

## Relationships and Sex Education policy 2025-2026

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**Approved by:**

**To be ratified by FGB**

**Date: September 2025**

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## **The Key Principles of the RSE Policy**

- At Dorset Studio School, it is our intention to ensure that all students are able to thrive to unlock their full potential. In order to achieve this, students need to have strong moral values and good character.
- Dorset Studio School is an inclusive school that wants its students to have a better understanding of the nature of positive and empathetic relationships irrespective of gender, identity and sexuality.
- School explicitly teaches students the importance of well-informed, prosocial choices. In turn, this helps students build life-long habits with focus on self-care and the respect and tolerance for others in a diverse British society.
- To ensure that students can safely discuss the nature of relationships, including marriage and know they will be treated with respect and dignity.

## **Aims**

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

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- Prepare students for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Help students develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy, and cultivate positive characteristics such as kindness and integrity
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships
- Teach students the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies

## **Statutory Requirements**

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

In teaching RSE, we are 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**.

In addition, we 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

Dorset Studio School has an RSE curriculum that gives students the opportunities to explore differences of opinion and foster tolerance and acceptance of other people's beliefs and way of life. This is entirely consistent with our Equality Objectives.

### **Policy development**

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

1. **Review** – a member of staff or working group pulled together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance
2. **Staff consultation** – all school staff were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations
3. **Parent/Carer/Family/Stakeholder consultation** – parents/carers and any interested parties were invited to attend a meeting about the policy
4. **Student consultation** – we investigated what exactly pupils want from their RSE
5. **Ratification** – once amendments were made, the policy was shared with governors and ratified

### **Definition**

Relationships and sexual education are about moral, physical and emotional development. It provides the basis for forming a clear understanding of stable, loving and empathetic relationships. It also teaches about sex, sexuality and sexual health as well as preparing students to form good habits to keep them safe and, more often than not, take responsibility for experiences in later life.

In addition, our curriculum is designed to support students and assist them in navigating their way around an increasingly complex and digital world. The dominance of social media, including misinformation and untrustworthy sources present significant challenges. The prevalence of cyber-bullying and child-on-child abuse means that it is important to get students to think carefully about their choices and the potential consequences of their actions.

**RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity or sexual orientation.**

## **The content of the RSE Curriculum**

The curriculum has been developed in consultation with parents/carers/families, students and staff, and considering the age, developmental stage, needs (such as cultural and religious needs) and feelings of our students. If questions are asked outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so that students are fully informed and do not seek answers online.

Students are helped to examine the values of family life, marriage and stable, loving relationships. They will also consider moral dilemmas that they could be potentially faced with. RSE helps students to develop a positive self-identity and be proud of themselves.

Students are taught to make choices based on the understanding of difference and tolerance. They will learn about the dangers of prejudice and how to avoid exploitation and abuse.

Students are encouraged to be in conscious control of their emotions and make well-informed choices, guided by a strong moral compass and good character. RSE provides opportunities for safe discussions and the development of an assertiveness to be able to say 'No'.

RSE focuses on understanding physical development at appropriate stages. Students will explore human sexuality, reproduction, sexual health, emotions and relationships. In addition, students will be provided with information on contraception and the range of local and national sexual health advice support services. Students will look at the benefits of delaying sexual activity and the avoidance of unplanned pregnancy. This will provide an objective and balanced view of sexually related matters, correcting misconceptions and misinformation.

A summary of the RSE Programme of Study (See **Appendix 1**) can be found below:

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

It is important that students are aware of the rule of law and what is stated about certain topics covered in RSE, particularly in relation to young people. This will help students develop their moral compass by identifying 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
- Online behaviours including image and information sharing (including sexual imagery, youth-produced sexual imagery 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

### **Teaching of RSE**

**The RSE curriculum will be delivered by appropriately trained members of staff.**

- Teachers will establish ground rules about conduct with students, emphasise the importance of mutual respect and encourage personal reflection.
- Teachers will make sure that students understand the importance of equality and respect, and learn about the law relating to the protected characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, by the end of their secondary education. The curriculum is designed to focus on students of all gender identities and expressions, and activities will be planned to make sure all are actively involved.
- Teachers will ensure all learning is taught in the context of family life taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of any child/children based on their home circumstances. In 21st Century Britain, family structures can be very complex, involving lots of different people.
- Throughout each year group, teachers will use appropriate and age-related material and resources to assist learning, such as:
  - Resources are evidence-based and contain robust facts and statistics
  - Resources are from credible sources

- Consider level of adaptation required in resources for different groups
  - Consider how any known previous Childhood Adverse Experiences may become distress
  - Presentations
  - Diagrams
  - Videos
  - Books
  - Games
  - Discussions and practical activities
  - Appropriate Internet-based research
  - Bookwork
- 
- Teachers 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).
  - If external speakers are used, they must agree with the school's stated principles and aims of this policy. They are required to follow the school's safeguarding procedures and will be supervised by the class teacher. In all cases, the class teacher must be clear on :
    1. What the speaker is going to say
    2. Their position on the issues to be discussed
    3. Provide any materials in advance of the session
    4. Their responsibility to stop the session if they are unhappy with any aspect of it
  - All teachers are provided with training on dealing with controversial topics and are clear about their safeguarding duties. In discussion-based lessons or sessions, it is important that no member of staff or student is made to feel uncomfortable. The following protocols ensure the learning environment is safe, respectful and tolerant of others:
    1. No-one feels they must answer a personal or sensitive question
    2. No-one will be forced to take part in a discussion
    3. No-one is allowed to dominate a discussion, attempting to force their values and opinions on others
    4. Meanings of words will be explained in a sensitive and factual way
    5. The teacher will not influence students with their personal beliefs and attitudes

## **The delivery of RSE**

RSE is taught through both the Philosophy and Ethics curriculum and Personal Development curriculum. The school also delivers 'Drop Down' lessons related to key issues of 'keeping safe'. In addition, a number of related themes may be covered in subject lessons such as science and ICT.

Many conferences also focus on the importance of making positive, prosocial choices and may include particular themes or topics according to the school calendar.

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 school 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
- It is 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.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **(i) The Governing Body**

The Governing Body will approve the RSE policy, and hold the Principal to account for its implementation.

### **(ii) The Principal**

The Principal is responsible for making sure that RSE is taught consistently across the school, for sharing all resources and materials with parents and carers, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory and/or non-science components of RSE.

### **(iii) 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 students
- 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, homophobia and stereotypes
- 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), Mr. Paul, Chapman.**
- 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 **Associate Leader for Global Studies, Mr. Steve Dearden.**

### **(iv) Students**

- Students are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, follow **SMILE** and treat others with respect and sensitivity.

### **Parental/Carer/Family right to withdraw**

Parents/carers/family have the right to request to withdraw their child/children from the non-statutory/non-science components of sex education within the RSE curriculum up to, and until, three terms before the sixteen turns sixteen. After this point, if the student wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in **Appendix 2** of this policy and addressed to the Principal.

A copy of any withdrawal requests will be placed in the student's educational record. The Principal will discuss the request with parents/carers/family and take appropriate action and provide the parents/carers/family with their decision in writing.

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

Alternative schoolwork will be given to students who are withdrawn from sex education, and, in most instances, they will work in Student Support.

## **Monitoring arrangements**

The delivery of RSE is monitored by **Steve Dearden, Associate Leader** and **Senior Leaders, including the Principal** through:

- Drop-ins
- Walk Throughs
- Formal Observations
- Student Voice
- Schemes of Work
- Class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems.

This policy will be reviewed by **the Principal, Jason Malone** on an annual basis. At every review, the policy will be approved by the **Full Governing Body**.

# APPENDICES

TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW
<p><b>Families</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● That there are different types of committed, stable relationships</li> <li>● How these relationships might contribute to wellbeing, and their importance for bringing up children</li> <li>● 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</li> <li>● That ‘common-law marriage’ is a myth, and cohabitants do not obtain marriage-like status or rights from living together or by having children</li> <li>● That forced marriage and marriage before the age of 18 are illegal</li> <li>● How families and relationships change over time, including through birth, death, separation and new relationships.</li> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● How to judge when a relationship is unsafe and where to seek help when needed, including when students are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust</li> </ul>
<p><b>Respectful relationships, including friendships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● About the characteristics of positive relationships of all kinds, online and offline, including romantic relationships. For example, students 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</li> <li>● How to evaluate their impact on other people and treat others with kindness and respect, including in public spaces and including strangers. Students should understand the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, and that everyone is unique and equal</li> <li>● 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. Students should understand what it means to be treated with respect by others</li> <li>● What tolerance requires, including the importance of tolerance of other people’s beliefs</li> <li>● 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</li> <li>● 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</li> <li>● Skills for ending relationships or friendships with kindness and managing the difficult feelings that endings might bring, including disappointment, hurt or frustration</li> </ul>

<p><b>Respectful relationships, including friendships (cont.)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The role of consent, including in romantic and sexual relationships. Students should understand that ethical behaviour goes beyond consent and involves kindness, care and attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of the other person, as well as an awareness of power dynamics. Students should understand that just because someone says ‘yes’ to doing something that doesn’t automatically make it ethically okay</li> <li>● How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). Students should be equipped to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice</li> <li>● How inequalities of power can impact behaviour within relationships, including sexual relationships. For example, how people who are disempowered can feel they are not entitled to be treated with respect by others or how those who enjoy an unequal amount of power might, with or without realising it, impose their preferences on others</li> <li>● How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, including by normalising harmful sexual behaviours and by disempowering some people, especially women, to feel a sense of autonomy over their own body and providing some people with a sense of sexual entitlement to the bodies of others</li> <li>● 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</li> </ul>
<p><b>Online safety and awareness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online</li> <li>● About online risks, including that any material they provide to another has the potential to be shared and circulated online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online. They should also understand the difference between public and private online spaces and related safety issues</li> <li>● 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. Students 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. Students should understand the serious risks of sending material to others, including the law concerning the sharing of images</li> <li>● About the characteristics of social media, including that some social media accounts are fake, and/or may post things which aren’t real or have been created with AI. They should also know that social media users may say things in more extreme ways than they might in face-to-face situations, and that some users present highly exaggerated or idealised profiles of themselves online</li> <li>● That keeping or forwarding indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime (even if the photo is of themselves or someone who has consented, and even if the photo was created by that child and/or using AI). That there are potentially serious consequences of acquiring or generating these images. That sharing indecent images of people over 18 without their consent is also a crime</li> <li>● How to seek support. They should also 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</li> </ul>

**Online safety  
and awareness  
(cont.)**

- 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
- About the prevalence of deep fakes including videos and photos, how deep fakes can be used maliciously as well as for entertainment, the harms that can be caused by deep fakes and how to identify them
- That the internet contains inappropriate and upsetting content, some of which is illegal, including unacceptable content that encourages misogyny, violence or use of weapons
- Where to go for advice and support about something they have seen online. Students should understand that online content can present a distorted picture of the world and normalise or glamourise behaviours which are unhealthy and wrong
- That social media can lead to escalations in conflicts, how to avoid these escalations and where to go for help and advice
- 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
- 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. That this can affect people who see pornographic content accidentally, as well as those who see it deliberately. That pornography can also portray misogynistic behaviours and attitudes which can negatively influence those who see it
- How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online
- That websites may share personal data about their users, and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes (for example, to enable targeted advertising)
- That criminals can operate online scams, such as 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
- 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. That 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

- How to recognise, respect and communicate consent and boundaries in relationships, including in early romantic relationships (in all contexts, including online) and early sexual relationships that might involve kissing or touching. That kindness and care for others requires more than just consent
- 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

<p><b>Being safe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, how to judge when a relationship is unsafe (and recognise this in the relationships of others); how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others if needed</li> <li>● How to increase their personal safety in public spaces, including when socialising with friends, family, the wider community or strangers. About ways of seeking help when needed and how to report harmful behaviour. 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. About the importance of trusting their instincts when something doesn't feel right, and they should understand that in some situations a person might appear trustworthy but have harmful intentions</li> <li>● What constitutes sexual harassment or sexual violence, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it</li> <li>● That sexual harassment includes unsolicited sexual language, attention or touching, taking and/or sharing intimate or sexual images without consent, public sexual harassment, pressuring other people to do sexual things, and up skirting</li> <li>● About concepts and laws relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault</li> <li>○ 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</li> <li>○ Domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour</li> <li>○ Harms which are exploitative, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and abuse, grooming, and financial exploitation</li> <li>○ Forced marriage</li> <li>○ Female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty</li> </ul> </li> <li>● That fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviours can be criminal, and where to get help if needed</li> <li>● That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences, and that strangulation (applying pressure to the neck) is an offence, regardless of whether it causes injury</li> <li>● 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</li> </ul>
<p><b>Being safe (cont.)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 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</li> <li>● 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</li> </ul>

**Intimate and  
sexual  
relationships,  
including  
sexual health**

- That sex, for people who feel ready and are over the age of consent, can and should be enjoyable and positive
- 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
- About 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 consider prior to sexual activity, such as the law, their faith and family values. That kindness and care for others require more than just consent
- 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
- That some sexual behaviours can be harmful
- 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
- That there are choices in relation to pregnancy. Students 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
- How the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted. How risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use)
- About 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
- About the prevalence of STIs, the short and long-term impact they can have on those who contract them, and key facts about treatment
- How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead people to take risks in their sexual behaviour
- How and where to seek support for concerns around sexual relationships including sexual violence or harms
- 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

**Appendix 2: Parent/Carer/Family form requesting their child's withdrawal from sex education within RSE**

Name of child		Class	
Name of parent/carer		Date	
Reason for withdrawing from sex education within relationships and sex education			
Any other information you would like the school to consider			
Parent/carer/family signature			
Agreed actions from discussion with parents/carers			
Signed			