# RSE Policy

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# 1. Introduction

At Waterside School, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is a vital part of our curriculum and safeguarding culture. It supports learners to understand themselves, develop healthy and respectful relationships, and stay safe in both offline and online contexts. As a specialist SEND school supporting learners primarily with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, we recognise that many learners benefit from clear, explicit and carefully structured teaching in this area.

RSE provides learners with accurate, age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate information about relationships, boundaries, consent, sexual health, identity and wellbeing. Teaching is designed to reduce vulnerability, support emotional regulation, and help learners recognise unsafe situations and seek help.

RSE is not about promoting sexual activity. It is about giving learners the knowledge, language and confidence they need to understand relationships, respect themselves and others, and make informed and safe choices as they grow older.

All RSE teaching at Waterside School is underpinned by trauma-informed practice. Lessons are delivered in a predictable, supportive and emotionally safe way, recognising that some learners may have experienced adversity, abuse or disrupted relationships in the past.

# 2. Our Intent for RSE

The intent of RSE at Waterside School is to ensure that all learners receive a **full-time, suitable and age-appropriate curriculum**, in line with **Independent School Standards Part 1, paragraph 2(a)**. RSE is designed to meet the needs, abilities and developmental stages of our learners and to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

Through RSE, learners are supported to:

- Understand different types of relationships and what makes them healthy or unhealthy
- Recognise and respect personal boundaries and the boundaries of others
- Understand consent and how to seek help if they feel unsafe
- Develop confidence in communication and self-advocacy
- Understand physical and emotional changes associated with puberty and adulthood
- Reduce vulnerability to exploitation, abuse and harm

RSE contributes directly to outcomes within Ofsted's **Personal Development**, **Behaviour and Attitudes**, and **Safeguarding** judgement areas, and supports learners to feel safer, more informed and more confident over time.

# 3. Statutory and Legal Framework

This policy reflects the requirements of:

- The **Children and Social Work Act 2017**
- DfE statutory guidance for **Relationships Education and RSE**
- **Independent School Standards (ISS) Part 1**
- The **Equality Act 2010**
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

RSE at Waterside School meets statutory requirements and is delivered as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Teaching is inclusive and does not discriminate against learners with protected characteristics. This includes disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief. Teaching reflects the reality of modern society and promotes respect, equality and understanding, supporting learners to develop attitudes that align with fundamental British values.

# 4. What Is Taught in RSE

RSE at Waterside School is taught progressively and is carefully sequenced to build understanding over time. Content is adapted to reflect learners' cognitive, emotional and social development, with flexibility to revisit learning as needed.

## 4.1Relationships

Learners learn about different types of relationships, including family relationships, friendships, peer relationships and romantic or intimate relationships. Teaching explores what makes relationships positive, respectful and supportive, and how conflict or difficulties can arise.

Learners are supported to understand communication, trust, empathy and emotional regulation within relationships. This includes learning how to express feelings safely, listen to others, and resolve disagreements appropriately. Online relationships are addressed explicitly. Learners learn how online interactions may differ from face-to-face relationships and how to stay safe when communicating digitally.

## 4.2 Respect, Boundaries and Consent

A core element of RSE is teaching about boundaries and consent. Learners learn that everyone has the right to personal boundaries and that consent must be freely given, informed and can be withdrawn at any time.
Teaching makes clear that pressure, manipulation or coercion means consent is not present. Learners are supported to recognise situations where boundaries are not being respected and to understand how to seek help from trusted adults.

This learning is particularly important for learners with SEND, who may be more vulnerable to exploitation or misunderstanding social cues.

## 4.3 Puberty and Physical Development

Learners are taught about the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty in a factual, sensitive and age-appropriate way. Teaching helps learners understand what changes to expect and reassures them that these changes are a normal part of growing up.

Lessons are adapted to individual needs and delivered in a way that supports dignity, emotional safety and understanding.

## 4.4 Sexual Health and Intimacy

As learners mature, they are taught about sexual health, including reproduction, fertility and different types of intimacy, including online interactions. Teaching focuses on safety, respect and wellbeing rather than behaviour.

Learners learn about contraception and parenthood within the context of healthy, respectful relationships, with an emphasis on communication, shared responsibility and informed decision-making.

## 4.5 Staying Safe, Abuse and Exploitation

Learners are taught to recognise unsafe or abusive behaviours, including grooming, sexual harassment, emotional abuse, coercion, exploitation and violence. Teaching includes recognising warning signs both offline and online.

Learners are supported to understand that abuse is never the fault of the victim and that help is available. Clear information is provided about how to report concerns and who to speak to in school and beyond.

This content supports the school's safeguarding duties and helps reduce risk by increasing awareness and confidence.

# 5. How RSE Is Delivered

RSE is delivered as part of the wider PSHE curriculum and usually taught through timetabled sessions. Due to the needs of our learners, RSE may also be delivered through small group or one-to-one sessions where this is more appropriate.

Teaching is structured, predictable and supportive. Clear ground rules are established to ensure learners feel emotionally safe. Lessons are delivered in a calm, non-judgemental way, with opportunities for learners to ask questions and check understanding.
Teaching is adapted in line with the SEND Code of Practice. High-quality teaching, differentiation and personalisation are central to ensuring accessibility for all learners. Some elements of RSE are also taught through the Science curriculum, where statutory requirements apply.

# 6. Safeguarding and Managing Disclosures

Safeguarding is integral to RSE at Waterside School. Learners may disclose concerns or experiences during lessons. Staff do not promise confidentiality and always follow the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Any concerns are reported promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL. Teaching staff are trained to respond calmly, sensitively and appropriately to disclosures.

# 7. Staff Training and Support

All staff delivering RSE receive training to ensure they are confident and prepared to teach sensitive content. Training reinforces that teaching must be factual, inclusive and free from personal bias.

The Deputy Headteacher undertakes ongoing professional development to remain up to date with statutory guidance and best practice.

# 8. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Headteacher** has overall responsibility for ensuring RSE is compliant with statutory guidance and ISS requirements. They manage parental requests for withdrawal from Sex Education.

The **Deputy Headteacher** coordinates curriculum planning, delivery and evaluation, ensuring content is suitable, sequenced and responsive to learner need.

**Teaching staff** deliver RSE sensitively, establish clear boundaries, monitor learner understanding and report safeguarding concerns.

**Learners** are expected to engage respectfully and contribute appropriately to learning activities.

## 9. Monitoring and Review

RSE provision is monitored through lesson observations, learner voice, work scrutiny and staff feedback. External contributions are evaluated, and findings are used to improve practice.

This policy is reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and Governing Body to ensure it remains compliant with statutory guidance and inspection expectations.

## 10. Working with Parents and the Right to Withdraw

RSE is designed to complement the role of parents and carers. Parents are consulted on policy development and have access to curriculum information via the school website.

Parents cannot withdraw their child from Relationships Education. They may request withdrawal from some or all Sex Education (excluding statutory Science content) up to three terms before their learner turns 16. Requests must be made in writing to the Headteacher.

From three terms before turning 16, learners have the legal right to opt into Sex Education themselves.