SHERBORNE BOYS

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Approving body: Education Committee
Owner: Deputy Head Pastoral
Author: Head of Pupil Wellbeing

Executive Summary

This policy outlines the approach to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) at Sherborne Boys including information about the right for a pupil/ their parent to withdraw them from Sex Education.

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Contents

The Importance of RSE 2
Legal Framework 2
The Principles of High Quality RSE 3
Parents 5
Missed RSE Lessons 6
The Role of the Pastoral Team 6
Parental Involvement 6
In-service Training 6
Use of Outside Agencies 6
Distribution of the Policy 6
Procedures for monitoring and evaluation 6
Appendix 1: Summary of Changes in Issue 6.1 7
Appendix 2: Lower School Wellbeing Curriculum Overview 8
Appendix 3: Upper School Wellbeing Curriculum Overview 9

The Importance of RSE

'To embrace the challenges of creating a happy and successful adult life, pupils need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health, and relationships and to build their self-efficacy.'

(Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education 2025)

High quality, evidence-based and age-appropriate teaching of these subjects can help prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life. They can also enable schools to promote the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils, at school and in society.

Legal Framework

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education.

All schools must provide, and make available for inspection and to parents, an up-to-date policy describing the content and organization of RSE taught outside of national curriculum science. This can be found in the SB Wellbeing policy.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from some or all elements of sex education[1] up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. If they wish to do so, please contact the Head of Pupil Wellbeing, Nikola Bowerman (nikola.bowerman@sherborne.org).

The Equality Act 2010 covers the way that the curriculum is delivered. RSE issues must be:

- Taught in such a way that does not subject pupils to discrimination. All pupils at Sherborne Boys are given equal access to RSE, including those who identify as part of the LGBT+ community.
- Ensures that young people are protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate, having regard to the age and the religious and cultural background of the pupils concerned. Whilst Sherborne Boys has a Christian foundation in the delivery of both Wellbeing and RSE, all the major world religions are recognised as sources of philosophical and moral wisdom. The School has a statement of aims for the teaching of all Wellbeing which is available on request.
- All political issues must be taught with a balanced view.
- Whilst Health Education is not a statutory requirement for independent schools, Sherborne Boys delivers a broader wellbeing curriculum which incorporates relevant health education content alongside RSE.

School governing bodies must have regard for the guidance.

The Principles of High Quality RSE

The aim of 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 colleague and a successful marriage 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 pupils 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.

Effective RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation.

It should teach young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others.

It enables young people to mature, build their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity.

Effective RSE also supports people, throughout life, to develop safe, fulfilling, and healthy sexual relationships, at the appropriate time.

Knowledge about safer sex and sexual health remains important to ensure that young people are equipped to make safe, informed, and healthy choices as they progress through adult life. This should be delivered in a non-judgemental, factual way and allow scope for young people to ask questions in a safe environment. Many teachers use approaches such as distancing techniques, setting ground rules with the class to help manage sensitive discussion and using question boxes to allow pupils to raise issues anonymously.

[1] These include lessons on contraception and sexual health. See SB Wellbeing Policy for more details.

Pupils should understand the benefits of healthy relationships to their mental wellbeing and self-respect. Through gaining the knowledge of what a healthy relationship is like, they can be empowered to identify when relationships are unhealthy.

They should be taught that unhealthy relationships can have a lasting, negative impact on mental wellbeing.

Pupils should be taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality, sexual health, and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way.

All pupils should feel that the content is relevant to them and their developing sexuality. There should be an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same sex relationships. This should be integrated appropriately into the RSE programme, rather than addressed separately or in only one lesson.

Pupils should be well informed about the full range of perspectives and, within the law, should be well equipped to make decisions for themselves about how to live their own lives, whilst respecting the right of others to make their own decisions and hold their own beliefs. Key aspects of the law relating to sex which should be taught include the age of consent, what consent is and is not, the definitions and recognition of rape, sexual assault and harassment, and choices permitted by the law around pregnancy.

Grooming, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour, should also be addressed sensitively and clearly.

Schools should address the physical and emotional damage caused by female genital mutilation (FGM). They should also be taught where to find support and that it is a criminal offence to perform or assist in the performance of FGM or fail to protect a person for whom you are responsible from FGM. As well as addressing this in the context of the law, pupils may also need support to recognise when relationships (including family relationships) are unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of neglect, emotional, sexual and physical abuse and violence, including honour-based violence and forced marriage) and strategies to manage this or access support for oneself or others at risk.

Schools should also be mindful that for pupils who are or have experienced unhealthy or unsafe relationships at home or socially, the school may have a particularly important role in being a place of consistency and safety where they can easily speak to trusted adults, report problems, and find support.

Internet safety should also be addressed. Pupils should be taught the rules and principles for keeping safe online. This will include how to recognise risks, harmful content, and contact, and how and to whom to report issues.

Pupils will also be taught to critically evaluate online content, including content generated through artificial intelligence, misinformation, harmful gender stereotypes, pornography, misogynistic material and manipulative online influences.

Pupils should have a strong understanding of how data is generated, collected, shared, and used online, for example, how personal data is captured on social media or understanding the way that businesses may exploit the data available to them.

Some pupils are also exposed to harmful behaviours online, and via other forms of media, which may normalise violent sexual behaviours. A focus on healthy relationships and broader Relationships Education can help young people understand acceptable behaviours in relationships.

The programme will address misogyny, violence against women and girls, harmful gender stereotypes and the development of respectful attitudes and behaviours.

Relationships and sex education at Sherborne Boys:

- is a partnership between home and school.
- ensures pupils' views are actively sought to influence lesson planning and teaching.
- is relevant to pupils at each stage in their development and maturity.
- is taught by staff who are trained and confident in talking about issues such as healthy and unhealthy relationships, equality, pleasure, respect, abuse, sexuality, gender reassignment, sex, and consent.
- includes the acquisition of knowledge, the development of life skills and respectful attitudes and values.
- has sufficient time to cover a wide range of topics, with a strong emphasis on relationships, consent, rights, responsibilities to others, negotiation, and communication skills, and accessing services.
- helps pupils understand on and offline safety, consent, violence, and exploitation.
- the curriculum reflects the Equality Act 2010 and respects all protected characteristics while presenting factual information in an age-appropriate manner.
- is medically accurate, evidence-informed and age appropriate, enabling pupils to make safe, informed and responsible decisions about relationships and sexual health.
- uses active learning methods, and is rigorously planned, assessed, and evaluated.
- helps pupils to understand a range of views and beliefs about relationships and sex in society including some of the mixed messages about gender, sex and sexuality from different sources including the media.
- teaches pupils about the law and their rights to confidentiality even if they are under 16 and is linked to school-based and community health services and organisations.
- promotes equality in relationships, recognises and challenges gender inequality and reflects girls' and boys' different experiences and needs.

It contributes to:

- a positive ethos and environment for learning.
- safeguarding pupils (Children Act 2004), promoting their emotional wellbeing, and improving their ability to achieve in school.
- a better understanding of diversity and inclusion, a reduction in gender-based and homophobic prejudice, bullying and violence and an understanding of the difference between consenting and exploitative relationships.
- helping pupils keep themselves safe from harm, both on and offline, enjoy their relationships and build confidence in accessing services if they need help and advice.
- reducing early sexual activity, teenage conceptions, sexually transmitted infections, sexual exploitation and abuse, domestic violence, and bullying .

Parents

The School believes that the prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with the parents. Parents are the key figures in guiding their children to cope with the emotional, physical, and psychological aspects of growing up and in preparing them to cope with challenges, responsibilities, and fulfilment which sexual maturity brings.

Through its RSE programme the School has a role complementary and supportive to that of the parents. This policy is available to all parents on the school website.

Missed RSE Lessons

If a pupil misses any lesson within the School, the department is responsible for ensuring that the pupil receives the relevant material in the most appropriate way. This may be achieved, for example, by issuing the relevant information and worksheets, using the support time available as Academic Support etc.

The Role of the Pastoral Team

The school's pastoral network supports the RSE provided. Pupils can discuss any of the issues raised as they impact upon them as an individual with a wide variety of people including Housemasters, Matrons, older pupils, Tutors, the Chaplain, Deputy Head Pastoral, the Health Centre staff, the School Counsellor, and the Independent Person.

Parental Involvement

We welcome parental involvement with the RSE programme. Parents are welcome to view any of the teaching material used by contacting either:

- Nikola Bowerman, Head of Pupil Wellbeing nikola.bowerman@sherborne.org or
- Allister Sheffield, Deputy Head (Pastoral) allister.sheffield@sherborne.org

We have a series of parental lectures / discussion sessions on a range of RSE topics during the academic year.

In-service Training

Teachers who are responsible for covering RSE areas in the Wellbeing programme are given specific training in both the subject material and the appropriate teaching methodologies. RSE issues will be discussed in safe environment where trust, co-operation and support between the pupils minimises embarrassment. All teaching staff receive annual child protection training and are aware of how to treat a disclosure by a pupil.

Use of Outside Agencies

Outside speakers are sometimes invited to talk to the pupils. When this happens, they are provided with a copy of this Policy and are required to provide a summary of the content of their presentation and their approach to the appropriate staff beforehand.

Distribution of the Policy

Copies of this Policy are available for parents, staff, and governors.

Procedures for monitoring and evaluation

The Headmaster and Head of Pupil Wellbeing are accountable to the Governors in ensuring that the RSE Policy operates in practice. The Head of Pupil Wellbeing monitors the Wellbeing programme at regular intervals using this feedback to evaluate and adjust the programme where necessary.

Appendix 1: Summary of Changes in Issue 6.1

- Minor updates to reflect the updated statutory guidance which came into effect 1 September 2026.
- Lower school curriculum overview moved to Appendix 2.
- Addition of Appendix 3.
- Approving body changed to Education Committee, author changed to Head of Pupil Wellbeing.

Appendix 2: Lower School Wellbeing Curriculum Overview

The starred lessons indicate which lessons are deemed Sex Education.

Third Form	Fourth Form	Fifth Form
The Teenage Brain	Living Well: Mental Health	Making the Right Decision
Nicotine and Addiction	Stress and Anxiety	Risk and Gambling
Healthy Eating and Diet	Alcohol and its Effects	Body Image and self esteem
Digital Balance	Alcohol and Risk Taking	Eating Disorders
Online Safety: Too Good to Be True	Drugs and their Effects	Self-Harm
Identity	Sleep and Wellbeing	Hormones and Health
Positive Relationships	Healthy Relationships	Health Awareness and Self-Checking
Families and Diversity	Applied Consent	Sexual Health and Fertility
Consent	Pornography and Media	Coercion and Control
Exploitation Awareness	Sharing Images	Sexual Harassment and violence
Citizenship and Democracy	*Sexual Health	Marriage, Relationships and Rights
Financial Awareness	*Contraception	Successful Parenting
Poverty and Society	Sexual Ethics	Equality Act
Environment and Sustainability	Safety Online - Chatbots	Bystander Intervention
Gaming and Gambling Awareness	Misinformation	Online Influencers
	AI and Deepfakes	Personal Safety
	Stereotyping	Law and Order
	Fraud and Scams	Human Rights
	Data Protection and Digital Privacy	Violence and Exploitation
	Helping Others and Community Action	FGM and Honour-Based Violence
	Managing Money and Financial Independence	Radicalisation and Extremism
	Modern Slavery	

Appendix 3: Upper School Wellbeing Curriculum Overview

Lower Sixth

Lower Sixth are taught once per week and cover the following topics:

Lower Sixth Topics	
Pathways	Unifrog Recap Exploring Pathways University research Personal Statement introduction
Living in the Wider World	Democracy and Law International Relations – The United Nations Model United Nations debate Online Life
Relationships	Healthy Relationships Abuse How to spot it and support someone Harassment
Exploring Right and Wrong	How can we make the right choice? Hate Speech and the Law What is extremism? Conflict and resolution
Wellbeing and Personal Safety	Drugs recap including spiking Sexual Health re-cap University and mental health Keeping yourself safe
Finance	Taxes/National Insurance and Payslips Borrowing Money Savings and Investments Identifying Fraud

Upper Sixth

In the Upper Sixth pupils will have a timetabled slot for Wellbeing talks and presentations. These will include a range of topics such as UCAS, Finance, Health and Wellbeing, Study Skills, and Relationships. There will also be directed periods for personal statements, careers support and private study.