviour. Pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the value of a stable family life, marriage, civil partnerships and the

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responsibilities of parenthood. Such matters will be treated with sensitivity and great care will be taken to encourage all children to feel a sense of worth. Particular care will be taken when issues such as marital breakdown and divorce are dealt with.

The parental right to withdraw their son or daughter from Relationships and Sex Education lessons:

DfE guidance states that:

“Parents will continue to have a right to request to withdraw their child from sex education delivered as part of RSE in primary and secondary schools which, unless there are exceptional circumstances, should be granted up to three terms before their child turns 16. At this point, if the child themselves wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements for this to happen in one of the three terms before the child turns 16 - the legal age of sexual consent.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education at primary or secondary as we believe the contents of these subjects – such as family, friendship, safety (including online safety) – are important for all children to be taught.”

If a parent wishes their child to be withdrawn from sex education within RSE, they must make an application in writing to the Executive Headteacher who will consider each application on a case-by-case basis. It must be noted that this does not apply to those elements of sex education required by the National Curriculum Science Order.

Advice to individual pupils:

It is understood that it is important to distinguish between the school's responsibility to provide education generally about sexual matters and the giving of advice to individual pupils on these issues. Good teachers have always taken a pastoral interest in the welfare and well-being of their pupils. It is also understood that this responsibility should never trespass on the proper exercise of parental rights and responsibilities.

Particular care must be exercised in relation to giving contraceptive advice to pupils under the age of sixteen, for whom sexual intercourse is unlawful. It is the general rule that giving an individual pupil advice on such matters without parental knowledge or consent would be inappropriate.

Where the circumstances are such that the teacher believes that the pupil has embarked upon, or is contemplating, a course of conduct which is likely to place him or her at moral or physical risk or in breach of the law, the teacher has the general responsibility to ensure that the pupil is aware of the implications and is urged to seek advice.

Inclusion:

Young people may have varying needs regarding RSE depending on their circumstances and background. The school strongly believes that all pupils should have access to an RSE curriculum that is relevant to their particular needs. To achieve this, the school's approach to RSE will take account of:

- **Ethnic and cultural diversity:** Different ethnic and cultural groups may have different attitudes to RSE. The school will consult pupils and parents/carers about their needs, take account of their views and promote respect for, and understanding of, the views of different ethnic and cultural groups.
- **Sexuality Identity and Sexual Orientation:** On average, about 5% of our pupils will go on to define themselves as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender (LGBT). Pupils may also have LGBT parents/carers, brothers or sisters, family members and/or friends. All our pupils will during their lives meet and work with LGBT people. Our approach to RSE will therefore include a sensitive, honest and balanced consideration of sexuality. Our pastoral support will take account of the needs of LGBT pupils and we will actively tackle homophobic bullying.

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Special Educational Needs:

We shall take account of the fact that some pupils may have learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties or physical disabilities that result in particular RSE needs.

Answering pupils' questions:

The school believes that pupils should have opportunities to have their genuine questions answered in a sensible and matter-of-fact manner. However, occasionally a pupil may ask a particularly explicit, difficult or embarrassing question in class. Teachers will use their skill and discretion to decide whether to answer questions in class and, if so, how. They will establish clear parameters of what is appropriate and inappropriate in class by discussing ground rules with pupils and by taking an approach that encourages pupils to be mature and sensible.

If a teacher does not know the answer to a question they will acknowledge this and suggest that they and pupils research the answer to the question later. If a question is too explicit or inappropriate to answer in class at that moment, teachers will acknowledge it and attend to it later with the pupil who asked it. If a question is too personal teachers will remind pupils about the ground rules and if necessary point out appropriate sources of support. If a teacher is concerned that a pupil is at risk of sexual abuse they will follow the school's child protection procedure.

Families:

Pupils should know:

- that there are different types of committed, stable relationships
 - how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children
 - what marriage is, including their legal status – for example, that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony
 - why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into
 - the characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships
 - the roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting
- how to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships), how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.

Respectful relationships, including friendships:

Pupils should know:

- the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships, in all contexts including online, such as:
 - trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict
 - reconciliation and ending relationships, this includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship
- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships

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- how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (for example, how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice)
- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs
- about different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help
- that some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable
- the 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.

Online and media:

Pupils should know:

- their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online
- about online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online
- not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them
- what to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online
- the impact of viewing harmful content
- that specifically sexually explicit material, for example pornography, presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners
- that sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail
- how information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online.

Being safe:

Pupils should know:

- 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, and how these can affect current and future relationships
how people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn, in all contexts, including online

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health:

Pupils should know:

- how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship that all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, for example physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing

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- the facts about reproductive health, including fertility and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women and menopause
- that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others
- that they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex
- the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available
- the facts around pregnancy including miscarriage
- that there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help)
- how the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing
- about the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment
- how the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour
- how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

The law:

It is important to know what the law says about sex, relationships and young people, as well as broader safeguarding issues. This includes a range of important facts and the rules regarding sharing personal information, pictures, videos and other material using technology. This will help young people to know what is right and wrong in law, but it can also provide a good foundation of knowledge for deeper discussion about all types of relationships. There are also many different legal provisions whose purpose is to protect young people and which ensure young people take responsibility for their actions.

Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, including for example:

- marriage
- consent, including the age of consent
- violence against women and girls
- online behaviours including image and information sharing (including 'sexting', youth-produced sexual imagery, nudes, etc.)
- pornography
- abortion
- sexuality
- gender identity
- substance misuse
- violence and exploitation by gangs
extremism and radicalisation
- criminal exploitation (for example, through gang involvement or 'county lines' drugs operations) □
hate crime
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- upskirting

Appendix 1 – Parent withdrawal form

To be completed by parents	
Name of child :	Form Group :
Name of parent :	Date :
Reason for withdrawal from sex education within RSE	
Any other information you would like the school to consider	
Parent Signature	
For school use only : Agreed actions with parents	