



RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

Policy Custodian: *Deputy Head (Pastoral) and Head of PSHE*

Approving Body: *MTS Senior Leadership Team*

Approved: *July 2026*

We define Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) as learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It equips children and young people with the information, skills and positive values to have safe, fulfilling relationships, to enjoy their sexuality and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.

Sex Education is specifically defined as learning about the physical and biological aspects of human development, reproduction, and sexual health.

This policy covers Merchant Taylors' School's approach to the teaching of RSE. We believe RSE is lifelong learning, which is integral to physical, sexual, moral and emotional development. It is about understanding the importance of stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care for family life. It involves acquiring information, developing skills and forming positive beliefs, values and attitudes.

In addition, we as a school believe that RSE should:

- Be an entitlement for all young people, supporting each individual as they grow and learn.
- Encourage every student to contribute to our wider school community, supporting family commitment and love, respect and affection, knowledge and openness.
- Encourage students and teachers to share and respect each other's views. We are aware of different sexual orientations and do not promote any particular family structure. We see family as a broad concept; not just one model, e.g. nuclear family. RSE includes a variety of types of family structure, and we actively promote the acceptance of different approaches. The important values are love, respect and care for each other.
- Generate an atmosphere where questions and discussion on sexual matters can take place without any stigma or embarrassment.
- Recognise that parents are the key people in teaching their children about sex, relationships and growing up. We aim to work in partnership with parents and students, consulting them about the content of programmes.
- Recognise that the wider community has much to offer and we aim to work in partnership with health professionals, social workers, peer educators and other mentors or advisers.

Legislation

We are required to teach RSE as part of the Department for Education statutory guidance [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education \(for introduction 1 September 2026\)](#). This guidance informs the content of the lessons and is read in conjunction with:

- Education Act (1996)
- Learning and Skills Act (2000)
- Education and Inspections Act (2000)
- Equality Act (2010)
- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (2017)
- National Citizen Service Guidance for Schools and Colleges (2017)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (2018)
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (2018)
- The Independent School Standards (2019)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
- Merchant Taylors' School Pastoral Curriculum Policy

Subject Content

Merchant Taylors' School specifically delivers RSE through its PSHE Programme and Biology lessons at KS3, and KS4. Specific RSE lessons are set within the wider context of the PSHE curriculum and focus more on the emotional aspects of sex and relationships, although the physical aspects of puberty and reproduction are also included. The Science National Curriculum is delivered by staff in the science department. These lessons are more concerned with the physical aspects of development and reproduction, although the importance of relationships is not forgotten.

The PSHE Programme and Science National Curriculum are taught in every school year. The scheme of learning for the RSE lessons of the PSHE programme can be seen below in appendix 1 of this policy. Teachers from a range of subjects deliver the PSHE Curriculum with support from professionals where appropriate. Teaching staff therefore receive RSE training prior to lessons, in order to best support pupils with the complexities of RSE.

Sex and Relationship Education in Merchant Taylors' School has three main elements:

Attitudes and Values

- learning the importance of values, individual conscience and moral choices;
- learning the value of family life, stable and loving relationships, and marriage;
- learning about 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;
- develop awareness of their sexuality and understand human sexuality; challenge sexism and prejudice, and promote equality and diversity;
- develop positive values and a moral framework that will guide their decisions, judgements and behaviour; have the confidence and self-esteem to value themselves and others and have respect for individual conscience and the skills to judge what kind of relationship they want;
- 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 with an absence of prejudice;
- developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made;
- managing conflict;
- empowering students with the skills to be able to avoid inappropriate pressures or advances (both as exploited or exploiter)

Knowledge and Understanding

- learning and understanding physical development at appropriate stages;
- communicate effectively by developing appropriate terminology for sex and relationship issues;
- understanding human sexuality, reproduction, sexual health, emotions and relationships;
- learning about contraception and the range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception and support services;
- learning the reasons for having protected sex;
- be aware of sources of help and acquire the skills and confidence to access confidential health advice, support and treatment if necessary;
- know the law of consent and how the law applies to rape, as well as other harmful sexual behaviours;
- learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity, and the benefits to be gained from such delay;
- the avoidance of unplanned pregnancy.

External Providers

3rd Form Anti-bullying Day, Robert Higgs - <https://www.rhiggspresents.com/about-5>

Assessment

Pupil attainment in Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is assessed through a combination of formative assessment and regular low-stakes quizzes, ensuring that progress is effectively monitored

and informs future teaching. Formative assessment takes place continuously within lessons and across sequences of learning, enabling teachers to evaluate pupils' understanding, skills, and attitudes in relation to their starting points. This allows staff to measure progress from each pupil's baseline to the end of a lesson or unit, adapting teaching in real time to address misconceptions and deepen learning. In addition, pupils complete short, structured quizzes following each lesson, which provide a clear snapshot of knowledge retention and understanding. Outcomes from these quizzes are used by teachers to identify areas requiring further consolidation and to shape subsequent planning, ensuring that the RSE curriculum remains responsive to pupil needs and supports sustained progress over time.

Safeguarding

Any SRE lesson may consider questions or issues that some students will find sensitive. Before embarking on these lessons ground rules are established which prohibit inappropriate personal information being requested or disclosed by those taking part in the lesson. When students ask questions, we aim to answer them honestly, within the ground rules established at the start of the sessions. When it is felt that answering a specific question would involve information at a level inappropriate to the development of the rest of the students, the question may be dealt with individually at another time.

More expert or specialist teachers support teachers who are uncomfortable with teaching certain aspects of the curriculum. Support is offered with the year team or from the Head of PSHE, who will help with delivery of lessons if required.

Teachers are aware that effective RSE, which brings an understanding of what is and what is not appropriate in a relationship, can sometimes lead to the disclosure of a child protection issue. Under these circumstances, staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality and will consult with the designated safeguarding lead, or their deputy in their absence. Teachers are not legally bound to inform parents/carers or the Head Master of any disclosure unless the Head Master has specifically requested them to do so.

In a case where a teacher learns from an under 16-year-old that they are having or contemplating sexual intercourse:

- the young person will be persuaded, wherever possible, to talk to parent/carers and if necessary to seek medical advice.
- child protection issues will be considered, and referred if necessary to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, following the School's Safeguarding Policy.
- the young person will be properly counselled about contraception, including precise information about where young people can access contraception and advice services.

In any case where child protection procedures are followed, the teacher will ensure that the young person understands that if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed first.

Health professionals in school are bound by their codes of conduct in a one-to-one situation with an individual student, but in a classroom situation they must follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Inclusion

Ethnic and Cultural Groups

- We intend our policy to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic groups. We will respond to parental requests and concerns when raised.

Students with Special Needs

- We will ensure that all young people receive RSE, and we will offer provision appropriate to the particular needs of all our students, taking specialist advice where necessary.

Gender, Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation

- We aim to deal sensitively and honestly with issues of gender and sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support. Young people, whatever their developing identity or sexuality need to feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them.

Parental Engagement

Merchant Taylors' School is committed to working with parents and carers and as such, they are informed of this policy through the usual school communications. Parents were consulted when the policy was created and will once again be consulted whenever this policy is reviewed. Attention will be drawn to it in the publication of the sectional newsletters and parents/carers are welcome to discuss points in it during the regular question and answer sessions with the Head Master and Heads of Section. This policy will be available to parents and carers through the school website.

The Right to be Excused

Parents/carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. However, we strongly advise against it, given the important role we feel it plays in the physical, sexual, moral and emotional development of all children. Sex education does not result in earlier sex, in fact, studies have consistently shown that the opposite is true.

If parents/carers do wish to withdraw their children from some or all of the sex education aspect of RSE, we would make alternative arrangements. Parents are encouraged to discuss their decisions with the relevant Head of Section at the earliest opportunity. Parents are welcome to review any RSE resources the school uses and schemes of learning are available at the end of this policy.

Where a pupil has been withdrawn from sex education, staff will respect the parent's right of withdrawal. If the pupil asks a question which would conflict with this, staff will respond in a supportive and non-judgemental way, acknowledging the question while making clear that it falls outside what can be discussed in school. Pupils will be encouraged to discuss such questions with their parent or carer, ensuring consistency with parental wishes. Staff may provide brief, general responses framed within relationships, health, or safeguarding education, where appropriate, but will avoid explicit detail. However, where a question raises a safeguarding concern or indicates risk, staff will respond in line with safeguarding procedures and ensure the pupil receives appropriate support.

From three terms before the pupil turns 16, a pupil can choose to opt back into sex education even if their parent has requested withdrawal. For example, if a pupil turns 16 during the autumn term, the pupil can opt back into sex education at any time after the start of the previous autumn term.

Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

Pupils will have opportunities to review their learning during lessons by completing formative assessments of their learning. They will also complete a series of online forms, consisting of a mixture of short content-based questions, as well as longer evaluative questions. The results of these forms are then used to inform our teaching of the RSE content in future years.

Reviewing this Policy

This policy will be reviewed in line with feedback, in September 2026, before the start of the next academic year.

Appendix 1 - RSE Scheme of Learning

Script in Red – Sex Education aspect of RSE

Third Form Topics

Topic	Aims
The Importance of Being Kind	• Have further considered stereotyping, by considering the impact of positive stereotyping. • Understand the good, that acts of kindness can have. • Know what acts of kindness you can do for yourself and your friends and family
What Makes a Good Friend?	• Identify a range of strategies for making and maintaining positive friendships. • Describe or demonstrate how to empathise with your peers. • Understand why friendships may end naturally and when you should make a conscious decision to end them.
Puberty (The Changes)	• Have tackled some of the myths relating to puberty. • Be able to describe the main physical and emotional changes experienced during puberty. • Have discussed a variety of frequently asked questions, that relate to puberty.
Growing Up & Personal Safety	• Have recapped your learning from last week's lesson about puberty. • Have considered some of the problems you may come across when growing up and how you can overcome these problems. • Have learnt how to identify risks and manage personal safety in increasingly independent situations.
Puberty & Relationships	• Have considered how emotional changes that happen during puberty, may affect your relationships with others. • Have learnt what menstruation is and have considered some of the worries females might have when on their period. • Have discussed strategies for managing the emotional changes experienced during puberty.
Dealing with Conflict	• I can explain how the outcome of family disagreements is dependent on each person's conduct. • I can explain the link between emotional wellbeing and the health of family relationships. • I can describe strategies for preventing and managing family conflict. • I can identify when support is needed for personal safety and explain how to access appropriate help.

Giving & Seeking Permission	• Explain what consent means, both legally and ethically, and why it is so important. • Describe how to recognise when a person is consenting and when they are not. • Explain how consent is sought, given and not given in a healthy relationship. • Describe or demonstrate what to say and do to seek the consent of another person.
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Anti-Bullying Off-Timetable Day – Occurs in second half of Autumn Term

What is Bullying?	• Give examples of the different types of bullying. • To know how bullying can affect people. • To know what to do if you feel you are being bullied at MTS. • Explain why some people might bully others.
Online Behaviour	• Have considered why online and offline behaviours may differ and the dangers of online abuse (trolling). • Have considered the dangers you might face, when online. • Have considered the extra dangers associated with live streaming. • Have discussed how to protect yourself, when online.
From Bystander to Defender	• Have identified bullying in all its forms and the potential impact on those involved. • Describe skills and strategies to prevent bullying.
Bullying Roleplays	• Have explored how we all have similarities and differences, but how a culture of inclusion can reduce bullying. • Have created your own role-play around bullying, demonstrating what is possible if bystanders and victims of bullying deal with it in the right way.

Upper Third Form Topics

Topic	Aims
Healthy, Respectful Relationships	• I understand that relationships can cause strong feelings and emotions. • I understand the features of positive and strong relationships. • Have reflected on the relationships you have with others, considering what you could change to be happier.
What is Love?	• I understand the different types of love. • I understand the different ways love can be shown. • I can explain the characteristics of a positive romantic relationship.
Dealing with Conflict	• I can explain how the outcome of family disagreements is dependent on each person's conduct. • I can explain the link between emotional wellbeing and the health of family relationships. • I can describe strategies for preventing and managing family conflict. • I can identify when support is needed for personal safety and explain how to access appropriate help.
Consent	• Identify common assumptions related to consent and establish what is morally and legally correct. • Discuss some of assumptions people incorrectly make when entering sexual relationships and investigate why these may be damaging. • Demonstrate ways to avoid making assumptions related to consent, and strategies someone could use to refuse or withdraw consent.

E-Safety Off-Timetable Day – Occurs in first half of Spring Term

Cyberbullying & Online Grooming	• Have discussed why cyberbullying can potentially be more harmful, than any other form of bullying. • Understand what online 'grooming' is and have practiced working out a person's hidden motives. • Know how to spot a fake profile online, so you can avoid being 'catfished'.
Online Gaming	• Have explored the benefits and risks associated with online gaming, including the grooming of players. • Have discussed how someone might become addicted to gaming and what they can do to quit.
How to Seek Help	• Be able to describe a number of the risks, associated with being online. • Be able to offer good advice to a friend having trouble online.

Fourth Form Topics

Topic	Aims
Freedom & Capacity to Consent	• Explain what is meant by freedom and capacity to consent. • Recognise contexts where someone's freedom or capacity to consent have been reduced or removed, and why this means consent has no longer been given • Explain where, why and how to get advice and support for issues relating to consent.
Beginning a Physical Relationship	• Have justified whether you feel something is a positive or negative way to act on first contact, or early in relationships. • Have considered questions, which a person can use, to assess their readiness for sex. • Have practiced positively negotiating condom use within a relationship, in order to build the confidence to be
STIs	• Have discussed how the various sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are passed between people and the impact they can have on those who contract them. • Explain what someone should do if they have had unprotected sex or are worried they might have an STI. • Have been introduced to some methods of contraception, which you will learn more about next lesson.
Contraception	• Be able to describe the full range of contraceptive choices, which are available and their efficacy (how likely they are to work). • Have practiced how to use a condom safely and know where and how to get them. • Be aware of how to access sexual health and family planning clinics. • Apply your knowledge of contraception to assess the best contraceptive options in a range of scenarios.
Sexting & Pornography	• Be able to justify your views around expectations in relationships. • Know the law surrounding pornography and have explained how pornography can distort relationship expectations. • Have evaluated different motivations and contexts in which sexual images are shared, and discussed the possible legal, emotional and social consequences.
Family Conflicts	• I can explain how the outcome of family disagreements is dependent on each person's conduct. • I can explain the link between emotional wellbeing and the health of family relationships. • I can describe strategies for preventing and managing family conflict. • I can identify when support is needed for personal safety and explain how to access appropriate help.

Divisions Topics

Topic	Aims
Marriage	- Describe the options available to people who wish to make a long-term commitment. - Have assessed the possible reasons why people get divorced and discussed whether divorce is necessarily a bad thing. - Recognise the unacceptability of forced marriage and identify support for someone who may be at risk.
FGM & Honour Based Violence	- Be able to explain what FGM, virginity testing and hymenoplasty are and examine the effects they can have. - Be able to explain what honour-based violence is. - Be aware of those most at risk from FGM and honour-based violence.
Harassment & Stalking	- Have identified behaviours associated with stalking. - Know what to do, if someone you know is the victim or perpetrator of harassment or stalking.
Sexual Assault & Rape	- Identify when asking for consent becomes inappropriately pressurising or persuasive and have learnt what the law says about sexual assault and rape. - Challenge victim blaming narratives and know what to do, if a friend feels angry/upset/confused after a sexual experience.
The Impact of Pornography	- Have evaluated the impact of pornography on: - People's understanding and expectations of consent. - Those working in the industry. - Have discussed the differences between offline and online porn. - Have debated what should be done, to protect young people from the impact of viewing pornography.
Social Attitudes to Sharing Nudes	- Reflect on societal attitudes towards requesting, sending and passing on nude images. - Describe the legal and moral implications of sharing images without someone's consent - Know of strategies to manage unwanted images, unwanted requests and pressure to send images, including how to report these behaviours.
Treatments for STIs	- Have learnt more about the prevalence of STIs, the short- and long-term impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment. - Be aware of 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.

Ending a Romantic Relationship	• Have identified the range of emotions associated with breakups. • I can describe ways to manage a breakup safely and appropriately. • I can suggest strategies to help manage emotions when a relationship ends. • I can explain how and where to get help for managing difficult relationship breakups.
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Relationships & Consent Off-Timetable Day – Occurs in first half of Autumn Term

Intimacy & Enthusiastic Consent	• Have considered the stages in building intimacy. • Have discussed the difficulties people have when understanding what is meant by consent and recognise what enthusiastic consent looks like.
Healthy Relationships	• Evaluate whether a relationship is healthy or unhealthy. • Have considered how to have difficult conversations within the context of a relationship. • Identify strategies to build a healthy lasting relationship.
The Impact of Sub-Cultures Unhealthy Relationships	• Have discussed inappropriate and upsetting content, which can be found on the internet, including unacceptable content that encourages misogyny. • Have learnt about the law, in relation to unhealthy relationships. • Have discussed what you could do, if you or a friend of yours, was in an unhealthy relationship.
Creating a Charter	• Have worked together, to produce a charter, for all pupils to follow.

Fifth Form Topics

Topic	Aims
Marriage & Stable Relationships	• Describe the legal rights of people in different forms of long-term commitment. • Analyse different attitudes towards marriage.
Fertility & Routes to Parenthood	• Define fertility and describe how fertility changes over a person's lifetime. • Know about factors that affect menstrual and gynaecological health and fertility. • Describe the different routes to parenthood, including IVF treatment.
Pregnancy & Parenthood	• Describe some of the factors that affect the development of a healthy pregnancy. • Identify the rights, roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children. • Evaluate the characteristics of successful parenting. • Discover how brain development occurs and explain the importance of the early years of a child's life for brain development.
Pregnancy Choices (Adoption & Abortion)	• Have considered the facts relating to teenage pregnancy. • Have discussed the options available to somebody facing an unplanned pregnancy.

Lower Sixth Form Topics

Topic	Aims
Romantic Relationships	• Have considered the different ways of meeting someone and debated some of the dos and don'ts around dating. • Have learnt how to argue well. • Have considered what would be a relationship red flag for you and have considered how to end a relationship in a healthy way.
Sexuality, Consent & the 'Right to Sex'	• Know the difference between gender and sexual orientation and have discussed the belief that there is a difference between biological sex and gender identity. • Have discussed what consent might look like in real life. • Have applied your understanding of consent to a number of scenarios. • Have investigated internet subcultures, discussing how people can be drawn in and how these can sometimes be dangerous.
Unhealthy Relationships	• Be able to recognise when romantic attention is unwanted or unacceptable, including online. • Know how the law protects those who are victims of stalking. • Be able to describe what is meant by coercive control and have discussed in further detail what might be considered a red flag in a relationship. • Know how the law protects those who are abused by partners.
Pornography	• Have considered the negative impacts that viewing pornography can have on individuals, as well as society as a whole. • Have debated whether the government should intervene, to give young people greater protection from pornography. • Be able to explain where, why, and how to access support and report concerns, if you are worried about the behaviour of others.

Upper Sixth Form Topics

Topic	Aims
STIs & Sexual Health Services	• Have discussed how the various sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are passed between people and the impact they can have on those who contract them. • Have considered why STIs might be more common in university students. • Be able to explain what someone should do if they have had unprotected sex or are worried they might have an STI. • Understand what sexual health services are available at university and how to access them.
Fertility & Parenthood	• Explain how fertility changes over a person's lifetime and some of the factors affecting this. • Explain how to maintain a healthy pregnancy. • Describe the different routes to parenthood.
Pregnancy Outcomes & Choices	• Identify the range of options available in the event of an unplanned pregnancy. • Describe where and how to access impartial advice and support in relation to pregnancy. • Identify key legal considerations in relation to abortion. • Consider the strongly held views on either side of the abortion debate.