

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

This policy reflects the school values and philosophy in relation to the teaching and learning of Relationships and Sex Education. It sets out a framework within which teaching and non-teaching staff can operate and gives guidance on planning, teaching and assessment.

Our School Aims make a commitment to developing the learning and personal relationships of pupils at school. The key steps include: using praise more often than behaviour sanctions; allowing pupils as much scope as possible for making choices and decisions during the school day; and allowing pupils to take on additional responsibility wherever possible.

In line with our Safeguarding policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2021, school has a responsibility to teach children and young people about consent. We need to teach our children and young people about how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they find themselves in an unsafe situation.

Relationships and sex education and the school ethos

The Governors believe that learning about sexual development together with awareness of relationships with others, can greatly enhance the pupils' ability to lead their lives competently and with fulfilment. At Pear Tree we value all staff and pupils as individuals worthy of dignity and respect therefore all our relationships and sex education will be set within this context. Our curriculum is very much designed and delivered on an individual basis, although there is a clear curriculum mapping in place to ensure all statutory areas are taught throughout the different key stages.

The values of the relationships and sex education programme

We believe that the basis of moral behaviour is that each of us feels valued for what we are and our worth to others. Our pupils, with a range of disabilities and from a range of backgrounds, need first to experience self-esteem before they can form satisfying relationships with others. For many of them marriage and parenthood are unrealistic expectations, but this does not mean they are to be excluded from forming loving and caring relationships during their lives. Our aim is to give our pupils the skills they need to conduct such relationships with dignity and assertiveness and to avoid being exploited.

Our aims for relationships and sex education:

- to provide knowledge and information to which all pupils are entitled
- to clarify/reinforce knowledge pupils have already acquired
- to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence in their personal relationships
- to help pupils understand their sexual feelings and behaviour, so that they can lead fulfilling and enjoyable lives

- to develop skills (language, decision making, choice, assertiveness) which are necessary in a range of situations
- to promote acceptable and appropriate behaviour in public and private situations
- to give practise of strategies which reduce the risk of exploitation, misunderstanding and abuse
- to provide the confidence to be an active member of society
- to understand their sexuality and deal with issues arising from their sexual choices
- to support access to information and facilities available in the school and from other agencies
- to advise parents if requested
- To understand about consent
- To understand situations when they are not safe and what to do to get help.

The relationships and sex education programme

We intend that all pupils will experience a programme of sex education and personal development at a level that is commensurate with their age, understanding and physical development. We are aware that such a programme can successfully follow the outline given below for almost all pupils.

- Who am I? What do I look like?
 - gender
 - other characteristics (size, colouring, age)
- Body parts:
 - privacy
 - naming body parts
 - private body parts
- Body changes at puberty
- Who do I know? How do I behave with them?
- How to say “No”

Staff will judge when older pupils are ready to move on to more specific work on sexuality and sexual relationships including:

- menstruation
- masturbation and the related feelings
- sexual intimacy and relationships
- safer sex
- sexual preference
- pregnancy and birth
- contraception
- peer and media pressure

The biological elements of sex education, including naming body parts, puberty and human development are part of the National Curriculum Science programme, whilst

'changing adolescent body' is statutory under health education. The curriculum content being covered within the different key stages can be clearly seen within our PSHE curriculum mapping and schemes of work.

Staff will decide the most effective methods to use in the classroom. We know that learning about personal matters is increased if pupils work in a supportive group where they feel safe; and if active methods are used which encourage practice of relevant skills. We understand the need for constant repetition and reinforcement.

We are aware that teaching relationships and sex education to our pupils means that classroom work may need to be made more explicit than in other types of school. We insist that the use of correct vocabulary for body parts and functions; of visual material, which is clear and unmistakable; and of anatomically correct three-dimensional models. This is a key part of safeguarding to ensure understanding if and when a disclosure is made and it is part of creating a safe learning environment and should be part of the group agreement.

Our policy on specific matters

General guidelines

- treat every pupil as an individual, with dignity and respect
- relate our language and behaviour to the chronological age of the pupil
- pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are not excluded from the programme
- they will experience most of the basic content: self awareness, gender awareness, body parts recognition, privacy and dignity
- reinforce the 'private' concept in all situations as far as possible, using NSPCC materials
- discourage older pupils from age inappropriate behaviour: for example, sitting on laps; hugging and kissing in greeting adults
- it is important that all adults and visitors, including professionals, who come into contact with the pupils are aware of the school's Relationships & Sex Education policy e.g. on language using young man/woman for older pupils; using correct names for body parts; on independence and choice

A partnership with parents

We place the utmost importance on sharing equal and joint responsibility with parents for their children's education in sexual matters. We will give due regard to religious or cultural views that parents may have which may affect the relationships and sex education they wish to be given to their children, although we would consider carefully any request which compromised our equal opportunities policy.

We are aware that some parents find it hard to cope with their children's sexual development and are happy for the school to take the initiative.

We will take every opportunity to inform and involve parents and carers:

- by making our commitment clear in the school prospectus
- by raising personal development issues at annual Review meetings
- by inviting parents and carers to join the parents' support group when their child enters the secondary/FE department
- by responding to parental requests for resources to be reviewed and their uses explained
- by welcoming parents to discuss any of these matters with the Headteacher

The organisation of relationships and sex education

Relationships education is statutory and sex education is optional for primary age pupils. However, the DfE and the PSHE Association both recommend that primary schools do have an age appropriate sex education programme. The governors expect a basic programme of sex education and personal development to be part of every child's entitlement in Pear Tree, planned according to individual and group needs and development. This programme will be made available to parents. Please read this section of the policy alongside our PSHE and Citizenship curriculum mapping which clearly shows what topics are covered within the different key stages throughout our school. All outcomes within statutory guidance are covered throughout our schemes of work from Early Years right through to 6th Form.

Class teachers, who may decide to work on a team - teaching basis, will teach it. There will be times when gender groups will need to work alone and other times when pupils will be grouped according to their development and maturity. No teacher will be expected to undertake specific sex education teaching without the support of colleagues within the school and of attendance at training courses as necessary. We will not insist that teachers who have strong reservations about sex education take part in the programme.

We expect Teaching Assistants who have much experience of the pupils, to be involved in planning, taking part and evaluating classroom work, although the overall responsibility rests with the Teaching staff. Pupils in the secondary and F.E. departments will have the opportunity through the PSD curriculum to cover the programme; however, time will be set aside in weekly PSD sessions to cover any specific areas as they arise. In the primary department it may be more appropriate to integrate the personal development programme with other work. This will still need careful planning and continuity and a common approach throughout the school will be essential. Specific issues will be addressed individually via IEP's/ ILPs.

Parents right to withdraw their children from relationships and sex education

Through discussions and working with parents, we aim to explain the value of sex education for their child and from past experience we are optimistic that this will continue.

Parents now have the right to withdraw their children from sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE, up to three terms before their sixteenth birthday and there is special allowance for pupils with SEND, although not from those elements which are in the Science curriculum. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, we will make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms. There may be exceptional circumstances where the Headteacher may want to take a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision. If a parent wishes to withdraw their child, we would welcome discussion with the Headteacher. Before granting any such request a discussion with parents and as appropriate, with the child will take place to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum and this process will be documented to ensure a record is kept. During this the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child will be discussed and include any social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly said by the teacher. We would like to make it clear that if pupils who are withdrawn from sex education lessons ask questions at other times; these questions will be answered honestly by staff. If a pupil is excused from sex education, here at Pear Tree School we will ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education or Health Education.

(Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance 2021)**Resources**

The most valuable resource in the education of our pupils is to be found in the understanding, experience, skills and creativity of our staff, both teaching and non-teaching. We also appreciate that many objects and opportunities can be used in the teaching programme. However, to avoid confusing pupils, some explicit resources will be needed such as slides and other illustrative material; cut outs of bodies and body parts; and anatomically correct models. We carefully select the resources needed to best teach and meet the needs of our students.

Use of visitors

On occasions, people from outside of school will work within the Governors' policy and a member of staff will be present at all times to offer guidance on explicitness/appropriateness. The visitors who on these occasions may be brought in to support and enhance with the delivery of a particular aspect of relationships and sex education are carefully selected in order to enhance the learning opportunities with their expertise and resources. This policy should be read alongside our schools Visitors' and Confidentiality Policies.

Safer Sex

Where sexual behaviour is covered, we will discuss, where appropriate, the use of condoms as safe and responsible sexual practice. A further stage would be to explain that infection may be passed on when a condom is not used. Pupils may ask questions about **HIV/AIDS** in any context: the aim of the answers will be to answer honestly to the extent the pupil can understand; to reassure and alleviate any anxiety and to counteract any prejudice expressed.

Questions about forms of contraception will be answered accurately and honestly within the pupil's ability to understand. If pupils need further personal advice about contraceptive use, counselling and support will be sought from appropriate agencies and personnel. Our curriculum is designed to educate about contraception and develop the pupil's knowledge and understanding, but we do not offer advice. We will signpost pupils and families to the appropriate advice should this be needed.

Sexual abuse

We acknowledge that some young people with learning disabilities may be vulnerable to sexual abuse or exploitation and it is because of this that we need to help our young people to cope. We do not accept that this is a reason for avoiding education about sex and personal matters, but it makes it more essential: such teaching may help pupils avoid some abusive situations.

If a child or parent makes a disclosure to a member of staff or an incident is witnessed by a member of staff, the school sexual abuse guidelines make it clear what action is to be taken. Such disclosure or incidents will be treated in a calm and supportive manner without causing further anxiety and distress. This is a sensitive area, but we are sure that parents will appreciate that the Headteacher and the school always seeks to act in what is believed to be in the child's best interest.

Appropriate methods for sex education use activities which 'distance' the subject matter from the pupils, by using pictures, stories and models, which encourage discussion about what the fictional characters do, say and feel. This lessens the scope for pupil responses like 'I do/did/would do...' etc. and also serves to protect staff from personal questions.

Group Agreement

A safe learning environment helps students share feelings, explore values and attitudes, express opinions and consider those of others without attracting negative feedback. As well as encouraging more open discussion it also helps to make sure that teachers are not anxious about unexpected disclosures or comments and therefore clear 'ground rules' should be established or reinforced, and the concepts of confidentiality and anonymity covered at the start of the lesson and this group agreement can then be referred back to at beginning of each session. At Pear Tree School prior to teaching a 'Relationships and Sex Education' topic ground rules (group agreement) should be negotiated and agreed with pupils and staff where appropriate. These may be written in pupils' own words, displayed in the classroom, in some cases, physically signed by pupils (like an informal contract), monitored by pupils themselves and followed consistently by the teacher as well as the pupils. Examples may include, respecting the views of others, right to pass, make no assumptions, listen to others, use of language.

Sexual Orientation

We acknowledge that some pupils may be confused as to what their sexuality is. Support and guidance will be offered in a caring and appropriate way to both the pupils and the parents or carers. This will be through discussion and guidance helping the pupil develop an understanding of their sexuality and any questions on sensitive issues will be dealt with as and when a situation arises and as openly and honestly as possible. We ensure our curriculum and resources, including language are not from a purely heterosexual perspective and positively promote all family dynamics and relationships.

Monitoring the relationships and sex education policy and programme

The school will need to assess how effective the aims, content, and methods in promoting pupils' learning are. Feedback from staff, parents and pupils will help to judge this. The Personal, Social and Health Education Subject Leader will be responsible for monitoring this information, and for presenting it, via the Headteacher to the Governors.

At Pear Tree School the following roles and responsibilities are in place in relation to PSHE.

Headteacher – Has overall responsibility for the curriculum.

Key Governor – Acts as an advocate on the board of governors, supports and has input with the subject review and monitoring of subject delivery throughout school.

Subject Leader – Develops the curriculum, regularly reviews and monitors assessment and progress through Evidence for Learning, provides teachers with lesson planning feedback and monitors the PSHE quality of teaching and learning throughout school.

Teachers – Use the mapping and scheme of work to develop, write and deliver lessons that meet the needs of the pupils within their class, set appropriate targets, make assessments and record and document evidence via Evidence for Learning.

Teaching Support Staff – Support in the delivery of planned lessons, resourcing and ensure pupils are appropriately supported in accessing learning activities within the subject.

Health Professionals – Provide student specific input, access to and provide resources to support in the teaching of a specific topic, offer guidance, advice and training where appropriate.

Policy reviewed: Autumn 2021

Next Review: Autumn 2024