



DEVONPORT HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION (RSHE) POLICY

Named person: Alan Thomas

Category: Statutory

Review: Annually or When there are significant changes

Date to be reviewed: Spring 2027

This policy has been reviewed with regard to the work-life balance of staff.

Adopted by the Head Teacher on behalf of the Trustees: 23/03/2026

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

This policy is written in accordance with the statutory Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education guidance currently in force, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

It has been updated in preparation for the revised statutory RSHE guidance due to take effect from 1 September 2026.

The document 'Sex and Relationship Education for the 21st Century' produced by the PSHE association and OFSTED and the review of sexual abuse in Schools and Colleges 2021 has also guided the policy.

RSHE is delivered within a safeguarding framework and contributes to the school's duties under Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Defining RSHE

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) was made compulsory in English schools by the passing into law of the Children and Social Care Act 2017. The law does not give a definitive statement as to what sex education is. At DHSG, RSHE is understood as education about relationships within a values framework, focusing on responsibility, respect and healthy relationships. Among the things we will concentrate on are knowledge of the facts of human reproductive processes, sexuality and behaviour, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception and abortion, and a consideration of the broader emotional and ethical dimensions of sexual attitudes. These include healthy relationships, consent and providing students with the knowledge to help themselves and others, keep safe from abuse, for example through sexual exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and child-on-child abuse. All aspects of the educative process will look at both off and online behaviour and risks.

This will include explicit teaching on online harms such as grooming, coercion, sexual exploitation, image-sharing, sextortion and online scams.

Health strands run alongside many aspects of the Relationships and Sex Education curriculum and our Health Education plan aims to give our students the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, to recognise issues in themselves and others, and to seek support as early as possible when issues arise.

By the end of secondary school, students will have been taught spiralled content which builds on their depth of knowledge and develops their complexity of understanding on a range of health topics, for example: mental wellbeing, internet safety and harms, physical health and fitness, healthy eating and health and prevention, drugs, alcohol and tobacco, basic first aid and the changing adolescent mind and body. These health topics will be interwoven with other topics within the RSHE curriculum where appropriate.

Further definitions

Relationships Education: learning about healthy relationships, respect and boundaries.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE): age-appropriate learning about relationships, sex and sexual health.

Health Education: learning about physical health, mental wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.

Rationale

RSHE provides an understanding that positive, caring environments are essential for the development of a good self-image and that individuals are in charge of and responsible for their own bodies. It ought to provide knowledge about the processes of reproduction and the nature of sexuality and relationships. It should encourage the acquisition of skills and attitudes which allow students to manage their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner.

Aims

In the attempt to enable students to acquire knowledge, skills, responsible attitudes and behaviour with regard to RSHE, DHSG aims to provide a worthwhile educational experience for all its students which will present opportunities:

- to help students to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and for others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty and fidelity;
- to enable students to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour and to accept that everyone should behave responsibly in relationships and sexual matters;
- to support the personal development and social skills of the students;
- to ensure that students have an understanding of their own and others' sexuality;
- to enjoy relationships based upon mutual respect and responsibility which are free from abuse and exploitation and understand what constitutes a healthy relationship;
- to provide information and knowledge which will counteract prejudice and ignorance;
- to develop an understanding of risk and to promote strategies for personal safety;
- to enable students to be aware of the sources of help and to acquire the skills and confidence to use them;
- to help students identify risks associated with sexual exploitation and how to report concerns and gain support for victims.
- to understand the law in relation to consensual sexual relationships, sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual abuse.

Objectives:

- to enable students to understand the biological aspects of reproduction and the laws in place to protect them.
- to consider the advantages and disadvantages of various methods of family planning in terms of personal preference and their social and moral implications.
- to recognise and be able to discuss sensitive and controversial issues such as conception, virginity, birth, child-rearing, abortion, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), domestic abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and technological developments

which involve consideration of attitudes, values, beliefs and morality (including the risks and impacts associated with sharing sexual images and pornography and information about infertility, IVF and miscarriage).

- to make students aware of the range of sexual attitudes and behaviour in present day society and recognise the importance of personal choice in managing relationships so that they do not present risks to health and personal safety.
- to make students aware that feeling positive about sexuality and sexual activity is important in relationships and that people have the right not to be sexually active.
- to explore the meaning of 'consent' in the context of a sexual relationship.
- to understand the changing nature of sexuality over time and its impact on lifestyles, e.g. puberty and menopause.
- to recognise that parenthood (including adoption and fostering) is a matter of choice that needs to be carefully considered.
- to critically analyse moral values and explore those held by different cultures and groups.
- to understand the concept of stereotyping and to discuss issues such as sexual harassment in terms of their effects on individuals.
- to understand aspects of legislation relating to sexual behaviour, gender and equal opportunities and to raise awareness of the availability of statutory and voluntary organisations which offer support in human relationships.
- to support students to understand the positive aspects of sexuality and sexual relationships, including intimacy, pleasure, and emotional wellbeing, within the framework of consent, respect, and personal safety.

Delivery

RSHE at DHSG is taught in a cross-curricular way, for example through Biology and Religious Studies, as well as through the Pastoral Programme. Some of the programme will be delivered by Health professionals. Specific detail of delivery can be evidenced through the Pastoral Health Programme Schemes of Work. The diverse staffing and the variety of experience contained within this teaching body is seen as a valuable resource for the delivery of RSHE. The provision of RSHE is seen as progressive in terms of language, concepts and content which increases in depth and complexity as students' progress through the school.

Throughout the course of teaching, a variety of sensitive issues will inevitably be explored. It is recognised that an individual's sexuality is a highly personal matter. The teaching of RSHE at DHSG will place stress upon the need for understanding and awareness of a variety of sexual preferences across the spectrum of human sexuality.

It is intended that students will be given up-to-date information on a wide variety of contraceptive methods and whilst general statements about the efficacy of these methods will be given, specific advice and guidance to individuals will not be made as part of the RSHE programme.

RSHE will be delivered by trained staff with the knowledge and confidence to teach sensitive topics safely.

All external providers will be appropriately vetted and their materials reviewed in advance.

RSHE in the Curriculum

Introduction: DHSG strives to offer an education for the whole person. Our RSHE programme aims to be a sensitive and responsible one which is set in a moral and social framework. It also aims to meet the statutory provision which has been outlined in various Government documents.

Context: The prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with parents/carers. Schools must recognise that parents/carers are key figures in helping their children cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up and in preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities which sexual maturity brings. The teaching offered by schools should be seen as complimentary and supportive to the role of parents/carers.

It is recognised that RSHE is a complex issue which will place demands on schools and teachers. However, the purpose of RSHE should be to provide knowledge about loving relationships, the nature of sexuality and the processes of human reproduction. At the same time, it should lead to the acquisition of understanding and attitudes which prepare students to view their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner and provide them with the information and skills to safeguard themselves.

The RSHE delivered will be tailored not only to the age, but also to the understanding of students. At DHSG we aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner. It will be set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law regarding sexual behaviour. Students will be encouraged to appreciate the value of a stable family life, marriage (including same sex marriage and Civil Partnerships in line with legislation changes in 2014) and the responsibilities of parenthood. Such matters will be treated with sensitivity and great care will be taken to encourage all students to feel a sense of worth. Particular care will be taken when issues such as marital breakdown and divorce are dealt with.

- Pupils will be taught that pornography presents a distorted and often harmful view of relationships, sex and consent.
- Teaching will address sexism, misogyny and harmful social media or influencer content.
- Pupils will be taught about risks associated with artificial intelligence and online tools, including misleading advice and artificial or exploitative interactions.
- Pupils will learn about gambling and gambling-related harms, including risks linked to gaming and online platforms.
- Teaching will include age-appropriate mental health education, including the safe and appropriate discussion of self-harm and suicide prevention in line with safeguarding guidance.
- Pupils will be taught the facts and law relating to biological sex, gender reassignment and equality law in an accurate and age-appropriate way.
- Pupils will be taught, in an age-appropriate and balanced way, about the law relating to biological sex, gender reassignment, and associated rights, ensuring they understand the legal framework while fostering respect and inclusion for all individuals
- The school teaches about protected characteristics in line with the Equality Act 2010 in a factual, respectful and age-appropriate way.
- Where topics are subject to differing views, the school will present these in a balanced way and will not present contested beliefs as fact.

Use of resources

We will apply due diligence to any resources we plan to use to ensure they are:

- aligned with the teaching requirements set out in the statutory RSHE guidance
- age-appropriate, given the age, developmental stage and background of our students
- evidence-based, and contain robust facts and statistics
- from credible sources and compatible with effective teaching approaches
- sensitive to student experiences and won't provoke distress
- teaching will also address emerging social and online harms, including misogyny, harmful sexual cultures, coercive behaviours, and risks linked to AI-generated content, ensuring students can recognise, critically evaluate, and respond safely to these issues

Inclusion

'Mainstream schools and special schools have a duty to ensure that children with special educational needs and learning difficulties are properly included in RSHE. RSHE should help all students understand their physical and emotional development and enable them to make positive decisions in their lives' - Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance (DfE). Young people may have varying needs regarding RSHE depending on their circumstances and background. We strongly believe that all students should have access to RSHE that is relevant to their particular needs. To achieve this DHSG's approach to RSHE will promote inclusion and the principles of equality and tolerance as detailed in the Equalities Act and will take account of:

a) **Ethnic/Religious and cultural diversity.**

Different ethnic, religious and cultural groups may have different attitudes to RSHE. We will consult students and parents/carers about their needs, take account of their views and promote respect for, and understanding of, their views.

b) **Varying home backgrounds.**

We recognise that our students 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.

c) **Sexuality/gender.**

Some students may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). Students may also have LGBT parents/carers, brothers or sisters, other family members and/or friends. All our students will meet and work with LGBT people. Our approach to RSHE will include sensitive, honest and balanced consideration of sexuality and gender. We shall actively tackle homophobic bullying and prejudiced behaviour and support students who may be questioning their gender with a safeguarding first approach. Where a pupil is questioning their gender, the school will take a safeguarding-led, case-by-case approach, working with parents where appropriate.

d) **The needs of boys as well as girls.**

It is reported that girls tend to have greater access to RSHE than boys, both through the media and the home. We will consider the particular needs of boys, as well as girls, and approaches that will actively engage them (applicable to the Sixth Form). We shall also be proactive in combating sexism and sexist bullying, and educate students to protect themselves and report child-on-child abuse including sexual harassment.

e) Special Educational Needs.

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

Safeguarding & disclosures

RSHE may lead to safeguarding disclosures. All staff will follow the school's safeguarding procedures and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

A member of school staff will always be present during sessions delivered by external providers.

Staff will not promise confidentiality where a pupil is at risk of harm.

RSHE delivery may increase the likelihood of disclosures, and staff are trained to respond appropriately in line with safeguarding procedures.

Answering student questions

RSHE explores a range of issues that may provoke questions from students. Where possible and age appropriate, where a question is relevant to the whole class, staff will answer it to the whole group. There may occasionally be the need to deal with a question outside of the classroom if it is not suitable for the entire class or to refer the student back to their parents or carers. School staff will not answer personal questions about themselves or ask direct personal questions of their students that could make either party vulnerable. However, we believe that an open approach to answering questions prevents students from learning inaccurate or harmful information online or from peers and older students. We believe exploring issues with the whole class helps to reduce the stigma and shame that can surround some of the issues explored in RSHE. Importantly, we believe children are better protected from harm and abuse when they can discuss issues openly with trained professionals and in a safe environment. Where topics involve differing or contested views, staff will present these in a neutral, factual way and will not present disputed opinions as fact.

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 students discuss issues in a way which does not encourage giggling and silliness.
- Students 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 students of the ground rules.

- Teachers should not be drawn into providing more information than is appropriate to the age of the student.
- Students must not be given the impression that teenagers inevitably have sex, the view that sex should be between two consenting people who are mature enough to make informed decisions should be emphasised.

Monitoring

As with all subjects PSHE is subject to the school's policy on Collaborative Quality Assurance. In addition, Heads of House / Head of Sixth Form or Form Tutors sit in on all sessions led by outside speakers to ensure consistency of delivery to each group.

Form Tutors complete returns to Heads of House / Head of Sixth Form.

Heads of House / Head of Sixth Form have regular pastoral meetings with a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in which these issues are discussed periodically.

Trustees review this policy annually.

The Inclusion Lead has oversight of the policy and works with the DSL and a multi-agency approach where concerns are shared.

Internet access of students is carefully monitored with filters to ensure only appropriate sites related to RSHE can be visited – see ICT policy.

The RSHE curriculum and resources will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain accurate, appropriate and compliant with statutory guidance.

Evaluation

There is an oversight process through joint working of the safeguarding and pastoral teams that enables strategic development of PSHE and this policy. In addition students regularly complete evaluation and feedback questionnaires that promote clear analysis via Microsoft Forms.

Parental Right to Withdraw from Sex Education

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from the sex education elements of RSHE (outside of the statutory science curriculum).

Requests must be made in writing to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher (or delegated senior leader) will meet with parents to discuss the request, ensure they understand the curriculum, and consider the child's needs.

The school will keep a written record of the request and decision.

In exceptional circumstances, including where safeguarding concerns are present, the Headteacher may determine that a pupil should receive sex education.

Pupils have the right to opt into sex education from three terms before their 16th birthday.

Consultation with Parents/Carers

Parents/carers receive an annual communication outlining the content and nature of RSHE and are reminded at the same time of their right to withdraw their children from the sex education programme.

Parents have the right to view the RSHE curriculum and a representative sample of resources used. The school will ensure that no external provider is used on terms that prevent materials being shared with parents.

Parents will be informed about significant elements of RSHE delivery, including the use of external speakers where appropriate.

The DSL offers sessions to Parents/Carers and also hosts discussions on related topics.

Assessment

Students' learning will be assessed at the end of topics to ensure that they are making sufficient progress to build on prior teaching and learning and that teaching strategies and resources remain relevant and effective. Assessment activities will be implicit, forming part of a normal teaching activity to ensure that students do not feel under pressure and will include self-assessment tasks that will confirm understanding of the topics. The evaluation of teaching and learning assessments will be shared as appropriate. The quality of RSHE teaching and learning will be monitored through activities such as RSHE learning walks, team teaching and informal drop-ins. The observations and findings of which will be used to identify and inform future staff training needs.

Age-related guidance

Age-related legal information will be delivered through the curriculum and reviewed regularly to ensure accuracy and alignment with current legislation.