

# Holy Family Catholic High School & 6<sup>th</sup> Form



## RSE (Relationship and Sex Education) Policy

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| <b>Date Approved</b>      | <b>June 2025</b>     |
| <b>Review Date</b>        | <b>June 2026</b>     |
| <b>Governor committee</b> | <b>Policy Review</b> |

The Governing Body believes that in order to enable effective teaching and learning to take place, good behaviour in all aspects of school life is necessary. It seeks to create a caring, learning environment in the school which derives from the injunction of Jesus to love our neighbours as ourselves. All pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff have a part to play in living and working according to the values of Christ.



## Holy Family Catholic High School & Sixth Form Centre



# Mission Statement

Inspired by the spirit of God:

**H**oly Family aspires to be a caring Catholic community,

**F**ollowing the example of Jesus,

**C**elebrating our talents and achievements,

**H**aving the ambition to be the best we can be,

**S**upporting each other in a secure and safe environment.

## **1. Defining Relationship and Sex Education**

The DfE guidance states that “children and young people need knowledge and skills that will enable them to make informed ethical decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships.” <sup>(1)</sup> High quality evidence-based teaching of RSE can help prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life and promote their moral, social, mental and physical development and cultivating positive characteristics including resilience, self-worth, self-respect, honesty, integrity, courage, kindness and trustworthiness.

It is about the development of the pupil’s knowledge and understanding of self as a sexual being, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in right relationships with self and others and being enabled to make moral decisions in conscience.

Building on prior learning from primary school, RSE, as part of the Personal Development programme at Holy Family Catholic High School will “provide young people with information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, including how to keep themselves and others safe, avoid sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies. By supporting confidence and self-esteem, RSE will enable young people to make their own choices about whether and when to develop safe, fulfilling and healthy sexual relationships, once they reach the age of consent, and to resist pressure to have sex.”<sup>(2)</sup>

## **2. Statutory curriculum requirements**

We are legally required to teach those aspects of RSE which are statutory parts of National Curriculum Science in KS3 <sup>(3)</sup> and KS4 <sup>(4)</sup>

The DfE guidance treats relationships education as the broader foundation and sex education as one specific part of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). In other words:

Relationships education is learning how to form healthy, respectful relationships whereas sex education is learning about sex, reproduction and sexual health.

The new 2025 guidance stresses that secondary RSE should build on relationships education first, so pupils understand trust, respect, boundaries and consent before learning about intimate and sexual relationships. It says schools should teach “healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds” and then extend learning to “intimate relationships” and sexual health in an age-appropriate way. This covers human reproduction, sexual intercourse, contraception, STIs, pregnancy, fertility, consent in sexual contexts, and sexual health. It also emphasizes biological, legal and health knowledge alongside safe decision-making

However, the sex education content which is a statutory part of the Science national curriculum is compulsory.

## **3. Policy development / approval / review process status**

This policy has been developed by the Personal Development Leads in consultation with pupils, staff, parents/carers, governors and diocesan guidance. Holy Family Catholic High School recognises the importance of meaningful consultation whilst ensuring that statutory curriculum requirements are met and the needs of pupils remain central. The Governing Body approved this policy in June 2025. The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner in response to any changes in statutory guidance or local need.

(1) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (updated 2025): Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers Page 2

(2) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (updated 2025): Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers Page 11

(3) Science programmes of study: Key Stage 3 national Curriculum in England (2013) Page 6

(4) Science programmes of study: Key Stage 4 national Curriculum in England (2014) Page 8

#### **4. Rationale**

'I HAVE COME THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT TO THE FULL' (John.10.10)

All teaching about sexual relationships at Holy Family Catholic High School is rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching about what it is to be truly human in Christ, what it means to live and love well in relationship with others and be presented within a positive framework of Christian virtue. We are involved in RSE since our belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins the approach to all education at our school. Therefore, our approach to RSE is rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching of the human person and presented in a positive framework of Christian ideals.

At the heart of the Christian life is the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit in communion, united in loving relationship and embracing all people and all creation. Because of the Christian belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, gender and sexuality are seen as God's gift, reflect God's beauty, and share in the divine creativity. RSE, therefore, is placed firmly within the context of relationships as it is there that sexuality grows and develops.

Following the guidance of the Bishops of England and Wales and as advocated by the DFE (and the Welsh Assembly Government) RSE is firmly embedded in the PSHE framework as it is concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of pupils. It is centered on Christ's vision of being human as good news and will be positive and prudent, showing the potential for development, while enabling the dangers and risks involved to be understood and appreciated.

All RSE at Holy Family will be in accordance with the Church's moral teaching. It will emphasize the central importance of marriage and the family whilst acknowledging that all pupils have a fundamental right to have their life respected whatever household they come from. It will also prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

#### **5. Values and Virtues**

Our programme enshrines Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage and family life. It also promotes those virtues which are essential in responding to God's call to love others with a proper respect for their dignity and the dignity of the human body. The following virtues will be explicitly explored and promoted: faithfulness, fruitfulness, chastity, integrity, prudence, mercy and compassion.

#### **6. Aim of RSE and the Mission Statement**

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and at Holy Family we believe that RSE is an integral part of this education. Furthermore, our school endeavours to raise pupils' self-esteem, help them to grow in knowledge and understanding, recognize the value of all people and develop caring and sensitive attitudes.

It is in this context that we commit ourselves, in partnership with parents, to provide children and young people with a "positive and prudent sexual education" which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and rooted in a Catholic vision of education and the human person.

## **7. Objectives:**

### **7.1 To develop the following attitudes and virtues:**

- Reverence for the gift of human sexuality and fertility;
- respect for the dignity of every human being – in their own person and in the person of others;
- joy in the goodness of the created world and their own bodily natures;
- responsibility for their own actions and a recognition of the impact of these on others;
- recognizing and valuing their own sexual identity and that of others;
- celebrating the gift of life-long, self-giving love;
- recognizing the importance of marriage and family life;
- fidelity in relationships

### **7.2 To develop the following personal and social skills:**

- making sound judgements and good choices which have integrity, and which are respectful of the individual's commitments;
- loving and being loved, and the ability to form friendships and loving, stable relationships free from exploitation, abuse and bullying;
- managing emotions within relationships, and when relationships break down, with confidence, sensitivity and dignity;
- managing conflict positively, recognizing the value of difference;
- cultivating humility, mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven;
- developing self-esteem and confidence, demonstrating self-respect and empathy for others;
- building resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognizing the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so developing the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately;
- being patient, delaying gratification and learning to recognize the appropriate stages in the development of relationships, and how to love chastely.
- assessing risks and managing behaviours to minimize the risk to health and personal integrity.

### **7.3 To know and understand:**

- the Church's teaching on relationships and the nature and meaning of sexual love;
- the Church's teaching on marriage and the importance of marriage and family life;
- the centrality and importance of virtue in guiding human living and loving;
- the physical and psychological changes that accompany puberty;
- the facts about human reproduction, how love is expressed sexually and how sexual love plays an essential and sacred role in procreation;
- how to manage fertility in a way which is compatible with their stage of life, their own values and commitments, including an understanding of the difference between natural family planning and artificial contraception;
- how to keep themselves safe from sexually transmitted infections and how to avoid unintended pregnancy, including where to go for advice

## **8. Parents and carers – including the right to be excused from RSE**

As the primary educators of their children, the role of parents/carers in the development of their child(ren)'s understanding about relationships is vital. They have a highly significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships.

As a Catholic school, we provide the principal means by which the Church assists parents and carers in educating their children.

Therefore, the school will support parents and carers by providing material, upon request, to be shared with their children at home and workshops to help parents/carers to find out more. This policy is published on the school website and is available to parents/carers on request.

Parents/carers will be informed by letter and email announcement when the more sensitive aspects of RSE will be covered in order that they can be prepared to talk and answer questions about their children's learning.

Parents/carers may request to view curriculum overviews, lesson materials and resources used to teach RSE by contacting the Personal Development Leads. Materials may be viewed in school, shared electronically where appropriate, or discussed with staff to ensure parents/carers are fully informed about the content and approach to RSE.

We will also consult with teachers and pupils to ensure the policy reflects their views. We feel that listening and responding to the views of young people will strengthen the policy, ensuring that it meets their needs.

Our aim is that, at the end of the consultation process, all stakeholders will have full confidence in the RSE programme and that it will meet their child's needs.

Parents/carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE <sup>(5)</sup>, except those elements required by the National Curriculum for Science, including topics related to puberty or sexual reproduction. This can be done by contacting the Headteacher.

We believe that the controlled environment of the classroom is the safest place for this curriculum to be followed. As such, before granting any such request a discussion or meeting will take place 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. A record of this will be kept. This discussion is likely to include informing the parents/carers of the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child. This could include any social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly said by the teacher (although the detrimental effects may be mitigated if the parents propose to deliver sex education to their child at home instead).

Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, the school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

This process is the same for vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND. However there may be exceptional circumstances where a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND are taken into account when making this decision.

If a pupil is excused from sex education, we will ensure that they receive appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education or Health Education. <sup>(6)</sup>

(5) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (updated 2025): Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers Page 6

(6) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (updated 2025): Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers Pages 27-31

## **9. Outcomes**

### **9.1 The Balanced RSE curriculum will:**

1. Cover the statutory requirements for relationship and sex education and citizenship to all year groups within the school.
2. Provide high quality teaching and learning which is inclusive, appropriately differentiated and which responds to the needs of all pupils in order to enable them to achieve.
3. Equip pupils with the knowledge and skills needed to make well informed decisions about their lives.
4. Help and support pupils through their physical, emotional and moral development.
5. Promote spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at school and of society preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

### **9.2 Inclusion, Equalities obligations and differentiated learning**

The governing body have wider responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 and will ensure that our school strives to do the best for all of the pupils, irrespective of disability, educational needs, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, pregnancy, maternity, sex, gender identity, religion or sexual orientation or whether they are looked-after children or require the teaching to be adapted according to their SEND requirements. We will ensure RSE is sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils in respect to pupils' different abilities, levels of maturity and personal circumstances; for example, their own sexual orientation, faith or culture and is taught in a way that does not subject pupils to discrimination. Lessons will also help children to realize the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber-bullying), use of prejudice-based language, and how to respond and ask for help.

### **9.3 Broad content and main themes of RSE**

Three aspects of RSE - attitudes and values, knowledge and understanding, and personal and social skills will be provided in three inter-related ways: the whole school / ethos dimension; a cross-curricular dimension and a specific relationships and sex curriculum. RSE will continue to develop pupils' knowledge on the topics taught at a primary level, in addition to the specific curriculum content.

The main statutory themes as required by the DfE are stated below with a Year group overview: <sup>(7)</sup>

Families

Respectful relationships

Online safety and awareness

Being Safe

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

- Year 7 – friendships, transition, puberty, safety online behaviour
- Year 8 – identity, relationships, consent foundations
- Year 9 – healthy/intimate relationships, exploitation, pornography literacy
- Year 10 – contraception, STIs, fertility, coercion, sexual health
- Year 11 – adult relationships, parenting, law, healthy choices

See **APPENDIX 1** for the full RSE curriculum

(7) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (updated 2025): Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers Pages 13-19

A more detailed overview of the RSE curriculum by year group is available through the school website and may also be requested from the Personal Development team, along with lesson resources. This ensures that parents/carers are fully informed about the progression of learning and the age-appropriate content covered throughout secondary school.

Whilst promoting Catholic values and virtues and teaching in accordance with Church teaching, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme by providing an RSE programme that offers a range of viewpoints on issues. Pupils will also receive clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE (in secondary schools/academies relating to forced-marriage, female genital mutilation, abortion, the age of consent and legislation relating to equality). Knowing about facts and enabling young people to explore differing viewpoints is not the same as promoting behaviour and is not incompatible with our school's promotion of Catholic teaching.

## **10. Delivery of RSE:**

### **10.1 Responsibility for teaching the RSE programme**

Responsibility for the specific RSE programme lies with the leaders of the Personal Development team who are line managed by the Deputy Headteacher and the members of staff in the specialist relationships team, who meet on a half termly basis to evaluate and plan lessons. They will be role models for pupils of good, healthy, wholesome relationships as between staff, other adults and pupils.

At Holy Family, all teaching staff are committed to delivering the highest quality RSE lessons as part of our Personal Development programme. Staff delivering RSE receive regular professional development and safeguarding training to ensure teaching remains accurate, age-appropriate, inclusive and responsive to emerging issues affecting young people. All teachers have a responsibility of care; as well as fostering academic progress they should actively contribute to the guardianship and guidance of the physical, moral and spiritual well-being of their pupil. Within this, we have developed a large team of specialist RSE teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that the specific RSE content is delivered in a sensitive, engaging and age-appropriate manner. We will ensure that pupils have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals.

RSE will be delivered in a non-judgmental, age-appropriate, factual and inclusive way that allows pupils to ask questions in a safe environment. Pupils may ask questions verbally, through agreed classroom discussion protocols or through anonymous question systems used by teachers where appropriate. Teachers will ensure pupils' views are listened to and encourage discussion in a respectful manner. Ground rules will be established to promote respectful discussion, confidentiality within safeguarding boundaries and the responsible sharing of views. Teachers will answer questions sensitively and honestly.

Where questions arise that go beyond the planned curriculum, or relate to sex education from which a pupil has been withdrawn, teachers will respond in an age-appropriate, factual and sensitive manner, taking account of safeguarding, the Catholic ethos of the school and pupils' maturity. Teachers may choose to address questions at a later point, respond individually where appropriate, or signpost pupils to suitable support services and trusted sources of information.

Teaching of the curriculum reflects requirements set out in law, particularly in the Equality Act 2010, so that we do not unlawfully discriminate against pupils with regards to protected characteristics and the wider legal implications of the decisions they make. Teachers will ensure lesson plans focus on challenging perceived views of pupils based on protected characteristics, through exploration of, and developing mutual respect for, those different to themselves.

Through effective organization and delivery of the national PSHE curriculum, the school will ensure that:

- Core knowledge is sectioned into units of a manageable size.
- The required content is communicated to pupils clearly, in a carefully sequenced way, within a

planned scheme of work.

- Teaching includes sufficient and well-chosen opportunities and contexts for pupils to embed new knowledge so that it can be used confidently in real-life situations.

RSE complements several other curriculum subjects, including Science, ICT, RE, Drama, English and Health and Social Care. Where appropriate, the school will look for opportunities to link the subjects and integrate teaching.

At all opportunities, the content will be taught with consideration of our Catholic ethos and mission statement.

We will ensure the programme delivers teaching on sensitive topics, in a way that is appropriate and sensitive to the various needs of the school community, e.g. cultural background. All teaching styles and resources will be evaluated by the leaders of the Personal Development programme in conjunction with the Head of RE and specialist SEND teachers to ensure they are appropriate for the age and maturity of pupils, are sensitive to our Catholic ethos and meet the needs of any pupils with SEND.

Throughout every Year group, appropriate diagrams, videos, books, games, discussion and scenario-based activities will be used to assist learning. All teaching and learning activities are quality assured by the leaders of the Personal Development programme. Inappropriate images or videos, etc., will not be used, and all resources will be selected with sensitivity given to the age and cultural background of pupils.

In teaching the curriculum, teachers will be aware that pupils may raise topics such as self-harm and suicide. When talking about these topics in lessons, teachers will be aware of the risks of encouraging these behaviours and will avoid any resources or material that appear as instructive rather than preventative. A specialist team of teachers has also been trained to deliver lessons confidently and sensitively on mental health and suicide prevention across the school.

PD leads liaise regularly with pastoral support staff, DSL, DDSL and progress leaders to identify any pupil(s) who may be triggered by upcoming content. In this case, a bespoke session is arranged with pastoral staff, and the pupil(s) will benefit from a 1-1 or small group session instead of in a full class.

## **10.2 External Visitors**

External visitors will be used only when the visit will complement the current programme and never substitute or replace specialist teacher led sessions. It is important that any external visitor is clear about their role and responsibility whilst they are in school delivering a session. Any visitor must adhere to our code of practice in the school Safeguarding Policy and the Checklist for External Speakers on the CES website.<sup>(8)</sup> They should follow the school's policies, minimizing the potential for disclosures or inappropriate comments using negotiated ground rules and distancing techniques as other teachers would. They will ensure that all teaching is rooted in Catholic principles and practice. The PD leads will view their presentation content ahead of the visit and make appropriate suggestions for adaptation, if necessary. Where disclosures arise during sessions delivered by external visitors, safeguarding concerns will be reported immediately in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and the Designated Safeguarding Lead informed.

(8) <https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/resources/checklist-for-external-speakers-to-schools>

## **11. Other roles and responsibilities regarding RSE and the implementation of the policy**

### **11.1 Head Teacher**

The Head teacher takes overall delegated responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for liaison with the Governing Board, parents, the Archdiocesan Schools' Service and the Local Education Authority, also appropriate agencies.

### **11.2 Personal Development Leads**

The PD Leads with the Head Teacher have responsibility for supporting other members of staff in the implementation of this policy and will provide a lead in the dissemination of the information relating to RSE and the provision of in-service training. They may be supported by the Deputy Headteachers and the Assistant Headteacher who is also the DSL

### **11.3 Governors**

- draw up the RSE policy, in consultation with parents and teachers;
- ensure that the policy is available to parents;
- ensure that the policy is in accordance with other whole school policies, e.g., SEN, the ethos of the school and our Catholic Christian beliefs;
- ensure that parents know of their right to withdraw their children;
- establish a link governor to share in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, including resources used;
- ensure that the policy provides proper and adequate coverage of relevant National Curriculum science topics and the setting of RSE within PSHE

## **12. Relationship to other policies and curriculum subjects**

This RSE policy is to be delivered as part of the PSHE framework. It includes guidelines about pupil safety and is compatible with the school's other policy documents, namely:

Behaviour Policy  
British Values Policy  
Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy  
Equality and Diversity Policy  
Online Safety Policy  
SEND Policy

Pupils and additional needs will receive appropriately differentiated support in order to enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills. Teaching methods will be adapted to meet the varying needs of this group of pupils. Learning about RSE as part of the Personal Development programme will link to / complement learning in those subject areas identified in the RSE audit, namely: Science, Health and Social Care, PE.

## **13. Handling Controversial or Sensitive issues**

There will always be sensitive or controversial issues in RSE. These may be a matter of maturity, of personal involvement or experience of children, of disagreement with the official teaching of the Church, of illegal activity or other doubtful, dubious or harmful activity. The governors believe that children are best educated, protected from harm and exploitation by discussing such issues openly within the context of the RSE programme. The use of ground rules at the start of every lesson, negotiated between teachers and pupils, will help to create a supportive climate for discussion. Some questions may raise issues which it would not be appropriate for teachers to answer during ordinary class time, e.g., where a child or young person's questions hints at abuse, is deliberately tendentious or is of a personal nature. If this happens, adults will tell the pupil at the time that they will speak to them after the lesson. A record of the discussion will be made, and parents/carers made aware if necessary.

#### **14. Confidentiality and advice**

All governors, all teachers, all support staff, all parents and all pupils must be made aware of this policy, particularly as it relates to issues of advice and confidentiality. All lessons, especially those in the RSE programme, will have the best interests of pupils at heart, enabling them to grow in knowledge and understanding of relationships and sex, developing appropriate personal and social skills and becoming appreciative of the values and attitudes which underpin the Christian understanding of what it means to be fully human. Pupils will be encouraged to talk to their parents/carers about the issues which are discussed in the programme. Teachers will always help pupils facing personal difficulties, in line with the school's pastoral care policy. Teachers should explain to pupils that they cannot offer unconditional confidentiality, in matters which are illegal or abusive, for instance. Teachers will explain that in such circumstances they would have to inform others, e.g., parents, head teacher, but that the pupils would always be informed first that such action was going to be taken

#### **15. Supporting children and young people who are at risk**

Children will also need to feel safe and secure in the environment in which RSE takes place. Effective RSE will provide opportunities for discussion of what is and is not appropriate in relationships. Such discussion may well lead to disclosure of a safeguarding issue. Teachers will need to be aware of the needs of their pupils and not let any fears and worries go unnoticed. Where a teacher suspects that a child or young person is a victim of or is at risk of abuse, they are required to follow the school's safeguarding policy and immediately inform the designated senior member of staff responsible.

#### **16. Monitoring and evaluation.**

The monitoring and evaluation of the RSE curriculum and delivery is rigorous, regular and used to inform subsequent planning and teaching of lessons. It takes several forms, including the following:

1. Regular feedback from RSE staff, Progress Leaders, and Pastoral Staff.
2. Learning walks conducted by Personal Development Team and Senior Leadership Team
3. The use of Pupil Voice
4. The scrutiny of work completed by pupils in the lessons on a half termly basis which is used to show staff what excellent work looks like, in future planning sessions.
5. Termly assessments via Microsoft Forms which assess pupil responses to a variety of different scenarios based on learning over the term. The results are used to address gaps in knowledge if they arise and are used to inform future planning.

The RSE curriculum and programme is reviewed annually by the Personal Development Leads, in conjunction with members of the Senior Leadership team and School Governors. Governors remain ultimately responsible for the policy. This policy was developed by the Personal Development Leads in consultation with pupils, staff, parents/carers, governors and diocesan guidance. It was approved by the Governing Body in June 2026 and will be reviewed annually

## **APPENDIX 1. CURRICULUM CONTENT KS3 – KS4**

### **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.<sup>8</sup>
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 normalize non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). Pupils should be equipped to recognize misogyny and other forms of prejudice.
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 realizing it, impose their preferences on others.
11. How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, including by normalizing 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 idealized 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.

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 normalize or glamorize 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 recognize, 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 recognize 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, emphasizing 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.
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, 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
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.

## **TEACHING ABOUT THE LAW**

There will be a range of opinions regarding some topics within RSE. The starting principle should be that applicable law should be taught in a factual way so that pupils are clear about their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

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