



Relationship and Sex Education Policy

Adopted by Utopia - for review by the Board of Directors
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Last amended - September 2024

For review - Annually

Overview

The purpose of a whole school Relationships and Sex Education policy is to:

- Explain the definition, aims and objectives of RSE.
- Describe what we teach and the approaches we use.

This policy helps ensure that the whole school community (pupils, parents/carers, staff, and governors) have a shared understanding of this important area of the curriculum. It is accessible to all stakeholders on the school website or by request. As a school which values personal development in our children and young people we ensure our RSE is up to date and regularly evaluated. This is a working document which provides guidance and information on all aspects of RSE and aims to provide a secure framework within which staff can work. The term Relationships and Sex Education, RSE, is used in this policy rather than Sex Education. This is to stress that our approach goes beyond provision of biological information to also focus on clarifying attitudes and values, and developing self-esteem and the skills to manage relationships.

Definition

Sex and relationships education is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. Some aspects are taught in science, and others are taught as part of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). In addition RSE will be embedded in to all conversations that staff have with young people at Utopia, no matter the lesson. Staff recognise the unique position we hold as trusted adults within the lives of our learners and will use all and every opportunity to promote positive and appropriate relationships and impart learning when opportunity presents itself. It is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of a stable and loving relationship. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health as well as preparing students at school for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity. Our curriculum is also designed to support children growing up in an increasingly complex and digital world. Whilst the internet is an overwhelmingly positive development in our lives, it does present significant challenges, particularly for young people. The dominance of social media, the prevalence of cyber-bullying and the risk that children learn about relationships from untrustworthy sources - we aim to support children to make the right decisions and keep themselves safe and happy by delivering RSE in an age appropriate way.

Statutory Requirements

As an Independent Special School, we must provide RSE to all students as per section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, and the new statutory Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education 2020. In teaching RSE, we are required to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996 in addition to Sections 406 and 407 of the Education Act 1996 and Part 6, chapter 1 of the [Equality Act 2010](#). The Public Sector Equality Duty (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

Policy Development

This policy will be reviewed annually and developed in conjunction with staff, learners and parents so that our provision of RSE is fit for purpose and appropriate to the needs of the young people who attend Utopia.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of RSE is to equip children and young people with the information, skills and values to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships, and to take responsibility for their sexual health and wellbeing. Effective RSE can make a significant contribution to the development of the personal skills needed by students if they are to establish and maintain relationships. It also enables young people to make responsible and informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. Effective RSE is essential if young people are to make responsible and well informed decisions about their lives. It helps support young people through their physical, emotional and moral development. It helps young people learn to respect themselves and others and move with confidence from childhood through adolescence into adulthood.

Addressing Relationships and Sex Education has three main elements enabling pupils to:

- Explore their own and other peoples 'attitudes and values.
- Develop and practice personal and social skills.
- Increase their knowledge and skills.

This Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy is underpinned by the ethos and values of our school and we uphold it as an entitlement for all our pupils. We recognise the need to work as a whole school community to ensure a shared understanding of RSE and the under-pinning values and to deliver an effective programme that meets the needs of our pupils.

Utopia teaches RSE within the following moral and values framework based on the following principles:

- The right of people to hold their own views within the boundaries of respect for the rights of others.
- The acceptance of the responsibility for and the consequences of personal actions
- The right not to be abused by or taken advantage of by other people.
- The right to accurate information about relationships.
- An awareness of the way another person feels.
- The value of stable loving relationship
- Mutual support and co-operation.
- Honesty and openness.
- Self-respect.

Attitudes and values

Learners are helped to examine the value of family life, marriage, and stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children. They are also encouraged to explore and consider moral dilemmas. RSE can also help young people to develop a good self-image and high self-esteem, responsibility and the ability to make informed decisions.

Personal and social skills

RSE encourages learners to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively whilst developing self-respect and empathy for others. Young people are taught to make choices based on an understanding of difference, with an absence of prejudice and learning how to recognise

and avoid exploitation and abuse. It also provides opportunities to develop communication skills and assertiveness within a range of different situations.

Knowledge and understanding

RSE focuses on understanding physical development at appropriate stages. The young people will explore; human sexuality, reproduction, sexual health, emotions and relationships. Learners will also be provided with information on contraception and the range of local and national sexual health advice support services. Young people will look at the reasons for delaying sexual activity, the benefits to be gained from such delay and the avoidance of unplanned pregnancy. This will provide an objective and balanced view of sexual matters, correcting any misconceptions and misinformation students may have gained.

Delivery of RSE at Utopia

RSE is taught discretely through the personal development activity programme, but a number of related themes are also delivered through a range of other curriculum areas. For example, the Science curriculum will be used to deliver aspects that relate to biological and anatomical factors and our PSHE curriculum will explore more specific issues in relation to social factors. Some themes might also be covered in assemblies or presentations and external facilitators will be used to deliver project based work.

Utopia recognise the need to create a supportive and secure atmosphere where students can develop the confidence needed to talk, listen and think about relationships and sex education. In order to do this, staff will:

- Establish ground rules with students
- Emphasise the importance of mutual respect
- Encourage reflection
- Make students aware of the relevant persons to approach within the organisation if support is needed.

RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds. The Utopia RSE curriculum will focus on the 5 key areas of;

- Families
- Respectful relationships (including friendships)
- Online and media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships (including sexual health)

Before leaving Utopia learners will have learned about families;

- that there are different types of committed, stable relationships.
- how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children.
- what marriage is, including their legal status e.g. that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony.
- why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into.
- the characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships.

- the roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting.
- how to: determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy: judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships); and, how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.

Before leaving Utopia learners will have learned the following about relationships;

- the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online) including: trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. This includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship.
- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships.
- how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice).
- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs.
- about different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help.
- that some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control.
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable.
- the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal.

Before leaving Utopia learners will have learned the following about media and the online environment;

- 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 someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online.
- not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them.
- what to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online.
- the impact of viewing harmful content.
- that specifically sexually explicit material e.g. pornography presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners.
- that sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail.
- how information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online.

Before leaving Utopia learners will have learned the following about being safe;

- the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships.
- how people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn (in all contexts, including online)

Before leaving Utopia learners will have learned the following about intimate relationships and sexual health;

- how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship.
- 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.
- the facts about reproductive health, including fertility, and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women and menopause.
- that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others.
- that they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex.
- the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available.
- the facts around pregnancy including miscarriage.
- that there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, 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) and the importance of and facts about testing.
- about the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment.
- how the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour.
- how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

Specialist support

Utopia also recognises that some aspects of RSE must be taught by specialists. From time to time the College will invite professional health experts in to deliver issues relating to RSE.

These will be asked to conform to the following:

- Visitors contributing to RSE will do so at the invitation of Utopia and will be qualified to make an appropriate contribution
- Visitors must agree with the aims of the organisation in delivering its policy on RSE
- When in class visitors will be supervised by a teacher who will be present at all times
- Visitors will follow the Utopia's Safeguarding procedures if a disclosure occurs within the classroom setting
- Visitors will know and understand where their contribution fits into Utopia's programme for RSE and Citizenship.

Dealing with sensitive issues

All teachers are given training on handling controversial topics, are made clear about confidentiality boundaries and know where/who to refer learners to for confidential advice and support. RSE is part of Utopia's provision for Spiritual, Moral Social and Cultural development. The following are protocols for discussion based lessons with students:

- No one (teacher or student) will have to answer a personal question
- No one will be forced to take part in a discussion
- Meanings of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way
- Teachers may use their discretion in responding to questions and may say that the appropriate person to answer that question is a parent/carer
- It is expected that teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes will not influence their teaching of RSE
- If at any point a disclosure is made by a learner it is the responsibility of the member of staff to follow the schools' safeguarding policy and notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL. Staff must also register any concerns for a learner on CPOMs before notifying the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL.

Parental right to withdrawal from RSE

RSE is part of all learners' education and it is hoped that all will participate. Some parts of RSE are compulsory - these are part of the National Curriculum for Science. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the [non-statutory/non-science] components of sex education within RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this. Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the Head of Centre. A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The head of Centre will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action. When the HOC receives such a letter they will invite the parents/carers to a meeting, at which they will explain clearly what the organisation's policy is and seek to accommodate the wishes and/or concerns of the parents/carers. If that is not possible the pupil will be withdrawn from RSE and placed in another class where suitable work and supervision will be provided.

Roles and responsibilities

Policy implementation will be overseen by the board of governors with overall responsibility falling on the Head of centre for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school.

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual students
- Responding appropriately to students whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the components of RSE
- Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSE are encouraged to discuss this with the Principal

Learners are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity. SEND learners will be provided with support and differentiated resources as appropriate which will ensure RSE is accessible to them.

Procedure for monitoring and evaluating RSE

The policy and its implementation will be reviewed every 12 months. The policy will be monitored by the Head of Centre whose responsibility it is to:

- Ensure that RSE is covered in the schemes of work for PSHE
- Monitor the use of teaching and learning styles through learning walks
- Monitor the use of teaching materials through work scrutiny
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the schools programme
- Ensure the content is age appropriate.

Further information and resources

<http://www.brook.org.uk/>

<http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/home.aspx>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/Explore/SexRelationships/Pages/SexRelationships.aspx>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-and-free-school-funding-agreements-multi-academy-trust>

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/section/34/enacted>