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| <b>Title</b>            | <b>Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Cross References</b> | <p><b>External:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance</li> <li>Education Act 1996</li> <li>Children and Social Work Act 2017</li> <li>Equality Act 2010</li> <li>Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026</li> </ul> <p><b>Internal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy</li> <li> Online Safety Policy</li> <li> SEND Policy</li> <li> Equality Policy</li> <li> PSHE Curriculum Policy</li> <li> Anti-Bulling Policy</li> </ul> |
| <b>Date</b>             | <b>October 2026</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## 1. Policy Statement

Apricot Online Ltd recognises Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) as an important part of preparing children and young people for safe, healthy and fulfilling relationships and adult life. Effective RSE supports students to make informed decisions, understand consent and boundaries, recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships, respect themselves and others, and know how to seek help.

Apricot Online provides remote alternative education to students with a wide range of needs and experiences. RSE within our provision must therefore be sensitive, inclusive, age-appropriate and responsive to individual starting points, SEND, prior education, emotional wellbeing and safeguarding needs.

Apricot may deliver RSE as part of a wider programme commissioned by a school or local authority. Where Apricot is not responsible for the student's full curriculum, we will work with the commissioner to understand the content Apricot is expected to deliver and how this contributes to the student's overall statutory entitlement.

## 2. Aims

Through appropriate RSE teaching, Apricot aims to help students:

- develop respectful, healthy and safe relationships;
- understand consent, personal boundaries and the right to say no;
- recognise coercion, control, abuse, harassment and exploitation;
- develop self-respect, confidence and respect for others;
- understand the physical, emotional and social aspects of relationships and sexual health at an appropriate stage;
- make informed and responsible decisions;
- challenge myths, stereotypes and harmful attitudes;
- understand how relationships and sexual behaviour can be affected by online environments;
- recognise risks associated with sharing intimate images, pornography, grooming, sexual harassment and manipulated or AI-generated sexual imagery;

- develop communication, decision-making, assertiveness and help-seeking skills; and
- know where to obtain reliable information, advice and support.

### **3. Curriculum and Delivery**

RSE may be delivered through PSHE and, where relevant, through subjects such as Science, Citizenship, Religious Studies and other curriculum areas. Content will be planned according to the age, developmental stage, needs and prior learning of students and the scope of the commissioned provision.

Teaching will be factual, balanced and inclusive. It will not promote sexual activity or any particular sexual orientation. Students will be supported to understand different families, relationships and identities in an age-appropriate way and to treat others with dignity and respect.

Teachers will establish appropriate expectations for respectful discussion. Students will not be required to disclose personal experiences, sexual activity, relationships, identity or other private information as part of a lesson.

### **4. RSE in an Online Setting**

Because Apricot teaches remotely, staff must consider privacy and safeguarding when discussing sensitive subjects online.

- Staff should remind students that personal experiences do not need to be shared during lessons.
- Teachers should use professional, age-appropriate language and approved curriculum resources.
- Sensitive questions should be handled carefully, particularly where other people may be within earshot in the student's home.
- Students should be offered an appropriate way to raise a question or concern where discussing it openly in a group would be unsuitable.
- Staff must remain alert to comments, messages, disclosures or changes in behaviour that may indicate a safeguarding concern.
- Staff must not use personal messaging or social-media accounts to continue sensitive discussions with students outside approved Apricot systems.
- Where online content is used, teachers should consider reliability, age appropriateness, accessibility and the risk of students being directed towards harmful material.

### **5. Consent, Healthy Relationships and Safeguarding**

RSE will support students to understand that consent must be freely given, informed, specific and capable of being withdrawn. Students should understand that pressure, threats, manipulation, intoxication, fear or an imbalance of power can affect a person's ability to consent.

Teaching will help students recognise features of healthy relationships, including respect, trust, communication and boundaries, and identify warning signs of unhealthy, controlling, coercive or abusive relationships.

Where a lesson or discussion gives rise to a safeguarding concern, the member of staff must follow Apricot's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. RSE teaching must never be used to investigate a child's personal circumstances.

## **6. Online Relationships, Sexual Imagery and Pornography**

RSE should reflect the reality that relationships and sexual pressures can occur through social media, messaging, gaming, video platforms and other online spaces.

Age-appropriate teaching may include:

- online consent and boundaries;
- grooming, coercion and sexual exploitation;
- pressure to send or share intimate images;
- the risks and potential consequences of sharing sexual images or videos;
- sexual harassment and abusive online behaviour;
- pornography and the difference between sexualised media and healthy real-life relationships;
- image manipulation, deepfakes and AI-generated sexual imagery;
- privacy, digital footprints and reporting harmful content; and
- how to seek help when something has happened online.
- Any concern involving intimate imagery of a child, including AI-generated or manipulated sexual imagery, must be managed as a safeguarding matter. Staff must not ask a student to forward such images or save them to a personal device.

## **7. Inclusion, Equality and SEND**

RSE will be inclusive and will be delivered in accordance with Apricot's equality duties. Students should be able to see that healthy relationships, respect, safety and consent apply to everyone.

Apricot will make reasonable adjustments for students with SEND and additional needs. This may include simplified language, visual support, additional processing time, repetition, smaller steps, accessible resources or individualised approaches where appropriate.

Staff should be sensitive to the fact that some students may have experienced trauma, abuse, exploitation, bullying or difficulties relating to identity or relationships. Teaching should be supportive without making assumptions about a student's personal experience.

## **8. Sexual Orientation and Identity**

Questions relating to sexual orientation and identity will be handled honestly, sensitively and in an age-appropriate way. Apricot will challenge homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and other discriminatory bullying or harassment.

Teaching will not seek to influence a student towards any particular sexual orientation or identity. The focus will remain on factual information, safety, respectful relationships, equality and the wellbeing of students.

## **9. Parents, Carers and Commissioners**

Apricot recognises the important role of parents and carers in relationships and sex education and will work constructively with families and commissioning bodies.

Where Apricot is commissioned to deliver RSE, the commissioning body should make clear the curriculum expectations, relevant student needs and any agreed arrangements relating to parental withdrawal.

Parents/carers may contact Apricot to discuss the content or delivery of RSE within the student's Apricot programme. Where responsibility for the statutory RSE programme sits with the commissioning school or local authority, Apricot will liaise with that body as appropriate.

#### **10. Right to Withdraw**

There is no right to withdraw a child from Relationships Education or from those elements of sex education that form part of the statutory Science curriculum.

Parents/carers may have a right to request withdrawal from some or all of the non-statutory Science elements of sex education delivered as part of RSE, subject to the statutory framework and the student's age.

Where Apricot is delivering RSE on behalf of a commissioning school or local authority, any withdrawal request will be discussed with the commissioner so that responsibilities and arrangements are clear. Apricot will not independently override a decision that properly rests with the commissioning body.

Any request relating to withdrawal should be considered sensitively and should include discussion of the nature and purpose of the curriculum and the student's needs.

#### **11. Confidentiality and Disclosures**

Teachers will create a safe environment for discussion but cannot promise absolute confidentiality. Students should understand that information may need to be shared if a member of staff is concerned that they or another person may be at risk of harm.

Students will be encouraged to speak to a trusted parent/carer or another appropriate adult where it is safe to do so and will be signposted to appropriate sources of advice and support.

Where a student makes a disclosure, staff must listen, avoid leading questions, record the concern appropriately and report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

#### **12. Sexual Activity and Safeguarding**

Information suggesting that a young person is sexually active must be considered carefully and in context. Staff must not make assumptions or undertake their own investigation.

Any information indicating abuse, exploitation, coercion, a significant age or power imbalance, inability to consent, harmful sexual behaviour or another safeguarding concern must be reported promptly to the DSL.

Where a young person seeks advice about sexual health, staff should maintain professional boundaries, follow safeguarding procedures and signpost or refer to appropriate health or support services. Decisions about confidentiality and information sharing will be made in accordance with safeguarding responsibilities and the young person's circumstances.

### **13. Dealing with Questions**

Students should be able to ask appropriate questions without embarrassment or ridicule. Teachers will:

- answer questions honestly and factually within the boundaries of the curriculum and the student's age and needs;
- say when they do not know an answer rather than speculate;
- avoid inviting or encouraging personal disclosures in front of other students;
- defer a question where answering it in a group would be inappropriate or unsafe;
- signpost students to reliable sources of information where appropriate; and
- follow safeguarding procedures where a question or comment suggests that a student may be at risk.

### **14. Staff Training and Resources**

Staff delivering RSE should be appropriately confident in the subject matter, understand Apricot's safeguarding procedures and know how to manage sensitive questions and disclosures in an online environment.

Resources should be factual, age-appropriate, inclusive, accessible and suitable for the needs of the student cohort. Materials should be reviewed where concerns arise or where guidance and emerging online risks change.

### **15. Monitoring and Review**

Apricot will review RSE provision through appropriate curriculum and quality assurance processes and through feedback from staff, students, parents/carers and commissioners where relevant.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where changes to statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements, curriculum expectations or Apricot's operating model make this necessary.

**Authorised by:** Jodie Phillips, Operations Director

**Date:** October 2026

**Review Date:** October 2027