

SANDWELL ACADEMY



Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

Document Details

Policy Title:	Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)	
Policy Reference:	Sandwell Academy / Curriculum and Assessment	
Description:	The aim of the relationship and sex education policy is to clarify the provision of relationship and sex education to all students (including education on sexual health) and the teaching of human growth and reproduction as set out in the National Curriculum.	
Status:	Statutory	
Category:	Academy	
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Version:	1.7 – July 2025	
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Behaviour for Learning Policy Anti-Bullying Policy Citizenship Policy Equality Policy Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Online Safety Bill		
Adopted by the Governing Board on:	July 2025	
Date for Review:	July 2026	

Change Record

Version	Date	Description
1.1	February 2015	Curriculum content review
1.2	July 2018	Change of contact details
1.3	July 2019	Curriculum content review
1.4	July 2020	Renaming of policy to bring into line with DfE policy Curriculum update
1.5	July 2022	Update of sex education aspect of RSE curriculum covered in each Year.
1.6	July 2023	Update of sex education aspect of RSE curriculum covered in each Year.
1.7	July 2025	Review of policy following update guidance from DfE

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1. Aims

At Sandwell Academy, our approach to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is rooted in our core values: we encourage students to Be Brave in asking questions and exploring their identity, Be Kind in how they treat others and themselves, and Be Proud of who they are and the respectful relationships they build.

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

2. Statutory requirements

We must provide RSE to all students under section 34 of the <u>Children and Social Work Act 2017</u>. In teaching RSE, we must have regard to <u>guidance</u> 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 Sandwell Academy, we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

4. Implementation

The programme will teach about relationships, it will help young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. It will build on the relationship's education taught in primary school and at an appropriate time extend teaching to include intimate relationships. This will provide knowledge about safer sex and sexual health ensuring that students are equipped to make safe, informed and healthy choices as they progress through adult life. It may be necessary to link sex and relationship education with issues of peer pressure and other risk-taking behaviour, such as the appropriate use of social networking, drugs, smoking and alcohol, and ensure that young people understand how the law applies to sexual relationships.

Teachers have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of students and because teachers therefore act in loco parentis, parents need to be reassured that the personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of relationship and sex education within the RSE framework.

Students need to be taught to behave responsibly towards relationship and sex issues and be able to make informed decisions. Students may be consulted on this relationship and sex education policy.

5. Curriculum

When developing the curriculum, we have considered the age, developmental stage, needs (such as cultural and religious needs) and feelings of our students. If students ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so that students are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

An outline of what students should know by the end of secondary school can be found in <u>Appendix</u> 1. We can share curriculum materials e.g., schemes of learning, with parents and carers on request.

To help students make informed choices, establish a healthy lifestyle and build up a system of values, the teaching methods used are as important as the content of the lesson. The participation of students in lessons is essential to encourage them to learn from others and to help them to use appropriate language in ways which are understood by others. This requires the use of a balanced range of teaching methods.

6. Delivery of RSE

RSE is delivered primarily through the Science curriculum, ensuring students receive accurate and age-appropriate education on the biological aspects of relationships and sexual health. This is complemented by the Academy's Welfare Curriculum, which addresses the wider personal, social, and emotional elements of RSE, including topics such as healthy relationships, consent, online safety, and emotional wellbeing. Continuity within the Academy is achieved by having in place a coordinated, progressive curriculum which begins in Year 7 and extends through to the Sixth Form, ensuring students build on their knowledge and understanding year by year. Together, these elements provide a comprehensive and cohesive RSE offer that reflects the Academy's values of Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud.

The Academy will make sure that:

- Core knowledge is sectioned into units of manageable size
- The required content is communicated to students clearly, in a carefully sequenced way and within a planned scheme of work
- Teaching includes sufficient and well-chosen opportunities and contexts for students to embed new knowledge, so that it can be used confidently in real-life situations

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

RSE complements several other curriculum subjects. Where appropriate, the school 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.

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.

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

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

Teachers will make sure that all students' 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 age of the students.

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

It is important for secondary students to know what the law says about certain topics covered in RSE, particularly in relation to the law and young people. This will help students 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
- Online behaviours including image and information sharing (including sexual imagery, youthproduced sexual imagery and including AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes). Students 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

We may amend our curriculum content to respond to the needs and context of our students, 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 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 school, 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

We will teach about these topics in a manner that:

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

We will also:

- Make sure that students learn about these topics in an environment that's appropriate for them
- Consider the level of differentiation needed

6.2 Use of resources

We will consider whether any resources we plan to use:

- Are aligned with the teaching requirements set out in the statutory RSE guidance
- Would support students in applying their knowledge in different contexts and settings
- Are age-appropriate, given the age and maturity of the students
- 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 students' experiences and won't provoke distress

7. Use of external organisations and materials

We will make sure that an agency and any materials used are accurate, age and stage appropriate and unbiased and in line with our legal duties around political impartiality.

We 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
 - o Are in line with students' developmental stage
 - Comply with:
 - This policy
 - The Teachers' Standards
 - The Equality Act 2010
 - The <u>Human Rights Act 1998</u>
 - The Education Act 1996
- Only work with external agencies where we 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
 - o Their position on the issues to be discussed
- Ask to see in advance any materials that the agency may use
- Know the named individuals who will be there, and follow our usual safeguarding procedures for these people
- Conduct a basic online search and address anything that may be of concern to us, 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

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

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The governing board

The governing board will approve the RSE policy and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.

8.2 The headteacher

The headteacher 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 students from non-statutory components of RSE (see section 9).

8.3 Deputy Head with Responsibility for RSE

The Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for RSE leads the strategic development, implementation, and quality assurance of the Relationships and Sex Education programme across the school. They ensure the curriculum is compliant with statutory guidance and reflects the Academy's core values of Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud. Their role includes overseeing curriculum planning, supporting staff with training and resources, monitoring lesson delivery through observations and learning walks, gathering student and parent feedback, and reporting on the impact of RSE to the Senior Leadership Team and Governors. They also ensure that RSE remains inclusive, age-appropriate, and responsive to the needs of all students.

8.4 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 students whose parents/carers wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory 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 students may make because of the subject content to the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

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 headteacher.

There is an allocated Deputy Headteacher, with responsibility for RSE within the Academy.

8.5 Students

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

9. Parents' 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 student turns 16. 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 headteacher.

A copy of any withdrawal requests will be placed in the student's educational record. The headteacher 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 student's specific vulnerability, the headteacher can refuse a request to withdraw the student from sex education.

Alternative schoolwork will be given to students 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 headteacher will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE where appropriate.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The Deputy Headteacher will monitor the delivery of RSE through regular curriculum reviews, lesson observations, and learning walks to ensure consistency and quality across all year groups. Staff will be supported through ongoing professional development and resource audits to maintain high standards of teaching. Student voice will be gathered through surveys and focus groups to assess the impact of RSE on learners' understanding and wellbeing. Parental feedback will also be considered to ensure transparency and community engagement. Monitoring outcomes will inform future planning and be reported to the Senior Leadership Team as part of the school's quality assurance process.

12. Date for next review

This policy will be reviewed at the end of each academic year for implementation the following September.

Following appropriate consultation, nothing contained in these policies shall prevent the Headteacher and the Chairman of Governors jointly agreeing in exceptional circumstances some alternative sanction or sanctions, or other measure which, in any case, is thought to provide a more effective resolution of the problem concerned.

Appendix 1: By the end of secondary school pupils should know

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Families	 That there are different types of committed, stable relationships How these relationships might contribute to wellbeing, and their importance for bringing up children 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 That 'common-law marriage' is a myth, and cohabitants do not obtain marriage-like status or rights from living together or by having children That forced marriage and marriage before the age of 18 are illegal How families and relationships change over time, including through birth, death, separation and new relationships. 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. 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, including friendships	 About 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 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 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 What tolerance requires, including the importance of tolerance of other people's beliefs 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 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

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
	 Skills for ending relationships or friendships with kindness and managing the difficult feelings that endings might bring, including disappointment, hurt or frustration The role of consent, including in romantic and sexual relationships. Pupils 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. Pupils should understand that just because someone says 'yes' to doing something that doesn't automatically make it ethically okay 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). Pupils should be equipped to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice 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 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 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	 Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online About online risks, including that any material they provide provides 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 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 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

TOPIC **PUPILS SHOULD KNOW** • 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 • 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 • 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 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 • 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. Pupils 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

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Being safe	 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 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 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 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 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 upskirting About concepts and laws relating to: Sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault Harmful sexual behaviour, which includes all types of sexual harassment and sexual violence among young people but also includes other forms of

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
	 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 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 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	 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 take into account 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. 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 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 (PEP) 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

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/carer		Date		
Reason for withdr	awing from sex education v	within relatio	nships and sex education	
Any other informa	tion you would like the sch	ool to consid	der	
Parent/carer signature				
Signature				
TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL				
Agreed actions from discussion with parents/carers				