Horizons Therapeutic Education Trust

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSE) Policy

Date adopted	

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1.0	Rich Williams	Head of Provision

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1. Aims

The aims of relationships and sex education (RSE) in our trust 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, and to cultivate positive characteristics such as kindness and integrity
- Create a positive culture and promote healthy norms about relationships, including sexual relationships where relevant, and about health, including mental health
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies

2. Statutory requirements

As a trust of secondary academies, we must provide RSE to all pupils under section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

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

We also have regard to legal duties set out in:

- Sections 404 to 407 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 6, chapter 1 of the Equality Act 2010
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

At Horizons Therapeutic Education Trust, we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

3. Policy development

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents/carers. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

1. Review – a working group of staff from the education team pulled together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance.
2. Staff consultation – staff across all schools were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations.
3. Parent/stakeholder consultation – parents/carers and any interested parties were invited to attend a meeting about the policy at their respective schools.
4. Pupil consultation – we investigated what exactly pupils want from their RSE.
5. Ratification – once amendments were made, the policy was shared with local governors and the board of trustees for ratification.

4. Definition

For the purpose of this policy, **Relationships, sex and health education** will:

- Provide young people with the information they need to develop healthy, safe and nurturing relationships of all kinds

- Focus on pupils having respect for themselves and others
- Not normalise early sexual experimentation
- Cover a range of topics, including topics related to abusive behaviour, along with teaching pupils how to stay safe, including online
- Combine sharing information with exploring issues and values
- Emphasise the relationship between physical health and mental wellbeing
- Aim to reduce stigma attached to health issues, in particular relating to mental health, and discourage the pejorative use of language related to ill health
- Support pupils to understand their changing bodies and their feelings, how to protect their own health and wellbeing, and when a physical or mental health issue requires attention
- Build on the primary health and wellbeing curriculum content.

5. Curriculum

Our RSE curriculum is set out as per Appendices 1, 2 and 3, but we may need to adapt it as and when necessary.

We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents and carers, pupils and staff, and taking into account the age, developmental stage, needs and feelings of our pupils. Teaching will be developed to ensure the curriculum is accessible for pupils with SEND.

If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so that pupils are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

We will share any curriculum resources and materials with parents and carers on request.

6. Delivery of RSE

RSE is taught within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum, and other aspects are included in religious education (RE).

The trust will make sure that:

- Core knowledge is sectioned into units of manageable size
- The required content is communicated to pupils clearly, in a carefully sequenced way and 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
- "Over blocking" by the trust's (or individual schools') filtering and monitoring system doesn't lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught

RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships, including:

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

Health education will build on the primary health and wellbeing curriculum content.

RSE complements several other curriculum subjects. Where appropriate, the trust will look for opportunities to make links between the subjects and integrate teaching. The RSE curriculum will be delivered by appropriately trained members of staff.

Effective teaching will be participative and interactive and will give pupils opportunities to develop skills and to discuss and critically evaluate complex relationship scenarios. When teaching sensitive topics, teachers will consider using approaches such as distancing techniques, setting ground rules with the class to help manage sensitive discussion, and using question boxes to allow pupils to raise issues anonymously.

Teachers will make sure that pupils understand the importance of equality and respect and learn about the law. This will include learning about the rights and protections from discrimination relating to the protected characteristics, including gender reassignment as set out in the Equality Act 2010, by the end of their secondary education.

The school will:

- Make sure that all pupils are taught the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment, recognising that people have legal rights by virtue of their biological sex which are different from the rights of those of the opposite sex with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. Pupils will also be taught to recognise that people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, as with the other protected characteristics, have protection from discrimination and should be treated with respect and dignity
- Be mindful in teaching the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment that beyond the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment there is significant debate
- Not endorse any particular view or teach this as fact – for example, the school will not teach as fact that all people have a gender identity
- Avoid:
    - Any language or activities that repeat or enforce gender stereotypes
    - Any suggestion that social transition is a simple solution to feelings of distress or discomfort

Throughout each year group we will use appropriate materials to assist learning, such as:

- Diagrams
- Videos
- Books
- Games
- Discussions and practical activities

Teachers will make sure that all pupils' views are listened to and will encourage them to ask questions and engage in discussion. Teachers will answer questions sensitively, honestly and appropriately for the ages of the pupils.

The programme will be designed to focus on boys as much as girls, and activities will be planned to make sure both are actively involved.

The trust will make sure that all teaching and materials are appropriate for the ages and needs of the pupils including any additional needs, such as special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

At all points of delivery of the curriculum, the trust will consult parents and carers, and their views will be valued. What will be taught and how will be planned in conjunction with parents and carers.

Curriculum Resources

To ensure that all RSE teaching is accurate, age-appropriate, inclusive and aligned with the school's values, all resources and materials used within the RSE curriculum will be subject to a formal review and approval process before use. Resources will be evaluated by the RSE Lead and, where appropriate,

senior leaders, against statutory Department for Education requirements, safeguarding considerations, the needs of our pupils, and the school's therapeutic approach. Particular consideration will be given to suitability for pupils' developmental stage, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), and any identified vulnerabilities. Resources will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain current, evidence-informed and reflective of the school's ethos of Safety, Belonging, Ambition and Hope. Any external materials, visiting speaker content or online resources must be approved in advance and recorded as part of the school's quality assurance process.

Assessment of RSE

Assessment in RSE will be used to evaluate pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, rather than personal beliefs, attitudes or experiences. Assessment will be proportionate, age-appropriate and adapted to meet individual needs, including those arising from SEND and SEMH. Pupils' learning will be assessed through a range of methods, including discussion, questioning, practical activities, reflective tasks, quizzes, written work, scenario-based activities and evidence captured through the school's assessment systems.

Teachers will use formative assessment throughout the curriculum to identify misconceptions, inform future planning and ensure that pupils are making progress against planned learning outcomes. Where appropriate, progress will be recorded through the school's wider personal development and preparation for adulthood assessment framework. Assessment information will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the RSE curriculum, identify areas requiring further teaching or support, and ensure that all pupils develop the knowledge and skills needed to build healthy relationships, maintain positive physical and mental health, stay safe, and prepare successfully for adult life.

RSE curriculum content and the law

It is important for secondary pupils to know what the law says about certain topics covered in RSE, particularly in relation to the law and young people. This will help pupils identify what is right and wrong and can provide a foundation of knowledge for deeper discussion. These topics include, but are not limited 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, and online behaviours
- Online behaviours including image and information sharing (including sexual imagery, making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes, 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
- The protected characteristics
- The age of criminal responsibility

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

The school will continue to develop knowledge of topics specified for primary schools as required and in addition cover the content specified for secondary schools.

We may amend our curriculum content to respond to the needs and context of our pupils, to discuss issues affecting them in an age-appropriate manner. We will inform parents and carers of any deviation from our published policy in advance and share any relevant materials on request.

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life taking care to make sure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (i.e. families can include single-parent families, same-sex parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents and foster parents/carers among other structures) along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example, looked-after children, young carers or kinship carers).

Across our trust, we will also be mindful of the law and legal requirements, taking care not to condone or encourage illegal activity, such as violent action against people, criminal damage to property or hate crime.

6.1 Inclusivity

Our schools will teach about these topics in a manner that:

- Considers how a diverse range of pupils will relate to them
- Is accessible to pupils with SEND
- Is sensitive to all pupils' experiences
- During lessons, makes pupils feel:
    - Safe and supported
    - Able to engage with the key messages

They will also:

- Make sure that pupils learn about these topics in an environment that's appropriate for them, for example in:
    - A whole-class setting
    - Small groups or targeted sessions
    - 1-to-1 discussions
    - Digital formats
- Give careful consideration to the level of differentiation needed

6.2 Use of resources

Our schools will consider whether any resources they plan to use:

- Are aligned with the teaching requirements set out in the statutory RSE guidance
- Would support pupils in applying their knowledge in different contexts and settings
- Are age-appropriate, given the age and maturity of the pupils
- Are evidence-based and contain robust facts and statistics
- Fit into our curriculum plan
- Are from credible sources
- Are compatible with effective teaching approaches
- Are sensitive to pupils' experiences and won't provoke distress

We will make sure that when we consult parents/carers we provide a representative sample of the resources that the school plans to use.

We will ensure that parents/carers are able to view all curriculum materials used to teach RSE on request.

Parents/carers are not able to veto curriculum content.

We will comply with any applicable copyright laws when sharing resources with parents or carers, and will include a statement that parents agree to as a condition of access that the content should not be copied or shared further except as authorised under copyright law.

7. Use of external organisations and materials

Whilst we may work with external organisations to deliver the curriculum, we remain responsible for the content and the way in which pupils are taught. Across our trust, we will make sure that any agency and any materials used are accurate, age and stage-appropriate and unbiased and in line with our legal duties around political impartiality.

Our schools **will**:

- Make appropriate checks and engage with external agencies to make sure that their approach to teaching about RSE is balanced, and it and the resources they intend to use:
    - Are age-appropriate
    - Are in line with pupils' developmental stage
    - Are accessible for all pupils, including those with SEND
    - Are sensitive to pupils' needs
    - Comply with:
        - This policy
        - Teachers' Standards
        - The Equality Act 2010
        - The Human Rights Act 1998
        - The Education Act 1996
- Only work with external agencies where they have full confidence in the agency, its approach and the resources it uses
- Make sure that any speakers and resources meet the intended outcome of the relevant part of the curriculum
- Review any case study materials and look for feedback from other people the agency has worked with
- Be clear on:
    - What they're going to say
    - Their position on the issues to be discussed
- Ask to see in advance any materials and lesson plans that the agency may use
- Know the named individuals who will be there, check the credentials of the visitor and/or visiting organisation, and follow our usual safeguarding procedures for these people
- Make sure the visitor understands and agrees in advance:
    - How confidentiality will work in any lesson
    - How safeguarding reports should be dealt with, in line with our trust policies

- Conduct a basic online search and address anything that may be of concern to the school, or to parents and carers
- Check the agency's protocol for taking pictures or using any personal data they might get from a session
- Remind teachers that they can say "no" or, in extreme cases, stop a session
- Make sure that the teacher is in the room during any sessions with external speakers
- Inform all external organisations that the school is legally obliged to share all content with parents and carers
- Share all external materials with parents and carers
- Consult parents/carers on the content of external resources on the topic of biological sex and gender reassignment in advance and make all materials available to them on request
- Avoid materials that use cartoons or diagrams that oversimplify the topics of biological sex and gender reassignment, that could be interpreted as being aimed at younger children, or that perpetuate stereotypes or encourage pupils to question their gender

We **won't**, under any circumstances:

- Work with external agencies that take or promote extreme political positions
- Use materials produced by such agencies, even if the material itself is not extreme
- Work with agencies who don't allow their material to be shared with parents and carers. The school will communicate to agencies that it is legally obliged to have regard to the expectation that all content can be shared with parents and carers

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The board of trustees

The board of trustees will approve the RSE policy and hold the Head of Provision to account for its implementation through the CEO.

8.2 CEO

The CEO will:

- Work with the Head of Provision to make sure they can implement the policy in their school
- Report to the board of trustees on any issues with its implementation across the trust

8.3 The Head of Provision

The Head of Provision is responsible for making sure that RSE is taught consistently across their school, for making sure that all resources and materials are shared with parents and carers, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory/non-science components of RSE (see section 9).

8.5 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a way that is sensitive, high-quality and appropriate for each year group
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils

- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents/carers wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory/non-science components of RSE
- Modelling positive behaviour and avoiding language that might perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and being conscious of everyday sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphoboia, sexual violence/harassment, derogatory behaviour and stereotypes
- Where misogynistic ideas are expressed at school, challenging the ideas, rather than the person expressing them
- Reporting any safeguarding concerns or disclosures that pupils may make as a result of the subject content to the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) Ben Howarth

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 Head of Provision.

8.6 Pupils

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

9. Parents'/Carers' right to withdraw

Parents/carers have the right to request to withdraw their child from the non-statutory/non-science components of sex education within RSE up to and until 3 terms before the pupil turns 16. After this point, if the pupil wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this. The school will make sure that pupils know they have this option.

Parents/carers do not have the right to withdraw their child from relationships and health education, nor can they be withdrawn from topics taught as part of the science curriculum, including science topics related to puberty or sexual reproduction. Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in Appendix 3 of this policy and addressed to the Head of Provision of the school.
A copy of any withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The Head of Provision will discuss the request with parents/carers and take appropriate action and provide the parents/carers with their decision in writing.

In exceptional circumstances, for example because of a safeguarding concern or a pupil's specific vulnerability, the Head of Provision can refuse a request to withdraw the pupil from sex education.

All withdrawal requests will be reported to the CEO to support consistency of practice and quality assure the process.

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

10. Training

Staff are trained on the delivery of RSE as part of their induction and it is included in our continuing professional development calendar.

The Head of Provision or Education Manager 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.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The delivery of RSE is monitored by the Head of Provision, through:

- Curriculum planning and resource review
- Observations of lessons

- Student voice
- Staff voice
- Assessment analysis
- Parent/carer feedback
- Safeguarding and behaviour data

Pupils' development in RSE is monitored by teachers as part of our internal assessment systems.

This policy will be reviewed by the Head of Provision, annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the board.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Curriculum Map

Due to the complex and highly individual needs of the young people we serve, the RSE curriculum is delivered through a profoundly personalised approach. Whilst all pupils will access the core knowledge and learning outcomes set out within the curriculum framework, the sequence, pace and emphasis of learning will be tailored to each student's developmental stage, identified needs, prior experiences, readiness for learning and therapeutic profile.

As a result, the order in which curriculum units are delivered may differ significantly between pupils, enabling staff to respond appropriately to emerging needs, safeguarding considerations and preparation for adulthood priorities while ensuring coverage of the intended curriculum.

Curriculum Strands and Themes Overview				
Relationships and Identity	**Health and Wellbeing**	**Sexual Health and Future Family Life**	**Independent Adulthood**	**Digital Life**
• Healthy, Positive Relationships • Boundaries and Consent • Inclusion, Equality and Diversity • Harmful Relationships and Safeguarding	• Mental Wellbeing • Physical Health • Substance Use and Risk • Personal Safety	• Sexual Health • Contraception • Fertility and Reproductive Health • Future Family Life	• Economic Wellbeing • Living Independently • Citizenship and Society	Online Relationships Online Safety Media Literacy Digital Citizenship Emerging Technologies

Appendix 2 - RSE Curriculum Strands, Themes, Composites and Components

Curriculum Strand	Themes	Composites and Components

Relationships and Identity	Healthy, Positive Relationships	• Characteristics of healthy relationships
		  ○ Respecting personal boundaries
		  ○ Following through on commitments
		  ○ Honest communication
		  ○ Shared decision making
		  ○ Constructive disagreement
		  ○ Emotional support
		  ○ Taking responsibility for mistakes
		  ○ Respecting differences in opinions and beliefs
		• Build, maintain and adapt healthy personal and professional relationships through effective communication, mutual respect and appropriate boundaries:
		  ○ Active listening
		  ○ Assertive communication
		  ○ Managing disagreements, compromise, negotiation
		• Managing relationship change
		  ○ Maintaining friendships
		  ○ Changing social groups
		  ○ Relationship endings, reconciliation & support seeking
		• Manage different types of relationships by adapting behaviour, communication and boundaries appropriately to context.
		  ○ Appropriate workplace communication
		  ○ Professional use of social media
		  ○ Confidential information handling
		  ○ Conflicts of interest
		  ○ Gifts and hospitality
		  ○ Reporting inappropriate behaviour
		  ○ Professional boundaries (managers and colleagues) and power dynamics

	Boundaries and Consent	• Apply legal and ethical principles of consent to maintain safe, respectful and mutually agreed relationships:
		  ○ Verbal indicators of consent
		  ○ Non-verbal indicators of consent
		  ○ Circumstances that invalidate consent
		  ○ Alcohol and consent
		  ○ Drug use and consent

		○ Ongoing consent ○ Withdrawal of consent ○ UK legal framework for sexual consent • Communicating boundaries ○ Personal limits, refusal skills, assertiveness, respecting boundaries, self-advocacy • Recognising coercion ○ Pressure, manipulation, intimidation, emotional blackmail, coercive control
	Inclusion, Equality and Diversity	• Personal identity ○ Values & beliefs ○ Self-concept ○ Aspirations ○ Identity formation • Equality and inclusion ○ The nine protected characteristics ○ Direct discrimination ○ Indirect discrimination ○ Harassment ○ Victimisation ○ Reasonable adjustments ○ Active allyship behaviours ○ Challenging discriminatory language • Cultural and social influences ○ Faith, culture, family expectations, social norms, media influence
	Harmful Relationships and Safeguarding	• Recognising abuse ○ Emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, technological abuse • Violence and exploitation ○ Sexual violence, stalking, harassment, exploitation, grooming • Seeking help and protection ○ Reporting concerns, safeguarding routes, specialist services, victim support
Health and Wellbeing	Mental Wellbeing	• Protective factors for wellbeing ○ Belonging, purpose, positive relationships, physical activity, sleep, recreation • Emotional self-management ○ Emotional literacy, self-awareness, resilience, coping strategies, stress management • Common mental health challenges ○ Anxiety, depression, loneliness, low mood, burnout, suicidal thought • Recognise when professional support is needed and navigate appropriate sources of help effectively

		○ NHS services (GP referrals), counselling, crisis support (Samaritans), peer support, self-referral
	Physical Health	• Preventative Healthcare ○ Vaccinations (HPV, seasonal flu), screening programmes (cervical), self-examination (breast, testicle, skin cancer), early intervention (sun safety) • Healthy Lifestyles ○ Nutrition, exercise, sleep, hydration, health monitoring ○ Managing Common Health Conditions (headaches, colds, cuts, bruises) ○ Freshers' flu ○ Sepsis ○ Meningitis ○ Sexual health symptoms ○ Infection transmission routes ○ Use of NHS 111 ○ Pharmacy services
	Substance Use and Risk	• Drug Awareness ○ Legal drugs, illegal drugs, prescription medicines, novel psychoactive substances • Effects of Substances ○ Intoxication, dependency, addiction, withdrawal, overdose • Risk Reduction ○ Drink-spiking awareness, safer choices, emergency response, support services
	Personal Safety	• Assessing Risk ○ Risk identification, consequences, likelihood, safer decision-making • Community Safety ○ Personal security, violence prevention, gang awareness, de-escalation, knife crime • Emergency Response ○ First aid awareness, CPR awareness, contacting emergency services
Sexual Health and Family Life	Sexual Health	• Preventing STIs ○ Transmission routes, barrier protection, testing, treatment • Sexual health services ○ Local sexual health clinics ○ STI testing methods ○ Home testing kits ○ Confidentiality rights

		○ Partner notification procedures ○ Contact tracing ○ Treatment options • HIV awareness ○ HIV transmission, prevention, PrEP, PEP, treatment
	Contraception	• Contraceptive methods ○ Condoms, oral contraception, implant, injection, IUD, IUS • Choosing contraception ○ Effectiveness, suitability, access, side effects, shared responsibility
	Fertility and Reproductive Health	• Fertility and conception ○ Ovulation, sperm production, conception, reproductive health • Factors affecting fertility ○ Age, lifestyle factors, medical conditions, substance use • Pregnancy and pregnancy loss ○ Antenatal care, pregnancy choices, miscarriage, support services
	Future Family Life	• Routes to parenthood ○ Parenthood, fostering, adoption, IVF, surrogacy • Family planning decisions ○ Readiness, finances, housing, relationships, life goals • Parenting responsibilities ○ Child development, attachment, safeguarding, parenting expectations
	Living Independently	• Housing ○ Tenancies, bills, deposits, landlord responsibilities, housing rights • Managing a household ○ Utilities ○ Food budgeting, domestic responsibilities, organisation • Accessing public services ○ Healthcare registration (GP, Dentist, NHS app), local authority services, legal documentation
Digital Life and Literacy	Online Relationships	• Maintaining healthy online relationships ○ Respectful communication, digital etiquette, online boundaries • Online consent and privacy

		○ Personal data, privacy settings, digital footprints, permission seeking • Managing online risks ○ Blocking, reporting, account security, identity verification
	Online Safety	• Image sharing and image-based abuse ○ Sexting law, consent, image ownership, reporting abuse • Online exploitation ○ Grooming, coercion, exploitation tactics, safeguarding responses
	Digital Citizenship	• Participate responsibly in digital environments by making ethical, legal and informed decisions about online behaviour and technology use. ○ Critically evaluating pornography ▪ Unrealistic portrayals, consent, objectification, relationship impacts
	Emerging Technologies	• Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies ○ Deepfakes

Appendix 2 – Parent/carer form requesting their child's withdrawal from sex education within RSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS/CARERS			
Name of child		Class	
Name of parent/carers		Date	
Reason for withdrawing from sex education within relationships and sex education			
Any other information you would like the school to consider			
Parent/carers signature			

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL	
Agreed actions from discussion with parents/carers	Include notes from discussions with parents/carers and agreed actions taken.
Staff Signature	