



Policy Information Sheet

Name of Policy:	Relationships and Sex Education Policy
Delegated Authority	☒ Trust Board ☐ Nominated Committee ☐ CEO ☐ CFO ☐ Other _____
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1. Rationale

Hartlepool Free School recognises the entitlement of all pupils to high-quality Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) that is current, meaningful, relevant and protective. RSHE is an important part of the school's preventative safeguarding approach and supports pupils to develop safe, respectful relationships, understand their rights and responsibilities, recognise harmful or abusive behaviour, seek help and make informed decisions. The school promotes respect for diversity, compassion, human dignity and equality, while ensuring that teaching is factual, age- and stage-appropriate and does not discriminate against or harass any pupil. We recognise the safeguarding challenges created by modern technology, including harmful online content, sexual harassment and abuse online, pornography, AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes, grooming, sextortion, misinformation and harmful influencers. Teaching and resources will be carefully sequenced, differentiated and personalised to meet pupils' individual communication, cognition, social, emotional and mental health needs, with particular regard to the additional vulnerabilities of pupils with SEND and to preparation for adulthood.

2. Statutory Guidance and Legislation

This policy has regard to the Department for Education statutory guidance Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, revised for introduction on 1 September 2026. The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, require relationships education for pupils receiving primary education and RSE for pupils receiving secondary education. Health education is compulsory in all schools except independent schools that are not academies; those schools must make appropriate PSHE provision through the Independent School Standards. The school also has regard, as applicable, to section 80A of the Education Act 2002, section 403 of the Education Act 1996, the Equality Act 2010, the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. This policy should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and wider PSHE/Personal Development curriculum.

3. Definition

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is the planned teaching of the knowledge, understanding, skills and values pupils need to develop healthy, safe and respectful relationships; understand growing up, sex, sexuality and sexual health at an appropriate stage; recognise risk, abuse and exploitation; understand relevant facts and law; and know how and where to seek help. Relationships education is distinct from sex education: it may include sensitive safeguarding content, such as consent, boundaries and sexual violence, without teaching the detail of sexual activity.

4. Aims

The aims of RSHE are to help pupils build positive relationships and healthy behaviours; understand kindness, respect, boundaries and consent; recognise and report abuse, exploitation, coercion, harassment and violence; manage their online lives safely; understand equality and the law; develop confidence, self-respect and resilience; and know how to access support. Teaching will be inclusive and relevant to pupils while respecting the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. Pupils will learn that discrimination, bullying and harassment are unacceptable. By the end of secondary education, pupils will be taught the facts and law relating to the protected characteristics, including sex, sexual orientation and

gender reassignment. Where topics are contested, teaching will distinguish clearly between established facts and law and matters of opinion or belief, and pupils will be supported to express differing views respectfully.

5. The aims of Sex Education:

Hartlepool Free School will provide sex education that is appropriate to pupils' age, stage of development, maturity and individual needs. Primary-aged pupils will receive the statutory relationships education and relevant science content; any additional sex education beyond the science curriculum will be identified clearly for parents. Secondary RSE will build progressively to include, at an appropriate stage, puberty and the changing body; healthy intimate relationships; consent and sexual boundaries; contraception; pregnancy and reproductive health; sexually transmitted infections; sexual harassment and sexual violence; coercive and controlling behaviour; exploitation and grooming; the impact of pornography and other online sexual content on attitudes and expectations; and relevant facts and law. Health education will include physical and mental health, menstrual wellbeing, drugs, alcohol, smoking, vaping and nicotine, online harms and other statutory content. The curriculum will avoid unnecessary or developmentally inappropriate detail and will be adapted so that all pupils, including pupils with SEND, can understand and apply their learning.

6. Delivery of the RSE Curriculum

Hartlepool Free School takes a whole-school approach to RSHE and Health Education. The statutory content is delivered through a planned, regularly timetabled and carefully sequenced programme within PSHE/Personal Development, supported and reinforced through science, computing, safeguarding education and the wider curriculum. The detailed curriculum/route map identifies what is taught, when it is taught and the intended learning outcomes. The programme is informed by statutory guidance, safeguarding intelligence, local and emerging risks, pupil voice and assessment of pupils' needs.

The curriculum is organised through the following broad themes and the detailed statutory content within them:

- Relationships
- Health and Wellbeing
- Living in the Wider World

6.1. Key Stage 2

During Key Stage 2, pupils develop the knowledge and skills needed for safe and respectful relationships, increasing independence and personal safety, including online. Teaching includes families and friendships, respectful relationships, privacy and boundaries, recognising unsafe or worrying behaviour, seeking help, puberty and the changing body, and age-appropriate online safety. Protective content will be introduced without causing unreasonable alarm or normalising risky behaviour. Where emerging safeguarding issues affect pupils, the school may address them in an age-appropriate way and will inform parents of any significant deviation from the published curriculum.

6.2. Key Stage 3

At Key Stage 3, pupils build on prior learning through increasingly detailed teaching about healthy and unhealthy relationships, consent and boundaries, sexual harassment and sexual

violence, coercive or controlling behaviour, exploitation and grooming, online relationships and image sharing, pornography and its potential effects, harmful online content and influencers, discrimination and prejudice, contraception and sexual health, and how to access help. Content is sequenced so pupils develop protective knowledge and skills before they are likely to encounter relevant risks.

6.3. Key Stage 4

At Key Stage 4, pupils deepen and apply their knowledge as they move towards greater independence and adulthood. Teaching includes healthy intimate relationships, consent, sexual health, contraception, pregnancy and reproductive choices, STIs, the law relating to sexual activity and sexual offences, online sexual harassment and abuse, AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes, sextortion, pornography, coercive control, exploitation, equality and protected characteristics, and accessing health and support services. Health education also develops pupils' understanding of mental wellbeing, self-harm and suicide-related risks, eating disorders, gambling and other relevant harms, using a safe and evidence-informed approach.

The KS2–4 curriculum will be developed through the following topic areas. The school's detailed PSHE/Personal Development curriculum plan provides the full sequencing of statutory RSHE content:

Section	Key Stage 2 Topic areas	Key stage 3 and 4 Topic areas
Self Awareness	- Things we are good at - Kind and unkind behaviours - Playing and working together - People who are special to us - Getting on with others	- Personal strengths - Skills for learning - Prejudice and discrimination - Managing pressure - Equality and protected characteristics - Sexism, misogyny/misandry and harmful stereotypes
Self Care, Support and Safety	- Taking care of ourselves - Keeping safe - Trust - Keeping safe online - Public and private - Consent, boundaries and asking for help - Age-appropriate risks from online content and image sharing	- Feeling unwell - Feeling frightened/worried - Accidents and risk - Keeping safe online - Emergency situations - Public and private - Gambling - Sexual harassment and sexual violence - Coercive and controlling behaviour - Grooming, criminal/sexual exploitation and sextortion - AI-generated sexual imagery, deepfakes and intimate image abuse - Pornography and harmful online influencers - Knife/weapon and criminal exploitation risks
Managing Feelings	- Identifying and expressing feelings - Managing strong feelings	- Self-esteem and unkind comments - Strong feelings

		• Romantic feelings and sexual attraction • Mental health, self-harm and suicide-related risks (safely taught) • Healthy coping strategies and accessing support
Changing and Growing	• Baby to adult • Changes at puberty • Dealing with touch • Different types of relationships	• Puberty • Friendship • Healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviour • Intimate relationships, consent and contraception • Long-term relationships/parenthood • Sexual health and STIs • Pregnancy, reproductive health and choices • The law relating to sexual activity and sexual offences
Healthy Lifestyles	• Healthy eating • Taking care of physical health • Keeping well	• Elements of a healthy lifestyle • Mental wellbeing • Physical activity • Healthy eating • Body image • Medicinal drugs • Drugs, alcohol and tobacco • Vaping and nicotine products • Eating disorders and body image risks
The World I Live In	• Respecting differences between people • Jobs people do • Rules and laws • Taking care of the environment • Belonging to a community	• Diversity/rights and responsibilities • Managing online information • Taking care of the environment • Preparing for adulthood • Managing finances • Misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories • Gambling-related harms • Hate crime, extremism and radicalisation • Medical consent and accessing services

7. Partnerships with parents and carers

Hartlepool Free School recognises parents and carers as important partners in RSHE. The school will proactively engage and consult parents when developing and reviewing this policy and will provide clear information about the planned curriculum, including the sex education content within lessons. Pupil voice will also inform curriculum review so that teaching remains relevant, accessible and appropriately sequenced.

Parents have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all sex education delivered as part of RSE, but not from relationships education, health education or relevant content taught through the science curriculum. Requests should be made to the

Headteacher/Principal. Before a secondary pupil is withdrawn, the Headteacher/Principal will normally discuss the request with the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil, including the purpose and benefits of the curriculum and any possible impact of withdrawal; the discussion and outcome will be recorded. In primary education, a request to withdraw from additional sex education outside the science curriculum must be granted. In secondary education, a request may be refused only in exceptional circumstances, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or a pupil has a specific vulnerability. From three terms before a pupil turns 16, the pupil may choose to receive sex education despite a parental withdrawal request. A pupil who is withdrawn will receive appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

Openness about curriculum materials and external providers

Parents will be shown a representative sample of planned RSHE resources and may request to view all curriculum materials used to teach RSHE, subject to appropriate arrangements for copyright. The school will respond positively to such requests and will not enter into contracts with external providers that prevent materials being shown to parents. Any external provider or visitor will be checked by the school, and their credentials, lesson plans and materials will be reviewed in advance for accuracy, impartiality, safeguarding, accessibility and age/stage appropriateness. The school remains responsible for all RSHE content and delivery, including content delivered by an external provider.

Sensitive questions and pupil-led discussion

Staff will answer pupils' questions in a factual, age- and stage-appropriate and safeguarding-focused way. Where a question goes beyond planned sex education, or relates to sex education from which a pupil has been withdrawn, staff will prioritise the pupil's welfare and may encourage discussion with a parent or trusted adult, signpost appropriate support, or respond individually rather than provide unnecessary detail to the whole class. Questions or disclosures that indicate a safeguarding concern will be managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

8. Confidentiality, safeguarding and child protection

Everyone involved in RSHE will understand the boundaries of their legal and professional roles and responsibilities. Staff will establish clear ground rules and explain that they cannot offer unconditional confidentiality. Any disclosure, concern or indication of abuse, sexual harassment or violence, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, self-harm, suicidal ideation or other safeguarding risk will be responded to in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, including prompt referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead where appropriate. Teaching will never imply that abuse is the fault of the person experiencing it. Direct teaching about suicide prevention or eating disorders will only be undertaken where appropriate and with suitably trained staff, using evidence-informed approaches that avoid methods, graphic detail or content that could increase risk.

9. Assessing, recording, reporting and monitoring pupils' progress

Assessment opportunities will be built into the RSHE programme and will consider knowledge, understanding, skills and relevant attributes. Pupils will have regular opportunities to reflect on and apply their learning. Progress and gaps in understanding will be identified through the school's PSHE/Personal Development assessment processes so that additional support or intervention can be provided where needed. The curriculum will be quality assured through the school's ongoing QA cycle, which may include learning walks, safeguarding drop-ins,

lesson observations, planning and work scrutiny, pupil voice and review of safeguarding trends. Parents and carers will be given appropriate information about pupils' learning and the curriculum.

10. Roles and responsibilities

10.1. Learners

Learners are expected to participate at an appropriate level of engagement in RSE and to treat others with respect and sensitivity when discussing relationships, health and sex education.

Pupils who are withdrawn from sex education will be provided with appropriate, purposeful alternative education for the duration of the withdrawal.

10.2. Delivery staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE and health education in a sensitive, factual, inclusive and age/stage-appropriate way;
- Differentiating and personalising delivery so that content is accessible to individual pupils, including pupils with SEND;
- Modelling respectful attitudes, challenging prejudice, discrimination, harassment and harmful stereotypes, and maintaining a safe learning environment;
- Monitoring pupils' progress and identifying gaps in knowledge or pupils who require additional support;
- Responding appropriately to pupils' questions, emerging issues and safeguarding disclosures, following school safeguarding procedures;
- Supporting the lawful withdrawal process from sex education and ensuring withdrawn pupils receive purposeful alternative education;
- Maintaining up-to-date subject and safeguarding knowledge through appropriate CPD, including specialist training before directly teaching higher-risk topics such as suicide prevention where required;

10.3. Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for ensuring that RSHE and health education are taught consistently, progressively and in accordance with the statutory guidance effective from 1 September 2026. SLT will ensure that the curriculum is accessible for pupils with SEND, that staff are appropriately trained, that safeguarding and local intelligence inform curriculum review, that parent consultation and transparency requirements are met, and that requests for withdrawal from sex education are managed lawfully. SLT will also ensure that external providers and resources are appropriately checked before use.

10.4. Trustees

The Trust Board will approve the RSE policy and hold Senior Leadership to account for its implementation. Trustees will assure themselves that all pupils make appropriate progress; teaching is accessible to pupils with SEND; curriculum content and resources align with statutory guidance; parents receive clear information about content, materials, external providers and withdrawal rights; and the policy is reviewed following meaningful parent consultation.

11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Trust Board every two years, or sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding evidence or pupils' needs require it. Parents will be proactively consulted when the policy is developed or reviewed, and pupil voice will be considered as part of curriculum evaluation. The current policy will be published on the school website and a copy will be provided free of charge on request.

12. Links to other Policies/Curriculum

- Health and Safety
- British Values
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (including Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026)
- Anti Bullying
- Equality Policy / Equality Act 2010
- PSHE/Personal Development and RSHE whole-school curriculum plan

SEND Policy and SEND Code of Practice

Online Safety / Acceptable Use Policy

Behaviour and Child-on-Child Abuse procedures

- SMSC Policy