Sydenham High School

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy
Senior School

Policy statement:

Definition of RSE – from *Sex Education Forum*

Relationships and sex education (RSE) is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It should equip children and young people with the information, skills and positive values to have safe, fulfilling relationships, to enjoy their sexuality and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.

Rationale and ethos:

Sydenham & Dulwich Girls GDST (SDG) takes its responsibility to provide relevant, effective and responsible relationships and Sex education (RSE) to all its pupils as part of the school's personal, social, health and economic education curriculum (PSHE) very seriously. At our school we want parents and pupils to feel assured that sex education will be delivered at a level appropriate to both age and development of pupils.

This teaching is not intended to replace advice or guidance which is ideally received at home, but to supplement and broaden knowledge and understanding.

This policy is drafted by the PSHE co-ordinator in consultation with the Deputy Head Pastoral (EWA), the school nurses, Heads of Section, Heads of Year and SEND coordinator. Parents are given the opportunity to discuss this policy content. Pupils were consulted on the content of our RSE topics and their delivery in the Senior School.

Aims of policy:

RSE is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about teaching sex, sexuality and sexual health in a way that is fully understood and effectively retained by students in our care. This includes emphasis on good health, the value of self - esteem in making choices and judgements, the nature of healthy and consensual relationships, and knowledge about how the body works, all within a context of moral issues and values.

RSE will outline the importance of marriage and family life and the raising of children, as well as highlighting the role of marriage and other stable relationships as building blocks for

community and society.

We want our pupils to lead a healthy and safe lifestyle and to care and respect their bodies and we provide them with the right tools that will enable them to seek information or support, should they need it, both during their school years and beyond.

What is Relationships and Sex Education? (RSE):
RSE is lifelong learning about physical, sexual, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care, for family life. It involves acquiring information, developing skills and forming positive beliefs, values and attitudes.

RSE should:

- be an integral part of the lifelong learning process, beginning in early childhood and continue into adult life
- be an entitlement for all young people
- encourage every student to contribute to our community and aim to support each individual as they grow and learn
- be set within this wider school context and support family commitment and love, respect and affection, knowledge and openness. Family is a broad concept; not just one model. It includes a variety of types of family structure, and acceptance of different approaches
- encourage students and teachers to share and respect each other's views. We are aware of different approaches to sexual orientation, without promotion of any particular family structure. The important values are love, respect and care for each other
- generate an atmosphere where questions and discussion on sexual matters can take place without any stigma or embarrassment
- recognise that parents are the key people in teaching their children about sex, relationships and growing up.

We aim to work in partnership with parents and students, consulting them about the content of programmes and recognise that the wider community has much to offer aiming to work in partnership with health professionals, social workers, peer educators and other mentors or advisers.

Legislation:

The department for education states that all schools must deliver relationships and sex education. Documents that inform our RSE policy include:

- Education Act (1996)
- Learning and Skills Act (2000)
- Education and Inspections Act (2006)
- Equality Act (2010), o Supplementary Guidance SRE for the 21st century (2014)
- Keeping children safe in education – Statutory safeguarding guidance (2026)
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (July 2025)

Provision and curriculum design:

The SHS curriculum is spiral, so that topics can be introduced and then be re-visited in later years. Although the topics below are listed specifically, we treat Relationships and Sex Education as part of the wider PSHE curriculum. We support equal opportunities in education, seeing it as enabling and encouraging all our students to build self-esteem through discussion and activities in a safe environment. We are equipping them with decision-making skills irrespective of gender roles and stereotyping.

The main topics covered in RSE are:

- Establishing healthy relationships, including peer-peer relationships
- Puberty, menstruation and change.
- Consent and how to communicate this to others.
- Contraception and safer sex
- Sexual pleasure
- Sexually transmitted infections.
- Understanding our bodies
- Sexting and online safety
- Pregnancy and pregnancy choices
- Sexuality and sexual orientation
- Sexual exploitation and coercion
- Sex and pornography
- Personal choices

How is RSE taught:
As part of the PSHE programme, Relationships and Sex Education is taught by the pastoral team, the school nurse and PSHE co-ordinator, mainly in form groups, using a range of activities and materials, and is supported by visiting health professionals to deliver talks to the students. The tutor team observes and team-teaches lessons, with the aim of upskilling more staff to be involved.

The programme is developed and reviewed in consultation to ensure that it meets the needs of the whole school community.

We ensure that RSE is age relevant and appropriate across all year groups; this means ensuring that the curriculum develops as our pupils do and meets their needs.
We ensure that staff are given regular and ongoing training on issues related to RSE including confidentiality, setting ground rules and establishing positive behaviour, handling controversial issues and responding to questions.

We ensure that all staff are up to date with policy changes, and familiar with the school policy and guidance relating to relationships and sex education.

We ensure their personal beliefs and attitudes will not prevent them from providing balanced RSE in school.

Terminology:
Pupils will be taught the anatomically correct names for body parts, but slang and everyday terms used in social situations will be discussed; this will be part of the discussion about what is and what isn't acceptable language to be used.

Ground rules are essential when discussing sensitive subject matter and staff will use strategies to enable pupils to feel comfortable to ask questions. If controversial questions are asked, the teacher will use professional judgement about how to answer them and pupils will be allowed to raise anonymous questions if preferred.

We recognise that because of the nature of the subject, sensitive and controversial issues are likely to arise. These may include, for example, abortion, emerging gender identity, sexuality and sexual abuse. These are dealt with within the framework of the aims of the school and of the Relationships and Sex Education Policy as a whole. Trigger warnings will be given to students prior to sessions commencing. Any cause for concern will be dealt with in accordance with our pastoral systems and safeguarding arrangements.

Guest speakers:
We sometimes use outside speakers to complement our teaching of this content, who are asked to work within the framework of the school's Relationship and Sex Education policy and adhere to the policy for Visiting Speakers. A teacher will be present throughout these lessons.

Parents
Parents are informed about RSE and the topics included prior to the sessions commencing, and at this point, they are informed about the right to withdraw (see below). Another letter is sent out post RSE sessions, encouraging parents to discuss subjects at home, and to ensure information from both environments is consistent and reliable.

Throughout the year, we host parent forum and workshop events, including those that are led by the school, and external speakers. These are generally well attended.

Parents can access all policies on the school website

Withdrawal from RSE:
The school aims to keep parents informed about all aspects of the RSE curriculum and urges parents to review this policy. RSE is a vital part of the school curriculum and supports the whole development of the child. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex education. Any parents considering withdrawing their child from RSE should contact the Head/ Pastoral Deputy Head to discuss their concerns. According to *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance* paragraph 41-43 pupils can opt into sex education from three terms before their 16th birthday.

Inclusion & Equal Opportunities:
Sydenham & Dulwich Girls is an inclusive institution and this is reflected in the inclusive nature of the RSE programme. Our programme aims to respond to the diversity of the students' culture, faiths, identities and family backgrounds. . It is our intention that all pupils have the opportunity to experience a programme of RSE at a level which is appropriate for their age and physical development, with differentiated provision if required.

Ethnic and Cultural Groups:
We intend our curriculum to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic groups. For some young people it may not be culturally appropriate for them to be taught particular items. We will respond to parental requests and concerns should they arise.

Students with Special Needs:

We will ensure that all young people receive sex and relationship education, and we will offer provision appropriate to the particular needs of all our students, taking specialist advice where necessary. All RSE is inclusive, regardless of gender identity and sexual preference.The school recognises that SEND students are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues and our programme of study is designed with this in mind.

Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation:
We aim to deal sensitively and honestly with issues of sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support. Young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them.

Objective discussion of the diversity of personal, social and sexual preference in relationships will take place in RSE and prejudiced views will be challenged in order to encourage tolerance. Any bullying around sexual behaviour or perceived sexual orientation arising from this prejudice will be dealt with as a serious matter.

Confidentiality, Controversial and Sensitive Issues
Matters of confidentiality are dealt with in detail in the Safeguarding Policy, however, specific reference to this issue needs to be reported here.

Teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality. Teachers are not legally bound to inform parents or headteachers of any disclosure unless the headteacher has specifically requested them to do so.

In a case where a teacher learns from an under 16 year old that they are having or contemplating sexual intercourse:

- the matter will be referred to the Pastoral Leader who will make a judgment about further action that may be taken
- child protection issues will be considered, and referred if necessary to the Child Protection Officers under the school's procedures.
- the young person will be persuaded, wherever possible, to talk to parent/carer and if necessary to seek medical advice.
- the young person will be properly counseled about contraception, including precise information about where young people can access contraception and advice services.

In any case where child protection procedures are followed, the teacher will ensure that the young person understands that if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed first.

Health professionals in school are bound by their codes of conduct in a one -to-one situation with an individual student, but in a classroom situation they must follow the school's confidentiality policy.

Parents and teachers need to be assured that the personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of sex and relationship education within the RSE framework. Teachers and all of those contributing to RSE are expected to work within an agreed values framework which is in line with current legislation.

Review and evaluation:
The educational and personal needs of our pupils develop in line with varying societal pressures and other changes. For this reason, we regularly review our RSE curriculum.

The PSHE co-ordinator works in conjunction with the Lead Team from the GDST, in conjunction with government guidelines, to ensure the programme is up to date.

All students complete a pre-RSE survey. This is used to gauge current knowledge and understanding before sessions are taught. Following the sessions, another survey is used. This indicates levels of engagement and enjoyment, whether the sessions were relevant and thought provoking, whether new information was given and learnt. There is the opportunity for student feedback listing topics they would like to cover more in future. This is then used for future planning and shaping of the curriculum map.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the PSHE co-ordinator, and review by the Deputy Head of Pastoral Care

The Deputy Head Pastoral will report on PSHE / RSE to the School Governing Board on a half termly basis.