



ASHGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

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Supporting Documents:

- Teaching and Learning Document
- National Curriculum 2014 (Science and PSHE)
- Department for Education Sex and Relationship Education Guidance
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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1. Rationale

In today's modern world, children learn about relationships and sex from the very youngest age, even if not directly shared with them, they are exposed to the concept visually, aurally and emotionally through a myriad of forms. In a world where sex or sexuality is used to sell and promote items from food to fast cars, and in a celebrity culture where lives become everyone's business, we should talk to our children to help them make sense of it all. Some of what they are exposed to can have negative connotations or be incorrect, confusing or even frightening. Schools have both a moral and legal duty to address these, particularly in a high tech world when social media, including texting and online access, is a day to day feature of children's lives.

In addition, in the UK we have one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe. We also have high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). However, a shift to a more relationships based strategy, focussing on the individual and not purely a biology sharing process, has led to teenage pregnancy being halved in the last decade. (ONS, England & Wales)

Effective RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation - but it does enable young people to mature, to build up their confidence and self-esteem, provide the knowledge and skills needed to be safe and to understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity until they are ready. Importantly, understanding that sexual relationships are embedded within loving and caring relationships can reduce the risk of child sexual exploitation.

2. Legal requirements

Whilst RSE is obligatory for secondary schools, primary schools are not required to teach a programme of RSE other than the aspects required under the Science and Personal Social and Health Curriculum.

However, good practice dictates that a common sense approach to RSE, that is integrated throughout the school and culminates in a dedicated relevant and appropriate Year 6 topic, best suits children's needs as they make the transition to secondary school. Indeed, this approach to RSE has seen a 27.8% decline in teenage pregnancies in the City of Derby in the last 2 decades.

3. Aims and objectives

The term Relationships, Sex Education – RSE – is used in this policy rather than sex education. This is to stress that our approach goes beyond provision of biological information to also focus on clarifying attitudes and values, and developing self-esteem and the skills to manage relationships.

According to the latest DfE guidance RSE is:

‘...lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respects, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health’.

DfES ‘Sex and Relationship Guidance’, 2000.

The guidance suggests that RSE should have three main elements as follows:

Knowledge and understanding

- Learning and understanding physical development at appropriate stages.
- Understanding human sexuality, sexual health, emotions and relationships.

Attitudes and values

- Learning the importance of values and individual conscience and moral considerations.
- Learning the value of family life, marriage and stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children.
- Learning the value of respect, love and care.
- Exploring, considering and understanding moral dilemmas.
- Developing critical thinking as part of decision making.

Personal and social skills

- Learning to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively.
- Developing self-respect and empathy for others.
- Learning to make choices based on an understanding of difference and with an absence of prejudice.
- Developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made.
- Managing conflict.
- Learning how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse.

The schools approach to RSE consists of:

- A specific Year 6 programme of study.
- Application of the National Curriculum.
- Pastoral support for pupils who experience difficulties.

4. An ethos of mutual respect and appropriateness

RSE requires a degree of respect and maturity in order for it to be successful. With this in mind, practices and processes should be developed around practices supporting:

- a) discovery of what pupils know, understand, think and feel and to identify their needs.
- b) creation of a programme for progressive and differentiated learning which caters for pupils' needs and is sensitive to individuals and groups.
- c) encouraging unembarrassed acceptance of sexuality by providing appropriate vocabulary for all of the body and encouraging positive attitudes to all bodily functions.
- d) generation of an atmosphere where questions and discussion on sexual matters can take place without embarrassment.
- e) counteracting misleading myth and folklore and false assumptions of "normal" behaviour.
- f) enabling pupils to accept variation in rates of growth and development (physical, emotional, social) and in ages when puberty or social attitudes commence.
- g) providing constant reassurance that change is part of the life cycle and to give help in adjusting to these changes.
- h) recognising the value of intimacy in loving and caring relationships. To understand the value of family life, the implications of parenthood and the need of the very young.
- j) understanding and respect the varied cultural and religious influences on individual sexuality.
- k) helping children affirm their rights, to be able to resist unwanted touch or advances and to communicate about such matters.
- l) developing awareness of sexual identity, and an understanding of the range of sexual identities.

5. Where and how RSE will be taught and what specific knowledge will be shared:

In a policy release March 2017, the Department for Education confirmed that the content of RSE was to agreed at school level and considering the local need. It stated that:

We do not think it is right to specify on the face of primary legislation the exact content of the subjects as this would be too prescriptive, removing freedom from schools and running the risk of the legislation becoming quickly out of date as the world changes.

The DfE do however advise as 'good practice', covering the following themes and topics:

- **different types of relationships**, including friendships, family relationships, dealing with strangers and, at secondary school, intimate relationships;
- how to recognise, understand and build **healthy relationships**, including self-respect and respect for others, commitment, tolerance, boundaries and consent, and how to manage conflict, and also how to recognise unhealthy relationships;
- how relationships may **affect health and wellbeing, including mental health**;
- healthy relationships and **safety online**; and
- factual knowledge, (Year 6), around **sex, sexual health and sexuality**, set firmly within the context of relationships.

The term "sex education" is unlikely to be used with younger children. The work will be integrated within science topic, Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) and will be gradually developed step by step through the age ranges.

Year on Year development of the curriculum (EYFS – Year 5)

Between Early Years and Year 5, children are taught about relationships and the human body through the science curriculum and PSHE, with aspects of RSE embed in that teaching. For this, staff use the National Curriculum for Science, Lancashire Learning Grid and SEAL PSHE. The class teacher is responsible for the work within the curriculum structure.

Year 6

In Year 6, prior to moving to secondary school, a 7 week RSE topic is planned and delivered. This is a bespoke programme of study, created with the specific needs and relevance to pupils at Ashgate Primary School. Usually the work is integrated into ordinary class work, though occasionally girls and boys might work in separate groups (e.g. when girls look in detail at personal hygiene related to menstruation).

Year 6 specific themes:

In Year 6, themes covered are:

1. Understanding what happens to bodies during puberty (including personal hygiene).
2. Understanding the emotional changes that occur during puberty.
3. Exploring the role of secure relationships, including marriage, to many people in different cultures and how different relationships are recognised.
4. Knowing about the main stages of the human life cycle and conception.
5. Finding out about the birth of human babies.
6. Understanding peer pressure and the need for contraception as a means of safe sex and avoidance of unplanned pregnancy.

The school nurse may also be involved from time to time, always working closely with the class teachers.

7. Equal Opportunities

Young people may have varying needs regarding RSE depending on their circumstances and background. The school strongly believes that all pupils should have access to RSE that is relevant to their particular needs. To achieve this, the school's approach to RSE will take account of:

a. The needs of boys as well as girls

Girls tend to have greater access to RSE than boys, both through the media (particularly magazines) and the home. We will consider the particular needs of boys, as well as girls, and approaches that will actively engage them. We shall also be proactive in combating sexism and sexist bullying.

b. Ethnic and cultural diversity

Ashgate Primary School will ensure that RSE is culturally appropriate and inclusive of all of our children of all faiths and none.

Different ethnic and cultural groups may have different attitudes to RSE. The school will consult pupils and parents/carers about specific needs where they arise, take account of their views and promote respect for, and understanding of, the views of different ethnic and cultural groups.

c. Varying home backgrounds

We recognise that our pupils may come from a variety of family situations and home backgrounds. We shall take care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances.

d. Special educational needs

We shall take account of the fact that some pupils may have learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties or physical disabilities that result in particular RSE needs.

e. Pupils who have been subjected to maltreatment

There may be cases where children have been subjected to, as and individual or witness to, abuse, including that of a sexualised nature. Where this is the case, staff may wish to consult with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to check content and access to lessons that may bring to the fore a pupil's anxieties and worries. Each case will be treated sensitively and carefully and it may be appropriate to amend planning accordingly.

8. A Whole School Approach

A whole school approach will be adopted to RSE that actively involves the whole school community. All groups who make up the school community have rights and responsibilities regarding RSE. In particular:

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will endeavour to support the provision and development of RSE in line with this policy by providing leadership and adequate resourcing.

The designated RSE co-ordinator will provide an overview of RSE provision and have overall responsibility for its development. This will include keeping up to date with developments and good practice, developing the provision to meet students' needs, providing support and resources for staff, arranging staff training, liaison with outside agencies and monitoring and evaluation.

Teaching staff

All teachers are involved in the school's RSE provision. Some RSE is taught through the PSHE programme and some through science and other curriculum area. All teachers play an important pastoral role by offering support to pupils. (Any teacher can be approached by a student who experiences a difficulty regarding sex or relationship issues.) Teachers will be consulted about the school's approach to RSE and aided in their work by provision of resources, background information, support and advice from experienced members of staff and access to appropriate training.

Non-teaching staff may be involved in a supportive role in some RSE lessons and also play an important, informal pastoral support role with pupils. They will have access to planning and objectives as required.

Governors have responsibilities for school policies. They will be consulted at one meeting per year about the RSE provision and policy, the PSHE document and have regular reports at Governors' meetings.

Parents / carers have a legal right to view this policy and to have information about the school's RSE provision. They also have a legal right to withdraw their children from dedicated sex education lessons if they wish. The school will seek and take account of parent/carer views and endeavour to adopt a partnership approach with parents/carers. This will periodically include information for parents and carers. The school approach to RSE will encourage dialogue between parents/carers and their children.

The school nurse plays a key role in RSE both in terms of input into lessons and provision of pastoral support for pupils. The school will work in ongoing consultation and partnership with the school nurse.

Pupils have an entitlement to age and circumstances appropriate RSE and to pastoral support.

9. Managing sensitive aspects of RSE.

RSE involves consideration of a number of sensitive issues about which different people may hold strong and varying views. The school's approach to RSE will be balanced and take account of, and be sensitive to, different viewpoints but will not be based on personal bias. We shall endeavour to have an approach that is educational, rather than one based on personal perspective.

On occasions, RSE can raise questions that are challenging and require consideration. Topics raised may not directly link to the lesson taught, but should not be seen as 'taboo'. To support staff the following acts as guidance for commonly misunderstood subject matter.

HIV/AIDS

Children may ask about HIV/Aids owing to the profile it receives in the news. Therefore this may come up in questions around sexual health. Children need to learn there is no danger from people with HIV or AIDS in any normal social contact; and that there are no 'risky people', only 'risky behaviours'. A standard response should be that there are ways of having a sexual relationship that reduces the risk of transmission and this information may be shared at another time. This response is suitable for other STD questions.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

The school recognises that many children may come from households or families that comprise of people within the LGBT community, or households and families may hold particular viewpoints, social, political or religious related to LGBT.

Where LGBT is raised or discussed, teachers are to promote the view that LGBT communities and individuals are one element of many personal and family lifestyles and that individuality, diversity and tolerance of lifestyles and beliefs are a positive feature of an inclusive United Kingdom. Staff will not tolerate or engage in conversations that share or reflect negativity towards any individual group.

Contraception

The concept of contraception, as a means of safe sexual relationships and avoiding unwanted pregnancy is often known by older children in primary schools; however, there can be common misunderstandings that children wish to explore. Staff will make reference the use of contraception for both these purposes and briefly explain that condoms can act as a barrier to transmission of sperm and STDs. Staff do however need to consider that views towards contraception can be culturally diverse, and respect should be given to the views of those expressing them.

Cyber space and multi media

In recent years, access to social media, the internet, apps, chatrooms and other information sharing platforms has led to new threats and concerns not experienced in other generations.

Inappropriate content includes information or images that upset a child, material that's directed at adults, inaccurate information or information that might lead or tempt your child into unlawful or dangerous behaviour. This could be:

- Pictures, videos or games which show images of sex, violence or exploitation (including sexual).
- unmoderated chatrooms – where there's no one supervising the conversation and barring unsuitable comments or imagery.
- Pornographic material.
- Sexualised discussions (including 'sexting').

What adults think is inappropriate material may differ from our own view or that of other parents. It will also depend on the child's age and maturity level. However, should a child disclose access to online/cyber materials that a staff member deems a safeguarding risk, this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Government guidance and recommendations express clearly the duty of schools to prepare children for this world. With this in mind, themes such as sexting and image sharing websites form an important part of the RSE programme. Discussing the dangers of sexting and image sharing are fundamental in ensuring that children are kept safe. Questions are not ignored, nonetheless should be dealt with carefully, sensitively and without explicit description. Educating children on the dangers of accessing and sharing any information is key across all year groups and at age appropriate levels. A key thread for feedback in such circumstances is that online information sharing and loving caring family structures are one and the same.

Explicit questions that are not relevant to the theme or explore descriptive or graphic acts that are not relevant.

Some children may ask questions about terms or phrases they have heard that are not appropriate. These may include specific sexual acts not conducive to sexual reproduction, common slang words or reference to innuendo. There are several reasons children may do so, including a genuine desire to understand, be seen as knowledgeable to peers or as an attempt to embarrass. Importantly, staff should recognise that the positive ethos they are providing may lead to genuine and heartfelt desires to understand.

Staff are not required to answer such questions. An appropriate response may include phrases similar to, "that is something you may want to ask your parents about as we do not discuss that as part of what we teach", or, "that is not important now, but may be something you discuss in other lessons as you get older".

It is important not belittle the pupil or the question.

10. Ground rules and distancing techniques

Teachers are careful to ensure that their personal beliefs and attitudes do not influence the teaching of sex and relationships. To this end ground rules have been agreed to provide a common values framework within which to teach. There are clear parameters as to what will be taught in whole class setting and what will be dealt with on an individual basis.

- Pupils will be given preparation so that they will know how to minimise any embarrassment they feel.
- No one (teacher or pupil) should be expected to answer a personal question.
- No one will be forced to take part in a discussion.
- Only the correct names for body parts will be used.
- Meanings of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way.

Answering difficult questions

Sometimes an individual child will ask an explicit or difficult question in the classroom. Questions do not have to be answered on the spot and can be addressed later. This school believes that individual teachers must use their skill and discretion in these situations and refer to the PSHE/Citizenship Co-ordinator / Headteacher if concerned.

Dealing with questions

- Teachers should establish clear parameters about what is appropriate and inappropriate in a whole-class setting.
- Teachers should set the tone by speaking in a matter-of-fact way and ensuring that pupils discuss issues in a way which does not encourage giggling and silliness.
- Pupils should be encouraged to write down questions anonymously and post them in a question box, the teacher will have time to prepare answers to all questions before the next session, and will choose not to respond to any questions which are inappropriate.
- If a verbal question is too personal the teacher should remind the pupils of the ground rules.
- If a question is too explicit, feels too old for a pupil, is inappropriate for the whole class, or raises concerns about sexual abuse, the teacher should acknowledge it and promise to attend to it later on an individual basis.
- Teachers should not be drawn into providing more information than is appropriate to the age of the child.
- Pupils must not be given the impression that teenagers inevitably have sex.
- If a teacher is concerned that a pupil is at risk of sexual abuse the Headteacher should be informed and the usual child protection procedures followed.

11. Parental concerns and withdrawal of students

Parents have a legal right to withdraw their children from dedicated 'sex education' lessons. They do not have a right to withdraw their children from those aspects of RSE that are taught in National Curriculum Science or where RSE issues arise incidentally in other subject areas.

With this in mind, parents of children in Year 6 are consulted before dedicated RSE lessons that include specific sex education take place.

We will work in active partnership with parents/carers, value their views and keep them informed about RSE provision. If a parent/carer has any concerns about the sex education elements of RSE provision, we will take time to address their concerns and allay any fears they may have. If any parent/carer decides to withdraw their child we will work with them and their child to explore possible alternative provision.

12. Pastoral support for pupils who experience difficulties

The nature of support available to pupils

The school takes its role in the promotion of pupil well-being seriously. Staff endeavour to make themselves approachable and to provide caring and sensitive support for pupils in a number of ways. Staff may be approached for help on an individual basis. They offer a listening ear and, where appropriate, information and advice. The school nurse offers a health and support service to pupils. Where appropriate, pupils are referred to the school nurse and/or outside helping agencies. The school will keep up to date about the development of local services and national help lines for young people and form working relationships with local agencies that are relevant to pupil needs.

13. Confidentiality and informing parents/carers

School staff cannot promise absolute confidentiality if approached by a pupil for help. Staff must make this clear to pupils. Child protection procedures must be followed when any disclosures about abuse are made.

It is very rare for a pupil to request absolute confidentiality. If they do, in situations other than those involving child protection issues, staff must make a careful judgement in consultation with the RSE co-ordinator and/or Headteacher, about whether or not a third party needs to be informed. This judgement will be based upon:

The seriousness of the situation and the degree of harm that the pupil may be experiencing.

14. Dealing with bullying, derogatory attitudes and negativity

Bullying commonly includes inappropriate and hurtful comments and behaviours concerning sexism, homophobia, appearance and other sex/relationship issues. The school takes the issue of bullying very seriously. This is reflected in the school's anti-bullying policy. Staff will challenge and deal sensitively with any evidence of bullying. Pupils will be encouraged to report any incidents. Staff will endeavour to investigate any incidents of bullying as soon as possible and give feedback to pupils who complain of bullying. The RSE and PSHE programmes will consider bullying and aim to discourage bullying based on sexism, homophobia, appearance and other sex/relationship issues.

