

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Southend High School for Girls Academy Trust



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The policy will be renewed each academic year – next renewal date:

- A = accepted with no amendments
- B = accepted with amendments
- C = new edition created

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Policy Summary

At SHSG, we believe that effective Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is essential in helping young people make responsible, informed decisions about their lives. RSE should not be delivered in isolation; it must be embedded within the broader framework of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education and aligned with the National Curriculum.

Our RSE programme aims to help students understand human sexuality, develop respect for themselves and others, and build the foundations for safe, happy, and successful lives. It is inclusive of all genders, sexual orientations, ethnicities, and family structures, reflecting the diversity of our school community and society.

RSE at SHSG contributes to the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of our students. It prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to navigate relationships with integrity and empathy.

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents and carers. Their views are regularly sought to ensure our RSE provision is transparent, relevant, and supportive of family values.

To deliver high-quality RSE, we ensure staff are well-trained and supported. The PSHE lead provides pastoral and curriculum guidance, and students are given regular opportunities to ask anonymous questions, which inform both teaching and pastoral support.

Safeguarding procedures are followed at all times, and we work closely with external agencies and healthcare professionals to enrich our provision and ensure it meets the needs of all learners.

Definition

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) supports the emotional, social, and cultural development of students. It helps young people understand and navigate relationships, sexual health, identity, diversity, and healthy lifestyles.

RSE is delivered in a safe, inclusive environment where students are encouraged to reflect, ask questions, and explore values and issues openly. It is not about promoting sexual activity. Instead, it takes a positive, proactive approach to equipping students with the knowledge and confidence to build respectful, nurturing relationships of all kinds—including friendships, family relationships, and romantic partnerships. The aim is to empower young people to make informed choices, understand themselves and others, and contribute to a culture of kindness, respect, and personal responsibility.

Aims

At Southend High School for Girls we believe that high-quality Relationships and Sex Education provides students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make safe, healthy and informed relationship choices as young people and in the future as adults. We believe in empowering our students to understand their bodies, to reflect on their relationship values and to be able to openly discuss relationships and sex. We believe that this approach will reduce the risk of unhealthy and abusive relationships. At Southend High School for Girls we are committed to the important role that RSE plays in students' holistic education and we aim to build on the RSE programmes covered in Primary Schools.

Statutory Guidance

SHSG acknowledges that all secondary academies must provide RSE to all students as per section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. In teaching RSE we acknowledge that we are required by our funding agreement to have regard for the guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996. This policy was developed in response to the following documents:

Document / Legislation	Purpose / Relevance	Link
Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Section 34)	Mandates RSE for all secondary students	Children and Social Work Act 2017

Education Act 1996 (Section 403)	Requires schools to have regard to Secretary of State guidance	Education Act 1996
Relationships and Sex Education Guidance	Core framework for delivering RSE	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education
Keeping Children Safe in Education	Safeguarding responsibilities	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68add931969253904d155860/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_from_1_September_2025.pdf
Behaviour and Discipline in Schools	Supports positive behaviour and respectful relationships	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-schools
Equality Act 2010	Promotes inclusion and prevents discrimination	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools
SEND Code of Practice (0–25 years)	Ensures accessibility and support for all learners	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25
Alternative Provision	Guidance for students educated outside mainstream settings	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools	Promotes emotional wellbeing	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755135/Mental health and behaviour in schools .pdf
Preventing and Tackling Bullying	Supports safe and respectful environments	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying
Cyberbullying Advice	Addresses online safety and digital conduct	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374850/Cyberbullying Advice for Headteachers and School Staff 121114.pdf
Promoting British Values through SMSC	Encourages respect, democracy, and tolerance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc
National Citizen Service Guidance	Encourages civic engagement and personal development	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-citizen-service-guidance-for-schools-and-colleges

Understanding the Law and Safeguarding in RSE

Southend High School for Girls acknowledges the importance of ensuring students understand what the law says about sex, relationships, and young people, alongside broader safeguarding issues. This includes key facts and rules around sharing personal information, images, videos, and other content via technology. This legal knowledge helps students distinguish right from wrong and provides a strong foundation for deeper discussions about all types of relationships. It also supports students in understanding their rights and responsibilities under the law.

Students will be made aware of relevant legal provisions at appropriate points in the curriculum. Teaching will be age- and stage-appropriate, and include:

- Marriage
- Consent, including the age of consent
- Violence against women and girls
- Sexual Violence and Harassment and Child on Child Abuse
- Online behaviours including image and information sharing (including sexting, youth produced sexual imagery, nudes etc)
- Pornography
- Abortion
- Gender identity
- Substance misuse
- Violence and exploitation by gangs
- Extremism/radicalisation
- Criminal exploitation (for example, through gang involvement or 'county lines' drugs operations)
- Hate crime
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)

Policy Development and Consultation

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, students, and parents to ensure it reflects the values and needs of the SHSG community. The consultation and development process included:

- **Staff Consultation** – All school staff were given the opportunity to read the draft policy and provide feedback or recommendations.
- **Parent Consultation** – Parents and other interested parties were invited to review the policy and share their comments.
- **Pupil Consultation** – Student focus groups were held to explore what pupils want and need from their RSE education.
- **Ratification** – Following amendments based on consultation feedback, the policy was shared with the governing body and formally ratified.

Curriculum Structure and Sex Education Content

Our RSE curriculum is outlined within the broader PSHE policy. Detailed content of the Relationships and Sex Education programme is available to parents upon request. The PSHE co-ordinator at SHSG is Ruth Marx. To access this, parents can contact the PSHE Co-ordinator via email at pshe@shsg.org

The curriculum is designed to meet all statutory requirements as set out in the Department for Education's guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), and Health Education. It ensures coverage of all required themes by the end of Key Stage 4, and is delivered in an age-appropriate, inclusive, and evidence-based manner.

By the end of Key Stage 4 the school will have covered all the content from the statutory guidance as set out on pages 13-19 of this guidance:

[Relationships and Sex Education Statutory Guidance](#)

The timing of RSE content within Life Skills lessons is outlined in the appendix at the end of this document. At Southend High School for Girls, Relationships and Sex Education is delivered through the '**Relationships**' strand of the Life Skills curriculum. While the majority of this strand focuses on relationships and health education, some lessons include elements of sex education. As stated in the Department for Education's Relationships Education Guidance (2025):

"Relationships education doesn't involve explaining the detail of different forms of sexual activity, but can cover sensitive topics such as sexual violence in order to keep children safe."

Lessons that include sex education are clearly indicated in the appendix. These are delivered in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner, with clear signposting for parental awareness and the right to withdraw.

Delivery of RSE

Southend High School for Girls acknowledges that high-quality, evidence-based, and age-appropriate teaching is essential in preparing students for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life. RSE also plays a vital role in promoting the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils—both within school and in wider society.

RSE is delivered as part of a whole-school approach to supporting students to be safe, happy, and successful beyond school. The curriculum complements and is supported by wider school policies on behaviour, inclusion, equality and diversity, anti-bullying, and safeguarding. It is embedded within the school's ethos and pastoral care system, contributing to the holistic development of every student.

At SHSG, RSE is taught within the **Life Skills curriculum**, using a spiralsed approach that revisits key themes in an age- and stage-appropriate way. Core knowledge is broken down into manageable units and delivered through a carefully sequenced programme of lessons. These lessons are regularly evaluated through student voice, teacher feedback, and in-class assessment. The PSHE Co-ordinator works closely with staff across related curriculum areas to ensure that RSE content complements, rather than duplicates, material covered in subjects such as Science, Information Technology, and Physical Education.

Southend High School for Girls delivers Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education throughout KS3 and KS4 within:

- Life Skills lessons
- Tutor Groups and related pastoral programme
- Assemblies
- External speakers and agencies
- Health care professionals
- Other curriculum delivery including Science, ICT, Food Technology, English, and PE.

Parental right to withdraw

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. They do not have the right to request that their child is removed from the national curriculum. After that point if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will arrange to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

Requests for withdrawal must be made in writing and submitted to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will discuss the request with parents and take the appropriate action. The Headteacher will ensure that where a pupil is excused from sex education, the pupil will receive appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal. There is no right to withdraw from the health or relationships education within the PSHE curriculum nor is there a right to withdraw from the national curriculum for science. The Headteacher may refuse this request in “exceptional circumstances”, such as because of safeguarding concerns.

Families should be aware that sex education can occur at any time within the broader school curriculum if it arises naturally from class discussion on feelings, values and relationships.

Training

Specialist RSE training from a lead RSE expert is provided for teachers of PHSE/RSE. We also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE.

Working with External Agencies

Southend High School for Girls is aware that working with external partners will enhance the delivery of RSE and will provide support by bringing in specialist knowledge and implement

different ways of engaging with young people. Where Southend High School for Girls uses external agencies, the credentials of the visiting organisation and any visitors linked to the agency will be checked. Southend High School for Girls will work with external agencies to ensure that the content delivered is age-appropriate and accessible for all pupils. Any materials that are used as part of the delivery must be approved by the school in advance of the session, and may be viewed by parents on request.

Safeguarding and Confidentiality

Southend High School for Girls recognises that at the heart of RSE, the focus is on keeping children safe, and acknowledges the significant role played in preventative education. We will allow children an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues. Such discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. Children will be made aware of the processes to enable them to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This will also include processes when they have a concern about a peer or friend.

In line with the document Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (KCSIE), all staff are aware of what to do if a child tells them that they are being abused or neglected. Staff are also aware of need to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This means only involving those that need to be involved, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead and children's social care. A member of staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this is not in the best interests of the child. The involvement of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) will ensure that trusted, high quality local resources are engaged, links to the police and other agencies are utilised and the knowledge of any local issues it may be appropriate to address in lessons

RSE and Sexual Violence and Harassment between Students

We recognise that children can abuse their peers. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up". We also recognise the gendered nature of peer-on-peer abuse. However, all peer-on-peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. Peer on peer abuse is covered as part of our RSE programme with lessons on behaviours and consent.





























Appendix 1: Life Skills RSE content delivery:

This table indicates when Relationships (and sex) education is delivered to year groups within their life skills lessons:

Year Group	HT1	HT2	HT3	HT4	HT5	HT6
 7			 Introduction to relationships			
 8			 Consent and why it matters			
 9			 My body, my life			 Families and contraception
 10		 Be aware				 Choices, choices.
 11	 Sex, statistics and support					

 HT = Half Term

This table shows the content delivered during the relationships (and sex) education lessons for year groups. Each unit has three lessons. The 'sex' education lessons which parents have the right to request to withdraw their child from are **in bold and indicated by ***

Year	Year and Unit	Lesson 1 content	Lesson 2 content	Lesson 3 content
 7	Introduction to relationships	 Different relationships, signs of a healthy relationship.	 Changes in puberty and feelings.	 Ending relationships and coping with change.
 8	Consent and why it matters	 Everyday situations with consent.	 The media, pornography and relationships.	 Online pressures for images, the law-staying safe.
 9	My Body My Life	 Challenging gender stereotypes and body image.	 Spotting abusive and unhealthy relationships.	 Subcultures and sexual ethics.
 9	Families and contraception	 *Contraception	 Different types of family structures	 Characteristics of successful parenting.
 10	Be aware	 Fertility and reproductive health	 Forced marriage and FGM.	 External workshop on consent.
 10	Choices, Choices	 The e-card scheme and local support.	 Choices in relation to pregnancy	 Managing sexual pressure, intimacy and delaying sex. *
 11	Sex, Statistics and support	 STIs nationally and locally and protection	 Alcohol and drugs and sexual health choices	 How to get support if things go 'wrong'

 * Indicates content that may be covered in more depth or within the lesson.

Appendix 2: By the end of secondary school pupils should know

Topic	Pupils should know
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That there are different types of committed, stable relationships • How these relationships might contribute to wellbeing, and their importance for bringing up children • Why marriage or civil partnership is an important relationship choice for many couples. The legal status of marriage and civil partnership, including that they carry legal rights, benefits and protections that are not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have, for example, undergone a non-legally binding religious ceremony • That 'common-law marriage' is a myth, and cohabitants do not obtain marriage-like status or rights from living together or by having children • That forced marriage and marriage before the age of 18 are illegal • How families and relationships change over time, including through birth, death, separation, and new relationships. • The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting and the importance of the early years of a child's life for brain development. • How to judge when a relationship is unsafe and where to seek help when needed, including when pupils are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust
Respectful relationships, including friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About the characteristics of positive relationships of all kinds, online and offline, including romantic relationships. For example, pupils should understand the role of consent, trust, mutual respect, honesty, kindness, loyalty, shared interests and outlooks, generosity, boundaries, tolerance, privacy, and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships • How to evaluate their impact on other people and treat others with kindness and respect, including in public spaces and including strangers. Pupils should understand the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, and that everyone is unique and equal • The importance of self-esteem, independence and having a positive relationship with oneself, and how these characteristics support healthy relationships with others. This includes developing one's own interests, hobbies, friendship groups, and skills. Pupils should understand what it means to be treated with respect by others • What tolerance requires, including the importance of tolerance of other people's beliefs • The practical steps pupils can take and skills they can develop to support respectful and kind relationships. This includes skills for

Topic	Pupils should know
	<p>communicating respectfully within relationships and with strangers, including in situations of conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The different types of bullying (including online bullying), the impact of bullying, the responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help • Skills for ending relationships or friendships with kindness and managing the difficult feelings that endings might bring, including disappointment, hurt or frustration • The role of consent, including in romantic and sexual relationships. Pupils should understand that ethical behaviour goes beyond consent and involves kindness, care and attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of the other person, as well as an awareness of power dynamics. Pupils should understand that just because someone says ‘yes’ to doing something that doesn’t automatically make it ethically okay • How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). Pupils should be equipped to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice • How inequalities of power can impact behaviour within relationships, including sexual relationships. For example, how people who are disempowered can feel they are not entitled to be treated with respect by others or how those who enjoy an unequal amount of power might, with or without realising it, impose their preferences on others • How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, including by normalising harmful sexual behaviours and by disempowering some people, especially women, to feel a sense of autonomy over their own body and providing some people with a sense of sexual entitlement to the bodies of others • How some sub-cultures might influence our understanding of sexual ethics, including the sexual norms endorsed by so-called ‘involuntary celibates’ (incels) or online influencers
Online safety and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online • About online risks, including that any material they provide provides to another has the potential to be shared and circulated online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online. They should also understand the difference between public and private online spaces and related safety issues • Not to provide material to others that they would not want to be distributed further and not to pass on personal material which is sent to them. Pupils should understand that any material provided

Topic	Pupils should know
	<p>online might be circulated, and that once this has happened there is no way of controlling where it ends up. Pupils should understand the serious risks of sending material to others, including the law concerning the sharing of images</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About the characteristics of social media, including that some social media accounts are fake, and/or may post things which aren't real or have been created with AI. They should also know that social media users may say things in more extreme ways than they might in face-to-face situations, and that some users present highly exaggerated or idealised profiles of themselves online • That keeping or forwarding indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime (even if the photo is of themselves or someone who has consented, and even if the photo was created by that child and/or using AI). That there are potentially serious consequences of acquiring or generating these images. That sharing indecent images of people over 18 without their consent is also a crime • How to seek support. They should also understand that they will not be in trouble for asking for help, either at school or with the police, if an image of themselves has been shared • What to do and how to report when they are concerned about material that has been circulated, including personal information, images or videos, and how to manage issues online • About the prevalence of deepfakes including videos and photos, how deepfakes can be used maliciously as well as for entertainment, the harms that can be caused by deepfakes and how to identify them • That the internet contains inappropriate and upsetting content, some of which is illegal, including unacceptable content that encourages misogyny, violence or use of weapons • Where to go for advice and support about something they have seen online. Pupils should understand that online content can present a distorted picture of the world and normalise or glamourise behaviours which are unhealthy and wrong • That social media can lead to escalations in conflicts, how to avoid these escalations and where to go for help and advice • How to identify when technology and social media is used as part of bullying, harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and other forms of abusive and/or illegal behaviour and how to seek support about concerns • That pornography, and other online content, often presents a distorted picture of people and their sexual behaviours and can negatively affect how people behave towards sexual partners. That this can affect people who see pornographic content accidentally, as well as those who see it deliberately. That pornography can also portray misogynistic behaviours and attitudes which can negatively influence those who see it

Topic	Pupils should know
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online • That websites may share personal data about their users, and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes (for example, to enable targeted advertising) • That criminals can operate online scams, such as using fake websites or emails to extort money or valuable personal information. This information can be used to the detriment of the person or wider society. About risks of sextortion, how to identify online scams relating to sex, and how to seek support if they have been scammed or involved in sextortion • That AI chatbots are an example of how AI is rapidly developing, and that these can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice. That it is important to be able to critically think about new types of technology as they appear online and how they might pose a risk
Being safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to recognise, respect and communicate consent and boundaries in relationships, including in early romantic relationships (in all contexts, including online) and early sexual relationships that might involve kissing or touching. That kindness and care for others requires more than just consent • That there are a range of strategies for identifying, resisting and understanding pressure in relationships from peers or others, including sexual pressure, and how to avoid putting pressure on others • How to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, how to judge when a relationship is unsafe (and recognise this in the relationships of others); how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others if needed • How to increase their personal safety in public spaces, including when socialising with friends, family, the wider community or strangers. About ways of seeking help when needed and how to report harmful behaviour. That there are strategies they can use to increase their safety, and that this does not mean they will be blamed if they are victims of harmful behaviour. About the importance of trusting their instincts when something doesn't feel right, and they should understand that in some situations a person might appear trustworthy but have harmful intentions • What constitutes sexual harassment or sexual violence, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it • That sexual harassment includes unsolicited sexual language, attention or touching, taking and/or sharing intimate or sexual images without consent, public sexual harassment, pressuring other people to do sexual things, and upskirting

Topic	Pupils should know
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About concepts and laws relating to: • Sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault • Harmful sexual behaviour, which includes all types of sexual harassment and sexual violence among young people but also includes other forms of concerning behaviour like using age-inappropriate sexual language • Domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour • Harms which are exploitative, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and abuse, grooming, and financial exploitation • Forced marriage • Female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty • That fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviours can be criminal, and where to get help if needed • That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences, and that strangulation (applying pressure to the neck) is an offence, regardless of whether it causes injury • That any activity that involves applying force or pressure to someone's neck or covering someone's mouth and nose is dangerous and can lead to serious injury or death • That pornography presents some activities as normal which many people do not and will never engage in, some of which can be emotionally and/or physically harmful • How to seek support for their own worrying or abusive behaviour, or for worrying or abusive behaviour they have experienced from others, including information on where to report abuse and where to seek medical attention when required, for example after an assault
Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That sex, for people who feel ready and are over the age of consent, can and should be enjoyable and positive • The law about the age of consent, that they have a choice about whether to have sex, that many young people wait until they are older, and that people of all ages can enjoy intimate and romantic relationships without sex • About sexual consent and their capacity to give, withhold or remove consent at any time, even if initially given, as well as the considerations that people might take into account prior to sexual activity, such as the law, their faith and family values. That kindness and care for others require more than just consent

Topic	Pupils should know
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing • That some sexual behaviours can be harmful • The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available, including male and female condoms, and signposting towards medically accurate online information about sexual and reproductive health to support contraceptive decision making • That there are choices in relation to pregnancy. Pupils should be given medically and legally accurate and impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help • How the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted. How risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) • About the use and availability of the HIV prevention drugs pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and how and where to access them. The importance of, and facts about, regular testing and the role of stigma • About the prevalence of STIs, the short and long-term impact they can have on those who contract them, and key facts about treatment • How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead people to take risks in their sexual behaviour • How and where to seek support for concerns around sexual relationships including sexual violence or harms • How to counter misinformation, including signposting towards medically accurate information and further advice, and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment