



RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION POLICY

Policy Owner	Grace Stacey/Lizzie Clark	Approval Date	September 2026
Approved By	SLT and Governors	Review Date	September 2027
Version		Status	Approved
Applies To	Pupils	Review Cycle	Annually
Related Policies	PSHCE Policy Safeguarding (Child Protection Policy) SMSC – With Regards to British Values SEND Policy Safeguarding Policy E-Safety Policy Curriculum Policy	Policy Ref.	

Policy Statement

Our school is committed to equity, safety, and transparency, ensuring all policies protect and support our community. Every policy translates our core values into clear practices to maintain an inclusive environment where the welfare of students, staff, and families remains paramount. To achieve this, our guidelines actively promote equal opportunities, celebrate diversity, and prioritize physical, emotional, and digital safety. We provide straightforward, accessible guidance that relies on shared community accountability. Finally, we subject all policies to regular reviews to stay aligned with statutory updates, local needs, and current best practices.

AIMS

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is an integral part of the learning process for all children. Its objective is to help and support students' physical, emotional and moral development so that they will be able to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships, and to build their self-efficacy. Students will also be able to put this knowledge into practice as they develop social skills and the capacity to make safe, informed and healthy decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts. Healthy relationships include intimate relationships, friendships, working relationships, marriage and other types of committed relationships. Most importantly, it is a key support for effective safeguarding, and forms a part of our timetabled PSHCE curriculum in the school.

The School consults parents when reviewing this policy, curriculum content and significant changes to provision. Feedback is considered by the PSHCE Department and Senior Leadership Team before implementation. Reviews to this policy are made annually by the Head of Department, alongside department teaching staff.

WIDER REFERENCES

This policy operates within a wider national policy framework, which includes:

- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)
- PSHCE Association guidelines
- DfE – Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2025) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>
- Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013
- Fraser Guidelines
- SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 years (2015) (statutory guidance)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (advice for schools) (2018)
- SMSC Requirements for Independent Schools (statutory guidance)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (statutory guidance)

RELATED INTERNAL POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with St Mary's School:

- PSHCE Policy
- Safeguarding (Child Protection Policy)

- SMSC – With Regards to British Values
- SEND Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Curriculum Policy

MORAL AND VALUES FRAMEWORK

All students are encouraged to:

- Build positive and healthy relationships
- Distinguish between right and wrong
- Build their self- esteem and personal confidence
- Develop a respect for others and themselves
- Take personal responsibility for their own actions
- Have space to develop a set of moral values for themselves and have tolerance for the values of others
- Understand the consequences of their actions for themselves and others
- Understand socially acceptable behaviour
- Move with confidence from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood
- Understand the meaning of consent and their right to say ‘no’

THE RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The Relationships, Sex and Health Education Programme has three fundamental dimensions:

1. Knowledge and Understanding

Factual information is presented through Science lessons in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner at age-appropriate stages in line with the National Curriculum.

In Prep, students learn about healthy, respectful relationships and who to speak to if a relationship makes them feel unsafe or unhappy. Children learn that marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong. They are taught about different relationship types through Protected Characteristics and British Values. Puberty is taught in Science and PSHE lessons in Key Stage 2.

In SH, students learn and understand physical development, puberty, human reproduction, pregnancy, childbirth, contraception, infertility, and sexually transmitted diseases including information about HIV/AIDS and the prevention of infection.

During PSHCE lessons, in addition to the list above, students also study emotional development, social development, self-esteem, relationships, consent, gender roles, stereotyping, prejudice, personal safety, being safe (including online), pornography, nudes, sexual abuse, sexual attitudes, sexual orientation and healthy sexual relationships. They also learn about the law and support agencies. See the PSHCE Policy or Scheme of Work for more information.

2. Values and Beliefs

All teaching is within our moral and values framework. The Relationships, Sex and Health Education programme fosters an appreciation of healthy relationships through a stable family life, marriage and mutually supportive relationships as well as the responsibilities of parenthood. The key underlying themes are respect, equality and trust. It also encourages the students to:

- Develop their values and attitudes towards sex, sexuality and relationships
- Respect and empathise with other's attitudes towards sex, sexuality and relationships
- Understand that sexual intimacy involves strong emotional feelings
- Respect their own and others' feelings, decisions, rights and bodies
- Understand the significance of marriage and mutually supportive relationships as key building blocks of community and society

3. Extending Personal and Social Skills

Through the Relationships, Sex and Health Education programme students develop the skills to:

- Articulate their own attitudes and values
- Deal with difficult moral and social questions
- Value themselves and be assertive, have resilience and cope with change
- Make decisions and understand the consequences
- Deal with peer pressure
- Understand and manage conflicting pressures relating to consent and exploitation
- Develop inter-personal skills

Recognising that for many students, the distinction between the online and offline world is less marked than for many adults, the Relationships, Sex and Health Education programme supports students in understanding differences between online and offline aspects of life.

ORGANISATION OF SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Relationships and Sex Education is an integral part of the Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education (PSHCE) programme at St Mary's School. The RSHE curriculum is carefully sequenced from EYFS to Sixth Form so that pupils build knowledge progressively and revisit key concepts at increasing levels of complexity and maturity.

In Prep, puberty in girls and the menstrual cycle are delivered through Science lessons to all students in Year 5 by the Science teacher and this is reviewed in Year 6. Parents are informed ahead of time what is being covered. This is primarily the biology of physical change, which is a part of the statutory Science National Curriculum.

Relationships Education starts in Early Years and is delivered by the class teacher. The focus is on the development of positive relationships, understanding feelings and fears, fairness, kindness and respect. By the end of Year 6 the topics of diversity, bullying, peer pressure, discrimination, family conflict and loss will have been covered in PSHCE lessons in an age-appropriate way. Assemblies are delivered weekly to all Prep girls covering the above topics.

A more detailed list of topics can be found on the Prep 1Decision PSHE curriculum overview found in the shared Prep Schemes of Work and Planning.

The internet for most people is an integral part of life and has many benefits. Internet Safety starts in Early Years and is delivered throughout Prep by the class teacher and additionally in Key Stage 2 in the Computing curriculum. The focus is on understanding how to use the internet safely. Pupils are taught about the benefits of rationing time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing. Understanding that people can behave differently online, sometimes by pretending to be someone they are not and that the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous.

Physical health, fitness and healthy eating is delivered by the Food and Nutrition, Physical Education, Science and PSHCE Departments.

In Senior School, RSHE takes place as a key part of the timetabled PSHCE lessons, and is complemented through visiting speakers and workshops.

All Key Stage 3 students learn about the male and female reproductive systems in Year 7. This is also delivered by their Science teacher in Science lessons and it is a part of the Key Stage 3 statutory Science National Curriculum. In science, students study how babies grow and develop inside the womb, puberty, the menstrual cycle and contraception. In Key Stage 4, all students are taught about the hormones that control fertility including the use of them in oral and other forms of contraception. Students are also taught how hormones are used in the process of IVF. All topics are delivered by the Science teachers. PSHCE complements this curriculum content at an age-appropriate level.

Relationships Education in Senior House starts in Year 7 and is delivered by a team of specialist PSHCE teachers. The focus is on the social and emotional aspects of development and relationships, including recognising the impact of social media and AI. All topics are taught at an age-appropriate level and include information on how and where to access help and support within school and beyond.

Topics covered include, but are not limited to:

- Healthy relationships (linking to harmful sexual behaviours)
- Consent
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Bullying including sexual bullying (child on child abuse)
- Equality, Diversity and Values within relationships
- Recognising risky behaviours
- Relationships, including those online
- Internet safety and harms
- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Mental wellbeing
- Menstruation

- Drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- Basic first aid

From Key Stage 4, the focus is on preparing the students for life beyond school.

Topics covered include:

- Personal health and wellbeing (physical and mental)
- Relationships with others (including child on child abuse)
- Online behaviours in terms of RSHE (including deep-fakes, harmful sexual behaviours and AI generated images)
- STI's and sexual health
- Female Health Conditions
- Pregnancy and Fertility
- Pornography and nudes
- Making choices regarding contraception
- Consent
- The role of sex in the media
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Sexual assault, abuse and harassment, misogyny, stalking, and rape culture and the law
- Grooming, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse (harmful sexual behaviours)
- Violence against women and girls

Specifically, regarding online technology and RSHE, pupils will learn about misinformation, harmful online communities, deepfake technology, online coercion, sexually manipulated images and the influence of harmful online content on attitudes towards relationships and equality. The RSHE curriculum supports the school's wider safeguarding approach, including the promotion of safe online behaviours, digital resilience and pupil understanding of the school's filtering and monitoring systems and acceptable use expectations.

Staff delivering RSHE receive appropriate induction, safeguarding training and continuing professional development to ensure the curriculum remains accurate, current and delivered confidently. A variety of teaching approaches are used, including ways of dealing with the more sensitive issues that may arise. Ground rules are established which prohibit inappropriate personal information being requested or disclosed by those taking part in a lesson. Students' questions are answered in an honest and sensitive manner and learning experiences are planned to meet the needs of **all** students. Staff may postpone discussion of individual questions where a considered response is required, or where responding immediately would be inappropriate in a whole-class setting.

Students are also taught how to seek help and report concerns to trusted adults, the DSL team and external agencies. Any concerns, allegations or disclosures relating to sexual harassment, sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour or child-on-child abuse will be managed in accordance with the School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This ensures students receive relevant, up to date information in all lessons and it is ensured that emotional and moral issues can be explored through productive discussion in a safe environment during PSHCE lessons. As mentioned, where appropriate, outside speakers will be involved in the delivery of PSHCE.

All visiting speakers will be expected to conform to the guidelines in the Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy. Any materials provided by external agencies are reviewed by school staff in advance and delivery is monitored to ensure suitability, accuracy and alignment with safeguarding requirements. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that external contributors supplement, and do not replace, teacher-led RSHE. School staff remain present and retain responsibility for planning, safeguarding and quality assurance.

In accordance with the RSHE statutory guidance, we have the same high expectations of the quality of pupil's work in RSHE lessons as for other curriculum areas. RSHE (in PSHCE lessons), teaching is incorporated within the Learning Walks schedule and feedback is used in our regular review of materials and provision. In terms of pupil assessment, in Prep students self-assess in workbooks, are monitored closely by form tutors through pastoral booklets and Blob Trees. In Senior House, students in Key Stage 3 make use of tracking booklets, and Key Stage 4 pupils work on a shared OneNote and Microsoft Teams page. All of these methods are monitored by class teachers and the Head of PSHCE to determine understanding of topics covered. Furthermore, pupils complete a termly quiz to look back and reflect on their learning. We utilise a range of ways to check for understanding of topics and identify where students may need additional support. Forms of assessment may include:

- Quizzes
- Presentations
- Moving 'attitudes' continuums
- Exit Polls
- Self-evaluation
- Participation in discussion
- Self-reflection/Blob trees

The PSHCE programme and Science Scheme of Work are reviewed annually by the PSHCE and Science teachers as part of the School plans for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Student voice is used to review the curriculum and its relevance for students' experience.

SPECIFIC ISSUES STATEMENTS

Anti-Bullying Procedures

St Mary's School has its own Anti-Bullying Policy, which gives clear guidelines on procedures for students and staff. We recognise that some students are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues on account of their SEND and take this into account when designing or amending our curriculum.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Responsibilities

In the Prep Department, Mairead Carney, Head of the Prep Department is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with responsibility for Child Protection (Safeguarding), and Rebecca Rose is the DSL specifically for EYFS. In the Senior House, Mairead Carney is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead. In the absence of either, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads will take responsibility. The School liaises with the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership to ensure the welfare of all children.

Complaints Procedure

Any complaints about the Relationships, Sex and Health Education programme should be made in writing to the Head in accordance with the School Complaints Policy.

Confidentiality

Staff always offer sensitive and appropriate advice. They maintain confidentiality on most matters; however, it is made clear that there are some matters that cannot remain confidential for Child Protection (Safeguarding) reasons. PSHCE and pastoral staff follow the Fraser Guidelines when dealing with any individual's concern regarding pregnancy and contraception.

Contraceptive Advice

Factual contraceptive information is given in lessons, including emergency contraception. Relevant telephone numbers of support agencies are on the school notice boards and Pastoral and PSHCE Firefly pages and other sources of help and information are given.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQIA+)

We will comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, (please see The Equality Act 2010: advice for schools), under which sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics. In relation to LGBTQIA+ issues, teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content. At the point at which it is considered appropriate to teach pupils about LGBTQIA+, content will be fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum.

The Law

Students will be taught about what the law says about sex, relationships and young people, including information and rules regarding sharing personal information, pictures, videos and other material using technology.

Withdrawal

Parents may request withdrawal from the non-statutory sex education elements of RSHE. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education, Health Education or the statutory Science curriculum. Before granting any such request the Head will discuss the request with parents to clarify the nature and purpose of the request and, as appropriate, with the child, to ensure that their wishes are understood, taking into consideration the statutory guidance.

Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, the school will respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms. This process is the same for students with SEND. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where the Head may want to take a student's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision. The Head will automatically grant a request to withdraw a student from any sex education delivered in the Prep Department, other than as part of the Science curriculum. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships or Health Education.

Working with external agencies

Work with expert organisations (e.g., Rabbits) supports the department in ensuring content is up-to-date, accurate, and of the highest calibre. Where appropriate, external organisations may be invited in to deliver content and bring specialist knowledge and ways of engaging students. Organisations or speakers will be

carefully considered in relation to their appropriateness in relation to the needs of students and how they can enhance teaching by PSHCE staff. As with any visiting speaker, the Head will be informed in advance of the details of the organisation or speaker, the purpose of the visit and details of the visit.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Our curriculum complies with the provisions set out in the Equality Act 2010. The planning and delivery of our RSHE curriculum acknowledges and promotes the importance of equality and respect, and specifically taking into account the protected characteristics of race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Resources may include age-appropriate educational materials addressing sensitive topics. Any content used will be carefully selected to ensure it is necessary, proportionate, developmentally appropriate and compliant with safeguarding requirements. Materials used are in accordance with our PSHCE policy and the law, inappropriate images or explicit material not directly related to explanation will be avoided.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEND)

RSHE is accessible to all students, however, the school is aware that for some students RSHE can be a particularly important or challenging subject and these factors are taken into account when teaching the subject. The school ensures that teaching is sensitive, age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate and delivered with reference to the law.

WORKING WITH PARENTS

The School's Relationships, Sex and Health Education programme is developed in consultation with staff, parents and students. The syllabus has been designed to take account of the varied religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds of students in keeping with the Equality Act 2010. The School will from time to time inform parents of changes and developments and include them in any future consultations as appropriate.

DISSEMINATION OF THE POLICY

A copy of this policy is available on the School website and accessibility copies will be available on request from the School office.