

RELATIONSHIPS & SEX EDUCATION POLICY

Applicable to:	RGS Guildford
Author(s):	Head of PSHE
Executive owner:	Senior Deputy Head
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Date of next review	Trinity 2027

1. Definitions, Rationale, and Ethos

1.1. Overview

The Royal Grammar School, Guildford and RGS Prep (together, “the School”) are committed to providing the highest standard of education and pastoral care. This policy reflects the School’s values, ensuring clarity and consistency for pupils, staff and parents.

Throughout this policy, the terms ‘child’, ‘pupil’ or student’ are used to refer to all those attending the School. At the time of publication, the school is a boys' school but is preparing to become co-educational. Nursery, Reception (Shell) and Year 3 at RGS Prep, and Year 12 (Lower Sixth) at RGS Senior will become co-educational from September 2027. Year 7 (1st Form) at RGS Senior will become co-educational from September 2028.

1.2. Statutory Framework

This policy has been written in accordance with the Department for Education's statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), published July 2025 and mandatory from 1 September 2026. It applies to all students and staff at RGS Guildford and replaces the previous policy written against the July 2020 guidance.

The DfE statutory requirements mean all secondary schools must deliver Relationships Education and Sex Education as a minimum. In addition to these statutory requirements, RGS has chosen to deliver a comprehensive, integrated RSHE programme embedded within the broader Personal, Social, Health and Moral Education (PSHE) curriculum.

We define:

- Relationships Education as the teaching of the knowledge, skills and values that support students to develop healthy, safe and fulfilling relationships of all kinds — with family, friends, peers and romantic partners — including understanding online relationships, consent, and recognising harmful behaviours.
- Sex Education as the teaching of biological, physical and emotional aspects of human sexuality and sexual health, including reproduction, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, and the legal framework around sexual activity. This is taught in addition to, and building upon, the content delivered through the Science and Religion curricula.

1.3. School Vision and Ethos

At RGS Guildford, Relationships and Sex Education is understood as part of a process of lifelong learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, human sexuality and sexual health, within a values-driven framework. It equips young people with the information, skills and positive values to have safe, stable and fulfilling relationships, to understand and respect their own and others' sexuality, and to take responsibility for their sexual health and wellbeing.

The school values of Inclusivity, Scholarship, Integrity, Respect, Courage and Collaboration are taught directly in the PSHE programme and are intrinsically intertwined with the delivery of RSE. The partnership between home and school is vital in providing the context for these values, and it is important for students to be able to make their own informed and healthy choices and to prepare for the challenges and responsibilities of adult life.

Effective RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation and reflects our belief that students benefit most from the opportunity to think critically, ethically, and reflectively about relationships and sexual health before encountering external pressures, rather than in response to them. It builds students' self-esteem and confidence to respect themselves and others. It enables them to develop critical awareness of the attitudes and norms around sex and relationships portrayed by peers, the media and online, and to make their own informed choices.

1.4. Co-educational Transition

RGS Guildford will become fully co-educational from September 2027. This policy acknowledges that transition and the preparation required for it. From September 2025 onwards, the RSHE programme will be progressively developed to reflect the needs of a mixed-sex student body, including review of topics such as misogyny, female health, gender-based violence, body image, and the social dynamics of mixed-sex peer relationships. Specific consideration will be given to when and how single-sex groupings may be used within RSHE delivery as the school transitions.

1.5. Intended Outcomes

As a result of their RSHE education at RGS, students will:

- Know and understand the biological, emotional and social aspects of human development, relationships and sexuality;
- Understand their rights - including the right to confidential advice and health services, and the right to bodily autonomy and consent;
- Understand their responsibilities — including treating others with respect, recognising and challenging harmful behaviours, and taking responsibility for their own sexual health;
- Develop the skills to communicate effectively, recognise and give consent, and seek help when needed;
- Develop the attributes of respect, empathy, resilience and critical thinking in the context of relationships and online life.

1.6. Inclusivity and the Equality Act 2010

RSE at RGS is inclusive and meets the needs of all students. In line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, due regard is given to all protected characteristics. The programme is designed to be relevant to students regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, culture, religion, belief or other life experience.

Teaching related to sexual orientation and gender reassignment is delivered clearly, sensitively and respectfully, in line with the 2025 statutory guidance and best practice principles. Students are taught that gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Biological sex and gender reassignment are taught accurately and in line with the law. Contested views on gender identity are not presented as established fact.

RSE will be fully inclusive of and relevant to LGBT students and those with LGBT family members.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. Board of Governors

Responsibility for this RSE policy lies ultimately with the school's Board of Governors. At least one Governor representative participates in the working group that develops and reviews the policy. The Education Committee of the Board of Governors formally approves the policy.

2.2. Senior Leadership

The RSE programme is led by the Head of PSHE in consultation with the Assistant Head (DSL) and the Senior Deputy Head, liaising with the three Heads of Section, the Head of Integrated Science and the Head of Religion and Philosophy. The Head of PSHE liaises regularly on curriculum matters with the Head of PSHCE at RGS Prep School to ensure continuity of provision.

2.3. Teaching Staff

RSE is taught by:

- Subject specialists, including Science teachers (who deliver content on reproduction, contraception and STIs through Integrated Science and Biology), and Religion and Philosophy teachers (who address topics such as loss, family breakdown and ethical perspectives on relationships);
- Form Tutors and PSHE teachers, who deliver the timetabled weekly PSHE programme. Positive and trusting relationships with form groups are central to creating the safe space required for sensitive RSE discussions;
- Specialist staff including the School Nurse, School Counsellor and Wellbeing Practitioner;
- Outside agencies, where appropriate and subject to the safeguarding protocols in Section 6.

Those responsible for delivering RSE receive lesson plans and briefings in advance of delivering them from the Head of PSHE.

2.4. Staff Training and Development

Staff training is available through dedicated sessions on Staff Development days, as well as more content-specific training throughout the year. Staff may also elect to attend external training relevant to their role. The school utilises training resources from the PSHE Association and NSPCC to ensure high quality. In preparation for the 2025 statutory guidance and the school's co-educational transition, specific training will be prioritised in the following areas:

- Delivering RSE in mixed-sex environments, including use of single-sex groupings where appropriate;
- Teaching topics newly emphasised in the 2025 guidance, including misogyny, online harms, deepfakes and incel culture;
- Handling sensitive disclosures and supporting vulnerable students;
- Gender identity and the legal framework — accurate, sensitive and legally grounded delivery.

3. Curriculum Design

3.1. Programme Structure

The RGS RSE programme is delivered as an integral part of a comprehensive PSHE provision, embedded within a broad Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) education. RSE is delivered throughout the Lower, Middle and Upper Schools in an age-appropriate way, building on prior learning. Topics may be revisited at different year groups with increasing depth and intellectual engagement.

The programme builds on content delivered at RGS Prep School. An overview of learning in each year group is maintained by the Head of PSHE and is available to parents on request.

As the school moves towards co-education from September 2027, curriculum design will be reviewed to reflect the needs of a mixed-sex cohort, including appropriate attention to the different ways in which topics such as body image, peer pressure, pornography and online misogyny affect students of different genders.

3.2. Curriculum Content — Relationships Education

The programme covers the following areas of relationships education across relevant year groups:

- Families and the nature of committed relationships, including marriage;
- Respectful relationships, including friendships — online and offline;
- Online relationships and digital safety, including the positive and negative aspects of social media, cyberbullying, and establishing a healthy digital footprint;
- Being safe — recognising exploitation, grooming, coercion and abuse;
- Consent — its meaning, active communication, and recognition in others;
- Misogyny, violence against women and girls (VAWG), and the factors that contribute to them including pornography, incel culture and the absence of positive male role models. Students are taught to recognise, challenge and report misogynistic attitudes and behaviours;
- The criminal nature of image-based abuse (including revenge porn and upskirting), strangulation, grooming, sexual coercion and exploitation;

- The influence of the media and online content on attitudes to sex and relationships, including body image, mental health and pornography;
- The growing threats of sextortion, non-consensual image sharing, deepfakes and AI-generated content;
- Mental health and wellbeing in the context of relationships, including emotional regulation, healthy sleep and the interaction between lifestyle and wellbeing;
- Signposting to school-based and community support services.

3.3. Curriculum Content — Sex Education

The following sex education content is delivered in addition to the statutory Science curriculum:

- ☐ The full range of contraceptive choices, sexual health, and sexually transmitted infections;
- ☐ Accurate and up-to-date information on reproduction, including the facts and choices around pregnancy, termination, and assisted conception;
- ☐ The law on sexual activity, sexual consent, forced marriage and FGM, including the Gillick competencies;
- ☐ Students' rights to confidentiality and access to health services;
- ☐ An understanding of the protected characteristics and their relevance to sexual health and relationships.

Sex education is primarily delivered in the Trinity term of the Third Form, with prior and subsequent content delivered through the PSHE programme. As the school becomes co-educational, delivery arrangements for sex education will be reviewed, including the use of single-sex groupings where pedagogically appropriate.

3.4. Links to Other Curriculum Areas

RSE in PSHE lessons is complemented by and linked to learning in:

- ☐ Science (Integrated Science and Biology): reproduction, STIs, contraception, puberty;
- ☐ Religion and Philosophy: ethical perspectives on relationships, loss, family, faith views on sex and marriage;
- ☐ Economics: financial aspects of relationships and family life;
- ☐ Computing: online safety and digital literacy.

3.5. Assessment and Evidence

Students' knowledge and understanding is assessed through classroom discussion, formative assessment activities, and end-of-topic summary forms. Evidence of learning may include presentations, written work, group work, observations, Microsoft Forms, or OneNote. Evidence is collected without detriment to learning outcomes themselves.

4. Safe and Effective Practice

4.1. Safe Learning Environment

RGS ensures a safe learning environment by deploying trusted, professional, and trained practitioners to deliver content. Ground rules are established by the teacher with students at the

start of each year and reinforced periodically to ensure mutual respect and confidentiality within the learning group.

Research shows that attempts to shock or scare young people into making healthy choices are rarely effective. Students will be reassured that the majority of young people make positive, healthy lifestyle choices.

4.2. Sensitive Issues and Distancing Techniques

Distancing techniques are used to enable vulnerable students to reflect on sensitive issues without putting themselves at risk. Students are given the opportunity to ask questions directly or anonymously; questions are answered sympathetically, honestly, and factually. If a question goes beyond the sex education covered by the school, or relates to content from which a student has been withdrawn, the teacher will signpost the student to appropriate sources of support inside or outside the school.

4.3. Confidentiality

Students are made aware that some information cannot be held confidentially. If certain disclosures are made, the information may be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

4.4. SEND

RSE is accessible for all students. In delivering RSE to those with SEND, the school is mindful of preparing for 'adulthood outcomes' as set out in the SEND Code of Practice. The school recognises that some students with SEND may be more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues, and this is taken into account in planning and delivery. Differentiated resources and approaches are used as appropriate.

4.5. Support for Students

Students are made aware of the counselling, mentoring and health support services available within the school and through external agencies, including:

- ☐ Brook: www.brook.org.uk
- ☐ NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- ☐ PSHE Association: www.pshe-association.org.uk
- ☐ Sex Education Forum: www.sexeducationforum.org.uk

5. Openness and Engagement with Parents and Stakeholders

5.1. Parental Partnership

RGS recognises that parents and carers are the primary educators of their children in matters of relationships and sex. The school works in partnership with parents to support them in preparing their children for happy and fulfilled relationships in adult life.

This policy is published on the school website. Parents are kept informed through newsletters and information evenings throughout the year, at which specific materials and resources are shared and recommended.

5.2. Transparency and Access to Teaching Materials

In line with the 2025 statutory guidance, the school is committed to transparency with parents about RSHE content. Parents may request to view the teaching materials used to deliver RSHE. Requests should be directed to the Head of PSHE, who will arrange access to relevant resources in a timely manner. Any deviation from this published RSE policy in delivery will be communicated to parents in advance.

5.3. Governors

Governors contribute to and are kept informed about the RSE policy and curriculum through the Education Committee. At least one Governor representative is involved in the policy review process. Governors may undertake observations of RSE lessons to ensure consistency of teaching and the safety of students.

5.4. Student Voice

Student voice is actively used to ensure the RSE programme meets the needs of the students it serves. Students regularly contribute through feedback questionnaires, student councils, and student working groups. Student voice is influential in adapting planned learning activities and will be particularly important as the school's curriculum evolves during the co-educational transition.

5.5. Co-educational Transition — Parent Communication

The school recognises that the move to co-education from 2027 will raise questions from parents about RSHE provision. The school commits to proactive, transparent communication with parents about how the programme is being developed and adapted in response to the transition, including clear information about delivery arrangements for sensitive topics.

6. Specific Issues Statement

RSE and PSHE at RGS will actively promote principles which encourage respect for all people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Sensitive or potentially contested issues will be dealt with on a factual, accurate, and impartial basis, in line with the school's values and its commitment to fundamental British values. No attempt will be made to promote one particular viewpoint on matters where reasonable people hold different views, but students will be encouraged to evaluate the moral, legal, and social implications involved and to develop their own informed positions.

Due regard will be given to the distinctive perspectives on relationships and sex held by different faith and cultural groups within the school community, whilst ensuring that all teaching is consistent with relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010.

Lessons will be designed and delivered to ensure that males are not stigmatised as perpetrators of abuse or harmful behaviour, nor females as victims. It will be made clear that: the majority of young men hold respectful attitudes; boys and young men can be victims of abuse, exploitation and coercive relationships; girls and young women have agency and are not taught as though vulnerability is their defining characteristic.

Teaching will ordinarily be delivered to whole classes. Teachers are not able to act as confidential counsellors to individual students on sexual matters, but will signpost students to appropriate sources of support within and outside the school.

RSE and PSHE lessons and resources are developed in consultation with the SENCO and Learning Support Department to ensure that the needs of students with SEND are appropriately considered. Particular attention is given to accessibility for all students, including the use of visual aids, differentiated resources, and drawing on form tutors' personal knowledge of their students to accommodate individual learning needs.

All teachers at RGS receive regular safeguarding training and are fully aware of safeguarding procedures. Any questions regarding the Safeguarding Policy or its implementation should be directed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

7. Right to Withdraw from Sex Education

Parents and carers have the legal right to withdraw their child from some or all of sex education that is not part of the statutory Science curriculum, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education or Health Education, which the government regards as important for all students.

Parents considering withdrawal should be aware that a student's lack of accurate information on sexual matters could expose them to misinformation, embarrassment, distress, or exploitation. It is likely that students will encounter this information from other sources outside the classroom.

7.1. Process for Withdrawal

Parents or carers who wish to withdraw their child from sex education should contact the Head of PSHE in the first instance. A written request for withdrawal will be required. The school will then arrange a meeting with the parents or guardian and, as appropriate, with the student, to ensure that their wishes are fully understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum content in question. A record of all withdrawal decisions is maintained by the school.

Parents will be notified in advance when sex education lessons are scheduled and will be given the opportunity to raise concerns or submit a withdrawal request at that time.

7.2. Student Right to Opt In

Where a student is three terms away from turning 16, they have the legal right to opt back into sex education regardless of a parental withdrawal request. The school will take active steps to ascertain

the student's own wishes at this point and, if they wish to receive sex education, will make appropriate provision.

7.3. Withdrawal Arrangements

Where a student is withdrawn from sex education, the school will ensure they receive purposeful and appropriate education during the period of withdrawal. The specific arrangements will be agreed with parents at the time of withdrawal.

8. Safeguarding

RSE plays a vital preventive role in meeting the school's safeguarding obligations, helping students learn about safety, risk and healthy relationships from an early age. This policy links to and is informed by the school's Safeguarding Policy and the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024), as well as the Anti-Bullying Policy, SMSC policy, and PSHE policy

Teachers are aware that effective RSE, which builds understanding of what is and is not appropriate in a relationship, can lead to a disclosure of a child protection issue. In such cases, the teacher will follow the school's safeguarding procedures and consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

8.1. Visiting Speakers and External Agencies

Where visiting speakers are invited to deliver elements of the RSE curriculum, testimonials are sought from other schools and a member of staff briefs them in advance on the school's safeguarding procedures. Visiting speakers are accompanied by a member of RGS staff and logged on the SMSC Register. Prior to delivery, the school will meet with the external speaker to confirm that the school is content with the content and tone of the presentation.

If a visiting speaker receives a disclosure from a student, they will refer this immediately to the accompanying member of staff, who will follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

Observations of RSE lessons may be undertaken by Governors, members of the Senior Leadership Team and the Head of PSHE to ensure consistency of teaching and student safety.

9. Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

The school's RSE provision is monitored and evaluated by the Head of PSHE and reported to the Education Committee of the Board of Governors.

Students have the chance to review and reflect on their learning in RSE lessons through peer discussion, feedback questionnaires and question-and-answer sessions. Student voice is used to ensure provision adequately meets their needs and is influential in adapting planned learning activities.

The Head of PSHE will annually review current provision against the recommendations of the PSHE Association to ensure best practice is being implemented.

Teachers will reflect on their professional practice in delivering RSE through personal development conversations with their Head of Year or the PSHE Coordinator. They are encouraged to share best practice through peer observation and to seek training to keep their professional knowledge current. The contribution of visiting speakers and external agencies to RSE provision is monitored and evaluated by the Head of PSHE.

10. Related Policies and Statutory Documents

10.1. Related School Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

Senior:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- PSHE Policy
- SMSC Policy

Whole School:

- Safeguarding Policy

10.2. Statutory and Guidance Documents

This policy is informed by:

- Education Act (1996).
- Learning and Skills Act (2000).
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education updated July 2025.
- Equality Act (2010) and The Equality and Human Rights Commission Advice and Guidance provides advice on avoiding discrimination in a variety of educational contexts.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – statutory safeguarding guidance (2024).
- SEND Code of Practice – Statutory Guidance.
- SMSC Requirements for Independent Schools guidance for independent schools on how they should support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in schools guidance for maintained schools on promoting basic important British values as part of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC).
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying advice for schools, including advice on cyberbullying.
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools advice for schools.
- Behaviour and Discipline in Schools advice for schools, including advice for appropriate behaviour between pupils.

11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in Trinity 2027 by the Head of PSHE in consultation with the Heads of Section, the Assistant Head (DSL), the Senior Deputy Head, and the Education Committee of the

Board of Governors. The Trinity 2027 review will incorporate both the requirements of the 2025 statutory guidance (mandatory from September 2026) and the preparations required for the school's co-educational transition in September 2027.

The policy will thereafter be reviewed at least every 18–24 months to ensure it continues to meet the needs of students, staff, and parents and remains aligned with current DfE guidance.