



The Athelstan Trust

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Date of Review	Approved by	Date of Approval	Next Review Date	Website
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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 around issues of sexuality and relationships
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies

The Trust is aware that children and young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. In this environment, children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way. The Trust believes that RSE is an important dimension of this statutory entitlement, and that it should be complementary to and supportive of the role of parents in educating their children about relationships and sexuality.

The aim of relationships and sex education (RSE) is to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good family, a good colleague and a successful marriage, civil partnership or other type of committed relationship. It should also cover contraception, developing intimate relationships and resisting pressure to have sex (and not applying pressure). It should teach

what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships. This will help students understand the positive effects that good relationships have on their mental wellbeing, identify when relationships are not right and understand how such situations can be managed. Our RSHE policy will provide clear progression from what is taught in the primary curriculum. We will build on the foundation of learning and, as pupils grow up, at the appropriate time extend teaching to include intimate relationships. Alongside being taught intimate relationships, pupils will also be taught about family relationships, friendships and other kinds of relationships that are an equally important part of becoming a successful and happy adult.

2. Statutory requirements

In our primary schools, we must provide relationships education to all pupils as per section 34 of the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#). This legislation also requires us to provide RSE to all pupils at our secondary academies.

We do not have to follow the National Curriculum, but we are expected to offer all pupils a curriculum that is similar to the National Curriculum including requirements to teach science. This would include the elements of sex education contained in the science curriculum at primary level.

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 406 and 407 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 6, chapter 1 of the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (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 The Athelstan Trust we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

3. Policy development

Within the Athelstan Trust, Schools are responsible for determining their own RSE procedures and teaching materials. These will be developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The consultation and school procedure development process involves the following steps:

1. Review –co-ordinated by the RSE lead, a working group of pull together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance
2. Staff consultation – staff from the schools are given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations
3. Parent/stakeholder consultation – parents and any interested parties are invited to attend a meeting about the policy at their respective schools
4. Pupil consultation – we ask what exactly pupils want from their RSE
5. Ratification – once amendments were made, the policy is shared with local governors for ratification

4. Definition

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity.

RSE involves a combination of sharing information, and exploring issues and values.

5. Curriculum

5.1. Curriculum design

Each school within the Trust has set out their Curriculum for Relationships, Sex, Education and their approach to delivering RSE and roles and responsibilities on their school website. Staff responsible for RSE teaching in each school will ensure that the curriculum is appropriate to the needs of pupils and will adapt content according.

As a minimum, all schools within the Trust will meet statutory guidance of topics covered in the following guidance: [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-guidance)

We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, and taking into account the age, developmental stage, needs and feelings of our pupils. 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.

5.2 Curriculum Delivery

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).

In July 2025, the DfE produced new statutory guidance (Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education) which takes effect from September 2026. Schools in the Trust may begin teaching in line with the guidance ahead of the September 2026 deadline. Each school sets out their procedures for teaching RSE Appendix 1 of this Policy: as per the guidance, this information will include names / roles of those responsible for teaching RSE in each school.

5.2.1 Primary Schools Curriculum Delivery

Across our primary schools, relationships education focuses on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships including:

- Families and People who care for me
- Caring Friendships
- Respectful, kind relationships
- Online safety and awareness
- Being Safe

Statutory Guidance recommends that primary schools teach sex education in years 5 and/or 6, in line with content about conception and birth in the science curriculum, but it is not compulsory. Our individual schools will determine the content that they will cover, including any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of pupils.

Primary sex education will focus on:

- Preparing boys and girls for the changes that adolescence brings
- How a baby is conceived and born

Throughout each year group Schools will use material 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.

Schools 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 school will consult parents and carers, and their views will be valued.

For more information about the RSE curriculum in the individual school, please see Appendix I.

5.2.2 Secondary Schools Curriculum Delivery

Across our secondary schools, 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 pupils 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 include pupils of all gender identities, and activities will be planned to make sure all are actively involved.

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 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 school/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.

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, 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

Schools are actively encouraged to design their curriculum to respond to the needs and context of our pupils, to discuss issues affecting them in an age-appropriate manner. Where possible, schools will endeavour to 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.

For more information about the RSE curriculum in the individual school, please see Appendix I.

5.3 Inclusivity

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

- Considers how a diverse range of pupils will relate to them
- 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

5.4 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

All schools in the Trust have curriculum materials available for parents / carers to view. An appointment should be made with the RSE lead.

6. Use of external organisations and materials

Schools will work with external organisations and providers to ensure that any agency and any materials used are accurate, 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
 - Comply with:
 - This policy
 - The 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 that the agency may use
- Know the named individuals who will be there, and follow usual safeguarding procedures for these people
- 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
- Our schools **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

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The board of trustees

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

7.2 The CEO

The CEO will

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

7.3 Local governing bodies

Local governing bodies are responsible for supporting the implementation of the policy at their school and reporting issues to the board of trustees if they occur.

7.4 The headteacher

The headteacher 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-science components of RSE (see section 9).

7.5 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, 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)

Whilst staff are expected to teach RSE, the Trust encourages staff to discuss concerns about teaching RSE with the headteacher, giving consideration of the needs of all stakeholders.

7.6 Pupils

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

8. Parents' right to withdraw

8.1 Primary Pupils

Across our primary schools, parents/carers do not have the right to withdraw their children from relationships education.

Parents/carers have the right to withdraw their children from the non-science components of sex education within RSE. Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the headteacher of the school.

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

8.2 Secondary Pupils

Across our secondary schools, parents/carers have the right to withdraw their children from the 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.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the headteacher of the school.

A copy of any withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The headteacher will discuss the request with parents/carers and take appropriate action.

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

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

9. Monitoring arrangements

Schools will typically review their Curriculum and RSE Procedures Annually, consulting with parents where appropriate. This Policy will be reviewed and approved by the board of trustees annually.

Appendix I

School specific procedures for RSE will be shared in this appendix.

From September 2026, this will meet the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE) Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and health education guidance issued in July 2025. This guidance can be found here: [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance](#)