



Highclare School

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION, AND HEALTH EDUCATION POLICY

Background and Whole-School Principles

This policy is published on the School's website, and is available by request for each parent. This policy has been written in consultation with the following DfE guidance:

- Guidance - PSHE Education (September 2021)
- Education Act, 2002 Section 78
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in Schools and Colleges (September 2021)
- Preventing and tackling Bullying (2017)

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Clarify the legal requirement and responsibilities of the school.
- Clarify the school's approach to relationships and sex education and (RSE) and health education for all staff, pupils, governors, parents/carers, external agencies and the wider community.
- Provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the school RSE and health education programme.
- Reinforce the role of the school in contributing to local and national strategies.

This policy applies to all staff, pupils, parents/carers and outside agencies working within the School. It will be reviewed on an annual basis and according to normal review procedure.

This policy sets out the framework for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education at Highclare School, providing clarity on how our RSE and Health Education curriculum is informed, organised and delivered.

Legal Obligations:

The Relationships, Sex and Health Education Regulations (2026) made under the Children and Social Work Act (2017) updated the compulsory changes brought into effect in all schools from September 2020.

Relationships Education is now compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and Relationships and Sex Education is now compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education. While the regulations do not make Health Education compulsory for independent schools, Highclare believes this is fundamental for promoting pupil wellbeing.

Why is relationships and sex education in schools important?

Young people learn about relationships and sex from a very young age. Some of the things they learn are incorrect, confusing and frightening; school should educate young people to help them to make sense of it all.

The DfE guidance states:

Children and young people need knowledge and skills that will enable them to make informed and ethical decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships. High quality, evidence-based teaching of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) can help prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life, and can promote their moral, social, mental and physical development. Effective teaching will support young people to cultivate positive characteristics including resilience, self-worth, self respect, honesty, integrity, courage, kindness, and trustworthiness. Effective teaching will support prevention of harms by helping young people understand and identify when things are not right.

Research has shown that young people who feel good about themselves, and are knowledgeable and confident about sex and relationships, are more likely to be more discerning in their relationships and sexual behaviours and to have fulfilling relationships.

Everyone has relationships with others, and most pupils will develop sexual relationships at some point in their lives. Relationships education should equip pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to act with kindness and respect in all their relationships as they grow into adulthood, to enjoy their relationships, and to keep themselves and others safe. Relationships education will focus on how to form and sustain positive relationships with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and adults, but will also help children identify risks and harms. Relationships education may therefore include topics related to preventing sexual abuse, or sexual violence, for example, or avoiding sharing inappropriate material online in order to keep children safe. This can be done without describing the detail of any sexual activity involved. The aim of Relationships and Sex Education is to give young people the information they need to help to develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships.

Good safeguarding practice requires young people to understand the correct terms for different parts of the body and to be able to confidently use these terms. This can be provided as part of health education, without describing any detail of sexual activity.

We are aware that pupils with SEND may be more vulnerable than their peers to harmful sexual behaviour, sexual abuse, exploitation and violence, bullying and other issues. RSHE can be particularly important for these pupils, particularly those with social, emotional and mental health needs or learning disabilities. Teaching is developed to ensure these subjects are accessible for pupils with SEND. Discussion about RSHE may form part of the IEP review process where appropriate.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following School policies:

- Safeguarding Policy (Child Protection Policy and Procedures)
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Curriculum (inc individualised learning) Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- E-safety Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- SMSC Policy

These policies are available on request from the School and on Highclare Virtual, our VLE.

What is relationships and sex education (RSE)?

The term *relationships and 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 but is also learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. Some aspects are taught in science, and others are taught as part of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHCE).

A comprehensive programme of RSE provides accurate information about the body, reproduction, sex, and sexual health. It also gives children and young people essential skills for building positive, enjoyable, respectful and non-exploitative relationships and staying safe both on and offline.

According to DfE guidance RSE is 'lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care, for family life. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health' (*DfE 'Sex and Relationship Guidance', 2000*).

Guiding principles for teaching RSHE at Highclare School

The RSHE programme at Highclare School reflects the school ethos and demonstrates the following values:

- Respecting self and others
- Responsibility for own actions

In addition, Highclare School believes that RSHE should:

- Be an integral part of the lifelong learning process.
- Be inclusive and an entitlement for all young people. There is an awareness that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of the SEND and appropriate actions will be taken to mitigate this.
- Ensure that there is a balance between teaching pupils about making sensible decisions to stay safe (including online), whilst making it clear that it is never the fault of any child who is abused and why victim blaming is always wrong.

- Encourage students and teachers to share and respect each other's views and take account of the fact that young people may be discovering or understanding their sexual orientation or gender identity and all pupils should feel that the content is relevant to them and explored at a timely point and in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner.
- Ensure that there is a focus on challenging perceived derogatory views about the legally protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/belief, sex and sexual orientation, through exploration of, and developing mutual respect for those different to themselves.
- Encourage every student to contribute.
- Be aware of different approaches to sexual orientation, without promotion of any particular family structure. The important values are love, respect and caring for each other.
- Ensure that there is an awareness of issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia, gender stereotypes, sexual violence and harassment, pornography and misuse of AI, with positive action taken to build a school culture within which these are not tolerated.
- Ensure that steps will be taken to foster healthy and respectful peer-to-peer communication and provide an environment which challenges perceived limits on pupils based on their gender or any other protected characteristic.
- Generate an atmosphere where questions and discussion on sexual matters can take place without stigma or embarrassment.
- Recognise that parents/carers are the key people in teaching their children about sex, relationships and growing up. The School aims to work in partnership with parents, carers and students, consulting them about the content of programmes.
- Recognise that the wider community has much to offer and the School aims to work in partnership with other health and education professionals. School invite external agencies such as the Police, Loudmouth, Sudden Productions and Kooth to provide workshops, theatre productions and presentations about healthy relationships and staying safe to enhance the main curriculum teaching.
- Pupil engagement and understanding is monitored through questioning and feedback. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions with question boxes allowing for anonymity if preferred. Teachers use feedback to guide their planning and responses.

Pupils may ask questions about topics which go beyond any sex education covered by the school or relate to sex education from which they have been withdrawn (see below for parent/pupil rights). Teachers will handle such questions, with an emphasis on supporting the child. This may include asking a pupil to speak to their parents or a trusted adult, signposting to support services where needed, and recognising that children whose questions go unanswered might instead turn to inappropriate sources of information, including online.

Inclusion

Teachers should never assume that all intimate relationships are between opposite sexes. All sexual health information should be inclusive and should include lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in case studies, scenarios and role-plays. Boys and girls can explore topics from a different gender's point of view, and a variety of activities – including practical tasks, discussions, group activities and competitions – can provide something for everyone.

Safeguarding / Confidentiality

At Highclare School, there is a focus on keeping our pupils safe, and the RSE curriculum plays an important role in our preventative education. All pupils are taught about keeping themselves safe, including how to stay safe online, as part of our over-arching curriculum.

Our good practice allows pupils to have an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues and it is recognised that such discussions could lead to increased safeguarding reports. The School's Safeguarding (Child Protection Policy and procedures) must be adhered to at all times and without exception, concerns or disclosures made within or as a result of RSE lessons must be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) or senior leader in line with procedures for safeguarding. Pupils are made aware of how to raise their concerns or make a report and how any disclosure will be handled. This includes processes when they have a concern about a friend or peer. A member of staff cannot promise confidentiality if concerns exist.

Teachers need to be aware that effective sex and relationship education, which brings an understanding of what is and is not acceptable in a relationship, may lead to disclosure of a child protection issue.

Main Aims in Delivering RSHE at Highclare School

The overall aims of the Relationships and Sex and Health Education programme here at Highclare School is to deliver high-quality, age-appropriate and ability appropriate RSHE lessons as part of our overall planned school curriculum and ethos. We also aim to provide balanced, factual information about human reproduction, together with consideration of the broader emotional, ethical, religious, and moral dimensions of sexual and broader health.

RSHE is delivered in a non-judgmental, age-appropriate, factual and inclusive way that allows pupils to ask questions in a safe environment. Approaches such as distancing techniques and use of classroom question boxes will allow pupils to raise issues or ask questions which they may find embarrassing.

The RSHE programme aims to prepare pupils for an adult life in which they can:

- Be prepared for puberty and adulthood
- Dispel myths.
- Develop respect and care for others.
- Communicate effectively by developing appropriate terminology for sex and relationship issues.
- Develop skills relevant to effective management of relationships and sexual situations. Examples include communication with and empathy towards others, risk assessment, assertiveness, conflict management, decision making, seeking help and helping others.
- Develop awareness of their sexuality and understand human sexuality; challenge sexism and prejudice, and promote equality and diversity.
- Explore a range of attitudes towards RSHE issues and reach their own informed views and choices for a healthier lifestyle. They will develop positive values and a moral framework that will guide their decisions, judgments and behaviour; have the confidence and self-esteem to value themselves and others and respect for individual conscience and the skills to judge what kind of relationship they want.
- Understand the consequences of their actions and behave responsibly within sexual and pastoral relationships.
- Avoid being exploited or exploiting others or being pressured into unwanted or unprotected sex with regards to child sexual exploitation (CSE), teen relationships and violence.
- Understand how technology, including AI can be used to exploit children and young people and how to protect themselves and others.
- Understand that pornography can be exploitative and presents a view of sexual relationships which can be inaccurate
- Understand the arguments for delaying sexual activity and the reasons for having protected sex.
- Understand active consent and the fact that they are free to make their own decisions. Understand that sex without consent is rape.
- Have knowledge on female genital mutilation (FGM) and the implications of this on women and society.
- Have sufficient information and skills to protect themselves and, where they have one, their partner from uninvited/unwanted conceptions and sexually transmitted infections.
- Be aware of sources of help and acquire the skills and confidence to access confidential health advice, support and treatment if necessary
- Know how the law applies to sexual, and other, relationships.

Content

The programme followed at Highclare School is based on national guidelines provided by the DfE and is sensitive to the age and experience of our pupils. It is delivered mainly through the Science curriculum and PSHCE lessons/events, as well as informally through other subject areas and the ethos of the school. School assemblies are also used as a means of promoting appropriate values.

Knowledge and understanding:

- Learning and understanding physical development at appropriate stages.
- Understanding human sexuality, sexual health, emotions and relationships.
- Learning about contraception and a range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception and support services.
- Learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity, the benefits to be gained from such delay
- The avoidance of unplanned pregnancy.

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.
- Challenging myths, misconceptions and false assumptions about normal behaviour.

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

Delivery of RSHE at Highclare Preparatory School (Key Stages 1 and 2)

In the Preparatory School every pupil in KS1 and KS2 is provided with relationships education, although this is primarily through our PSHCE framework, relationships, health and wellbeing are also covered through topics across the curriculum, for example online safety and wellbeing is taught as part of the Computing curriculum. The School has a strong focus on relationship education in PSHCE lessons, sex education is covered in our science lessons. Science lessons include content required by the national curriculum. Relationships education will include teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults.

Sex education will not be taught in KS1 and KS2 outside National Curriculum science

There is no right to withdraw from relationships education.

Delivery of RSE at Highclare Senior School (Key Stages 3 and 4)

All pupils in the senior school are provided with relationship and sex education, except where a pupil is excluded from the sex education element (see below). Pupils will be given 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.

Relationships and Sex Education is taught to Senior School pupils from U3-U5 and in Sixth Form. This teaching is provided by specialist staff and forms part of the PSHE curriculum. PSHE lessons are held fortnightly for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4. Sixth Form pupils receive PSHE teaching through their weekly briefing and their enrichment program.

Within the Senior School, curriculum content will build further on the areas introduced in primary, and including in addition: intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health. Pupils should also be apprised of relevant legal provisions when topics are being taught, such as consent (including the age of consent), FGM, sexuality, gender identity, exploitation.

PARENTAL CONSULTATION AND THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

Parents may view curriculum information on the VLE (Resources_Parents_Information_RSHE) and are welcome to view / discuss specific resources or content with the Head of PSHE, Deputy Head: Pastoral, Head of Prep School or the Head.

Most of a pupil's informal relationships and sex education occurs within the family and the school's programme will complement and build on this. The School will share responsibility for the education of pupils, with parents, who will be kept informed via sharing of the RSHE policy, a letter outlining RSE events, and links on the school website.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of the statutory RSE, dedicated sex education lessons, except from those aspects of RSE that are taught in National Curriculum Science or where RSE issues arise incidentally in other subject areas. Pupils who are withdrawn will receive purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

The sex education elements of the National Curriculum Science Order are mandatory for all pupils of primary and secondary school age. These cover anatomy, puberty, biological aspects of sexual reproduction and use of hormones to control and promote fertility.

However, a child will also have a right to opt into sex education from their 15th birthday (specifically three academic terms before they turn 16) even if it is against his/her parents' wishes.

There is no right to withdraw from relationship education.

A summary is provided below to help clarify this right. Any parents wishing to withdraw their child under this right would, in line with DfE guidance, be invited to a meeting to discuss this with the Head or appropriate deputy.

Title	Definition	Applicable to:	Parental right to withdraw
Relationships Education	The fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships; with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and adults	Highclare Preparatory School	There is no right to withdraw their child(ren) from this education. This is because any sex education delivered within the preparatory school will be contained within the national curriculum for science.
Relationships and Sex Education	The information the young people 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.	Highclare Senior School	There are two elements to this curriculum: - Relationships education (building on that provided in the primary settings) - Sex education Parents do not have the right to withdraw their child(ren) from the relationships education element. Parents do have the right to withdraw from those elements of sex education not contained within the national curriculum for science. The right to withdraw exists from the start of the U3 year (Yr7) up until the 15th birthday of their child, i.e. 3 academic terms before they turn 16 years old.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Highclare School is committed to ensuring that the Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (RSHE) programme is effective, relevant, and responsive to the needs of all pupils. The delivery and impact of the RSHE curriculum will be regularly monitored and evaluated as part of the school's wider curriculum review cycle.

Monitoring will include feedback from pupils, staff, and parents/carers to ensure that content remains age-appropriate, inclusive, and reflective of pupil voice. Lesson observations, planning scrutiny, and staff reflection will also support the evaluation process. The PSHE/RSHE curriculum leader will oversee this process, ensuring any necessary adaptations are made in response to changes in statutory guidance or school context.

Findings from this ongoing evaluation will inform the annual review of this policy and the future development of the RSHE curriculum. Updates and amendments will be shared with key stakeholders, including parents/carers and governors.

Review Cycle	Most recent review:	Most recent communication with parents regarding RSHE taught content	Most recent consultation with parents
Annual	September 2026	March 2026	June 2026