Policy Title:	**Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy**	
Policy Code:	OPSP21	
Applies to:	Schools and Learning Centres	
Date Reviewed:	June 2026	
Next Update Due:	August 2027	
Policy Lead:	Kelly Berry	
Policy Sponsor:	Robert James	
Cross Reference:	OPSP09	Child Protection Policy and Procedures
	OPSP11	Curriculum Policy
	OPSP20	PSHE and Citizenship Policy
	OPSP04	Anti-Bullying Policy
	OPSP24	SEN Policy
	OPSP05	Assessment, Marking & Feedback Policy
	ITP02	IT Systems and Services Acceptable Use Policy
	DPP05	Data Protection Policy
	OPSP23	SMSC and British Values Policy
Outcome:	This policy: • Supports Witherslack Group schools and learning centres to deliver high-quality and age-appropriate RSHE lessons as part of their overall planned school curriculum and ethos • Ensures Witherslack Group schools and learning centres fulfil their legal obligations related to RSHE • Ensures Witherslack Group schools and learning centres take account of parental views and carry out effective consultation • Supports Witherslack Group schools and learning centres to ensure pupils are provided with accurate information from reliable sources • Supports Witherslack Group schools and learning centres to ensure pupils know how to keep themselves safe and how to seek help if needed • Supports Witherslack Group schools and learning centres to use a range of appropriate resources matched to the strengths and needs of individual pupils • Ensures Witherslack Group schools and learning centres provide pupils with opportunities to engage positively in sensitive discussions and enable them to have the confidence to ask questions to help address any misconceptions • Ensures Witherslack Group schools and learning centres encourage pupils to remember what they learn to support their ongoing preparation for the future	

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Witherslack Group is committed to the fair treatment of all in line with the Equality Act 2010. An equality impact assessment has been completed on this policy to ensure that it can be implemented consistently regardless of any protected characteristics and all will be treated with dignity and respect.

ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL, GOVERNANCE (ESG) STATEMENT
Witherslack Group is committed to responsible business practices in the areas of: Environmental Stewardship, Social Responsibility, Governance, Ethics & Compliance. An ESG impact assessment has been completed on this policy to ensure it can be implemented successfully without adverse implications on our Group goals.
To ensure that this policy is relevant and up to date, comments and suggestions for additions or amendments are sought from users of this document. To contribute towards the process of review, please email the named policy lead.

CONTENTS

1. RATIONALE AND CONSULTATION
2. DEFINITIONS
3. AIMS AND INTENT
4. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW
5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
6. TRAINING AND CPD
7. IMPLEMENTATION (ORGANISATION AND DELIVERY)
8. WORKING WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS
9. SAFEGUARDING AND CONFIDENTIALITY
10. MANAGING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS
11. IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT
12. MONITORING AND REVIEW
13. REFERENCES
14. ASSOCIATED FORMS
15. APPENDICES

1. RATIONALE AND CONSULTATION

1.1 This policy sets out the framework for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) at schools and learning centres within Witherslack Group and it meets our statutory requirement to do so. It is supported by each school providing a local protocol which gives clarity on how their RSE curriculum is informed, organised and delivered.

1.2 Witherslack Group understand that parents and carers may have concerns about some aspects of RSE; however, each school/learning centre will ultimately make the final decision about what is to be taught and when, and this will be informed by statutory obligations as well as parental views and the needs of pupils.

1.3 Witherslack Group expect all schools/learning centres to engage with parents and carers when developing and reviewing their RSE policy and listen to views raised as part of that consultation. Opportunities should be provided for parents and carers to view RSHE resources and curriculum materials, including those related to the teaching of sensitive topics (See Appendix 1), including those from external providers.

During the Summer Term schools/learning centres will provide an opportunity for parents to read and feedback on their draft local protocol policy document before it is published ahead of implementation in September and uploaded to the school website.

1.4 Witherslack Group schools and learning centres are expected to provide additional opportunities for parents/carers to be informed and ask questions about the delivery and content of the RSHE curriculum. This will include but will not be limited to:

- Notification of when RSHE topics are to be taught and a summary of the content to be covered
- Opportunities to view and discuss examples of RSHE teaching and learning resources and curriculum materials, including those related to the teaching of sensitive topics, including those of external providers
- Information about parents' right to withdraw their child from non-statutory elements of RSE

1.5 Witherslack Group expect for schools and learning centres to provide parents/carers of new pupils with all the above information at the point of admission, regardless of the time of year they join the school. Parents/carers will be provided with opportunities to find out about the progress of their children in RSHE related topics; for example, as part of Annual Reviews of EHCPs, during parents' evenings and within termly progress reports.

1.6 This policy reflects the updated statutory guidance for Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) issued by the Department for Education. The revised guidance was published following a government review and comes into force for schools from September 2026.

1.7 This policy was reviewed and developed in response to the guidance referenced in section 13.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 Within the parameters of this protocol, the following definitions apply:

- ***PSHE:*** Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.
- ***RSHE:*** Relationships, sex education and health education
- ***Health education:*** Health education is learning about physical health and mental wellbeing
- ***Relationships education:*** Relationships education is learning about the physical, social, legal, and emotional aspects of human relationships including friendships, family life and relationships with other children and adults
- ***RSE:*** Relationships and sex education is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health
- ***Sex education:*** Sex education is learning about reproduction, pregnancy and birth, preventing pregnancy and STIs

3. AIMS AND INTENT

3.1 Witherslack Group expect all its schools and learning centres to provide a high quality, inclusive RSE. When designing a RSE curriculum (often taught as part of the PSHE and Citizenship curriculum), we expect schools and learning centres to consider the DfE's statutory guidance, the backgrounds, needs and personal circumstances of pupils, parental views as well as national/local issues, events and trends which may influence pupils, either directly or indirectly.

3.2 Each school and learning centre are expected to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Part 1) which are related to the Quality of Education of pupils, inclusive of PSHE/RSE. It is essential for each school/learning centre community to view RSE as an important part of the curriculum.

3.3 As such, all schools and learning centres are expected to have a local protocol related to RSE along with a robust curriculum plan, tailored to the needs of pupils. This protocol should outline how the school/learning centre meets the intended outcomes of this policy.

4. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

4.1 The Relationships, Sex and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, introduced compulsory requirements for Relationships, Sex and Health Education in schools from September 2020. From this date, Health Education became compulsory for all pupils in primary and secondary schools. Relationships Education is compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education, and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education.

4.2 It is important to note that while sex education is not compulsory for primary-age pupils beyond the statutory science curriculum, in order to support pupils' ongoing emotional and physical development effectively, schools may choose to deliver additional age-appropriate content in line with their ethos and in consultation with parents. This should be described in the local protocol.

4.3 Each school/learning centre is expected to acknowledge the rights of parents/carers as described below:

- From September 2020, parents of both primary and secondary-aged pupils will not be able to withdraw their children from any aspect of Relationships Education or Health Education (which includes learning about the changing adolescent body, puberty and developing and nurturing healthy friendships and relationships).
- Parents of both primary and secondary-aged pupils will not be able to withdraw their child from any aspect of the National Curriculum for Science (which includes subject content such as {PRIMARY} the names of external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age, and reproduction/off-spring in some plants and animals AND {SECONDARY} reproduction in humans and plants, hormones in reproduction, hormone and non-hormone methods of contraception communicable diseases including sexually transmitted infections in humans).
- Parents will be able to withdraw their child (following discussion with the school and providing notification to the Headteacher in writing) from any or all aspects of Sex Education (other than those provided as part of the Science curriculum) up to and until three terms before the age of 16.

- In line with the statutory guidance, where pupils are withdrawn from Sex Education, schools and learning centres will keep a record of this (including discussions/requests from parents/carers) and we will ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.
- In line with the statutory guidance, if any secondary-aged pupil wishes to receive Sex Education rather than be withdrawn, schools and learning centres will make arrangements to provide the pupil with Sex Education during one of the three terms before the age of 16.
- At Post 16, schools and learning centres will continue to offer Sex Education to our pupils as part of their non-qualification activities linked to the development of character, broader skills, attitudes and confidence and in preparation for transition to life beyond school. Parents/carers will not have the right to withdraw pupils from this.

4.4 For further clarity, please see Appendix 2 of this policy for an overview of the compulsory aspects of RSE at the different stages of education as set out by the DfE.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The Headteacher of each school and learning centre assumes overall responsibility for ensuring that the organisation and delivery of RSE lessons is carried out by staff who have an appropriate level of expertise and knowledge and that all pupils make progress in achieving the expected outcomes. The Headteacher is also responsible for managing any requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory sex education lessons and organising alternative appropriate education.

5.2 Teachers who are given responsibility for delivering RSE lessons must recognise the importance of these subjects for pupils. They must seek support, advice and further professional development wherever necessary to ensure that teaching continues to be well-prepared and of a high standard at all times.

5.3 The governance structure provided by Witherslack Group will ensure that the school complies with the provisions of this policy and that legal obligations as related to RSE are fulfilled.

5.4 All other roles and responsibilities related to the teaching of RSE will be determined by each school and learning centre and these arrangements will be reflected in their local protocol.

6. TRAINING AND CPD

6.1 Witherslack Group recognise the importance of ensuring teachers of RSE have an appropriate level of expertise and knowledge. We currently provide PSHE and Citizenship Network Meetings each term and it is expected that each school/learning centre will send representation. Schools and learning centres should determine any additional training needs locally, particularly in relation to those staff delivering the most sensitive topics.

7. IMPLEMENTATION (ORGANISATION AND DELIVERY)

7.1 Each school or learning centre will determine how they will organise and deliver a high quality RSE curriculum and this will be reflected in the local protocol, and will include an overview of RSE within their curriculum.

7.2 Through effective organisation and delivery of RSE, all Witherslack Group schools and learning centres ensure that:

- RSE is delivered in a non-judgemental, 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 (encouraging pupils to use their names) will allow pupils to raise issues or ask questions which they may find embarrassing.
- Teachers ensure that pupils' views are listened to and will encourage them to ask questions and engage in discussion. Ground rules are developed and shared with pupils as part of best practice. Ground rules help to ensure discussions and personal questions/comments are managed appropriately and sensitively, along with those questions which are more challenging.
- Core knowledge is sectioned into units of a manageable size.
- Taught content provides opportunities to revisit previous content and allows clear progression. Topics and lessons are carefully sequenced, within a planned scheme of work, and where relevant are linked to other areas of the curriculum.

- Teaching includes sufficient and well-chosen opportunities and contexts for pupils to embed new knowledge so that it can be used confidently in real-life situations.
- The curriculum proactively addresses issues in a timely way in line with current evidence on pupils' development as well as their age.
- Groupings are carefully considered by teachers and senior leaders (including the Designated Safeguarding Lead as appropriate) - some classes may be taught in gender-specific groups, on a one to one basis or within a whole class setting - dependent on the nature of the topic being delivered at the time, the cultural, religious or personal background of pupils, their age and SEND.
- All resources are selected carefully and are suitable for the needs of the pupils being taught – inappropriate/illegal images, videos and other materials are not be used in any circumstances and all related school policies will be are followed.
- Care is taken to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of any pupil based on their home circumstances and needs, to reflect sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them; e.g. children in care or young carers.
- There is an awareness that some pupils are more susceptible to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND and appropriate actions will be taken to mitigate this.
- There is a balance between teaching pupils about making sensible decisions to stay safe (including online), whilst being clear it is never the fault of any child who is abused and why victim blaming is always wrong.
- It is recognised that pupils 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.
- Content related to LGBTQ+ is fully integrated into a range of topics, rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson.
- 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.
- Steps are taken to foster healthy and respectful peer-to-peer communication and we provide an environment which challenges sexual violence and harassment as well as perceived limits on pupils based on their gender or any other protected characteristic.
- There is awareness of issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia, gender stereotypes, sexual violence and harassment (including online), with pupils taught to recognise, challenge and report such behaviours, and with positive action taken to build a school culture within which these are not tolerated. Teaching is underpinned by clear messages about consent, respect, equality, safeguarding, and the law, and avoids reinforcing gender stereotypes.
- Awareness of the issues of sexting and youth produced sexual imagery are not taught in isolation and instead are taught as part of a carefully sequenced, age-appropriate and developmental PSHE programme. Teaching is safeguarding-led, reflects the legal context, and is informed by current government guidance, including Sharing nudes and semi-nudes. Pupils are taught about consent, coercion, online risk, and how to report concerns and access support.

8. WORKING WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

8.1 Working with external agencies can sometimes enhance the delivery of some aspects of RSE in our schools and learning centres, bringing in specialist knowledge and different ways of engaging pupils. For example, some schools and learning centres may consider accessing support from the NHS or local specialist services who may be able to provide advice and CPD for teachers. Alternatively, some schools and learning centres might introduce pupils to the School Nurse or a representative from the NSPCC Speak Out/Stay Safe Programme via a workshop.

8.2 Schools and learning centres are expected to only uses visitors to enhance teaching provided by their own school staff, not to replace it. Staff employed by the school will be present during any RSE session delivered by an external visitor commissioned by the school. It will be agreed with any visitor how confidentiality will

work in any lesson and how safeguarding reports are to be dealt with in line with the school Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Similarly, the school will consider whether information-sharing is necessary and will comply with the provisions of the school's Data Protection Policy.

8.3 Where external experts are invited to assist from time-to-time with the delivery of RSE, they will be expected to comply with the provisions of this policy and the school's local protocol. In line with the usual procedures and policies of our schools and learning centres, the credentials of all external agencies are to be checked and schools/learning centres must ensure the teaching delivered by any external experts fits with the planned curriculum and provisions of this policy. The school/learning centre will discuss with the visitor the details of how they intend to deliver their sessions and ensure that content is age-appropriate and accessible for all pupils. The school/learning centre will request copies of the materials and lesson plans the visitor will use, to ensure it meets the full range of pupils' needs and ensure it is available for parents to access.

8.4 Where a pupil has involvement from specialist external agencies, discussions between those agencies and appropriate senior staff in school, including the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), are important in order to ensure that RSE lessons are delivered in a way that is most appropriate for the individual child.

9. SAFEGUARDING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

9.1 Within the Witherslack Group, 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 and how to stay safe within the community, as part of our over-arching curriculum. Teachers are made aware of common 'adverse childhood experiences' or ACEs (such as family breakdown, bereavement and exposure to domestic violence). Teachers should understand that pupils who have experienced problems at home may depend more on schools for support.

9.2 The PSHE/Citizenship Lead is expected to liaise with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in anything that is safeguarding-related within the context of PSHE and Citizenship, including RSE and keeping safe. The DSL is likely to have knowledge of trusted, high quality local resources that could be engaged, as well as knowledge of any particular local issues which may be appropriate to address in lessons. The DSL is expected to liaise with the PSHE and Citizenship Lead about the circumstances of individual pupils if felt to be required, including when and how adverse childhood experiences may be affecting any individual pupil and so may be influencing how they experience these subjects topics. Additional professional advice will be sought if needed as related to those pupils, including support and advice from our on-site clinical services staff.

9.3 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 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, PSHE and Citizenship lessons must be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Pupils are made aware of how to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This includes processes when they have a concern about a friend or peer. Staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.

10. MANAGING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

10.1 Leaders in each school/learning centre will provide advice to staff on the type of questions which are appropriate and inappropriate to ask and answer within a whole-class setting. The use of Ground Rules with pupils will support this process. Each school/learning centre will describe their approach to managing difficult questions in their own local protocol.

11. IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

11.1 The usual assessment processes apply for each school/learning centre in respect of RSE (see Assessment, Marking and Feedback Policy). Each school/learning centre will recognise that the impact of work on RSE may not ever be observed in school or indeed until adulthood, but every effort will be made to track destination data which will provide some impact information. Each school/learning centre will also make efforts to find

out if pupils have been able to apply learning in the community or at home as appropriate e.g. through discussions with parents, carers and other professionals.

11.2 Each school/learning centre will describe their approach to assessment in RSE in their own local protocol.

12. MONITORING AND REVIEW

12.1 Leadership teams will ensure that the RSE Policy and local protocol is consistently visible in practice through usual monitoring and evaluation processes. This will include termly planning and work scrutiny, lesson observation and learning walks.

12.2 The RSE Policy will be reviewed and/or updated annually. Leadership teams will then review their local protocol annually to ensure it continues to reflect its best practice and that it meets the requirements of this policy and takes into account feedback from parents and carers.

13. REFERENCES

- Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 16 to 19 study programmes guidance: 2024 to 2025 academic year - GOV.UK
- Regulating independent schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- [Withdrawn] Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Preventing bullying - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Three steps to RSHE success | sexeducationforum.org.uk
- Advice & Guidance | sexeducationforum.org.uk
- Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Equality Act 2010: advice for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

14. ASSOCIATED FORMS

None

15. APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix 1: Annual Consultation letter to parents

APPENDIX 1
SCHOOL
DATE

TO GO OUT TO PARENTS IN THE SUMMER TERM ALONG WITH A COPY OF THE DRAFT POLICY TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT TIME FOR CONSULTATION PRIOR TO A FINAL POLICY BEING PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTATION. THE LETTER MUST BE GIVEN TO PARENTS OF ALL PARENTS OF NEW PUPILS AT THE POINT OF ADMISSION

Dear Parents and Carers,
As part of your child's education at (insert school name), we promote personal wellbeing and development through a comprehensive Personal, Social, Health, Economic (PSHE) and Citizenship education programme. PSHE and Citizenship equip children and young people with the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills they need to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives, and to prepare them for the responsibilities and experiences of later life.

From September 2020, Relationships Education (primary), Relationships and Sex Education (secondary) and Health Education became statutory for schools in England. Updated statutory guidance for RSHE was published in July 2025 and will be fully implemented from September 2026. Our approach already reflects this guidance. All schools are required to have a Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy and to work in partnership with parents and carers when reviewing and delivering this provision.

Please find attached a draft copy of our schools updated RSE policy for implementation in September 2026, The policy includes an overview of curriculum content so parents and carers can see what will be taught and when. We are committed to openness, transparency and consultation and welcome parental views as part of our ongoing review process.

We believe that high-quality Relationships and Sex Education is a vital part of supporting pupils' personal development, wellbeing and safeguarding. Teaching is age-appropriate, carefully sequenced and inclusive, and is adapted to meet the needs and maturity of individual pupils.
RSE supports children and young people to:

- Build healthy, respectful relationships
- Understand consent, boundaries and personal safety
- Keep themselves safe online and offline
- Know how and where to seek help if they are worried or need support

Statutory requirements and the right to withdraw aspects of RSHE are statutory and must be taught to all pupils. Parents and carers retain the right to withdraw their child only from certain elements of sex education, as detailed in our RSE policy and summarised below.

	KS1 (Years 1-2)	KS2 (Years 3-6)	KS3 (Years 7-9)	KS4 (Years 10-11)	KS5 (Years 12-13)
Relationship education	Must be taught – no right to withdrawal	Must be taught – no right to withdrawal	Must be taught – no right to withdrawal	Must be taught – no right to withdrawal	Not statutory, but schools are expected to support personal development and wellbeing
PSHE - Health education	Must be taught – no	Must be taught – no	Must be taught – no	Must be taught – no	**PSHE remains compulsory in independent schools**; personal

	right to withdrawal	right to withdrawal	right to withdrawal	right to withdrawal	development activity required in 16–19 study programmes
Science - reproduction education	Must be taught – no right to withdrawal	Must be taught – no right to withdrawal	Must be taught – no right to withdrawal	Must be taught – no right to withdrawal	**Not applicable** (no statutory science curriculum requirement post-16)
Sex education (beyond the compulsory Health and Science aspects of the curriculum)	Schools can choose whether to teach this – parents can withdraw	Schools can choose whether to teach this – parents can withdraw	Must be taught – parents can withdraw	Must be taught – parents can withdraw until three terms before a child's 16th birthday	**Not statutory**; may be offered as part of PSHE, enrichment or preparation for adulthood

Insert if your school is registered for primary pupils: To support pupils' emotional and physical development, (insert school name) provides age-appropriate sex education for primary-aged pupils. The majority of this content is already covered through National Curriculum Science and Health Education, including:

- The human body and how it changes
- Puberty
- Correct names for external body parts
- Reproduction in plants and animals

Parents may request withdrawal only from non-statutory elements of sex education, not from Relationships or Health Education.

Insert if your school is registered for Post 16 students: (Insert school name) also continues to offer Relationships and Sex Education for Post-16 students as part of wider personal development provision, supporting transition to adulthood, independent living and life beyond school.

If you would like to ask questions about RSHE, review curriculum materials, discuss the RSE policy or talk about your child's participation please contact the PSHE and Citizenship Lead via the school office by INSERT DATE. Following this period of consultation the RSE Policy for (insert school name) is published available on our school website and available as a paper can be requested from the school office.

Insert details of any other opportunities for parents to engage here – such as engagement events, parent voice/ surveys. If you are considering withdrawing your child from the non-statutory elements of sex education, please ensure you have read the RSE policy and notify the Headteacher in writing by INSERT DATE. We encourage parents to discuss this with us so we can work together in the best interests of the child.

Thank you for your continued support.
Yours sincerely,
NAME
PSHE and Citizenship Lead
(Amend title as appropriate)