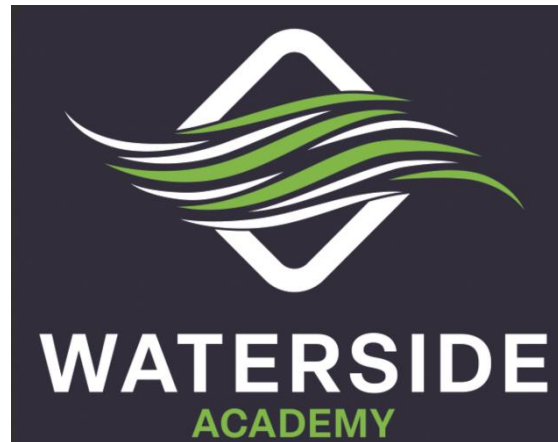




Sex and Relationships (RSE) Policy

Policy Details

Status:	In-house
Frequency of review:	Annual
Lead member of staff:	Stephanie Larner
Last reviewed:	January 2026
Next Review Date:	January 2027

1. Definition and Rationale

1.1 Definitions

- Relationships education focuses on how to form and sustain positive relationships, including friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and adults. It does not involve explaining the detail of sexual activity, but can cover sensitive topics such as sexual violence to keep children safe.
- Sex education covers the physical, emotional and social aspects of human sexuality, including reproduction, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, and the skills to make informed choices about sexual health and relationships. This goes beyond the biological aspects covered in the science curriculum.

1.2 Legal Framework

This policy ensures compliance with the DfE's Relationships, Sex and Health Education statutory guidance (July 2025), which comes into effect in September 2026.

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 make RSE compulsory for all secondary pupils.

1.3 Our Vision and Values

We believe RSE is important because it equips pupils with the knowledge, skills, and values to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, relationships, and sexual health, and prepares them for adult life.

Our RSE provision is underpinned by our school values, which are:

Our School Values and your Rights



Inclusion

Respect other people's space – words and actions.

Everyone has the **right to feel safe** (Article 19). Don't touch, push, or use hurtful words. Give people **space** and treat them with **kindness**. **All children have rights, regardless of their abilities or disabilities** (Article 2).



Communication

Speak kindly and respectfully to everyone.

You have the **right to speak and be heard** (Article 13), but so does everyone else.

Use respectful words with adults and friends – how we speak shows our respect



Aspiration

Let everyone learn. Everyone has the **right to an education** (Article 28).

That means we all need to listen, stay focused, and not stop others from learning too.



Nurture

Be open to help and advice – in learning and behaviour.

You have the **right to grow and learn in the best way for you** (Article 29).

When adults or friends give help or feedback, it's to support you, not to judge you.



At Waterside we believe every child has the right to learn and thrive safely (Articles 28 & 31).

Staying where you're meant to be helps keep everyone safe and focused.

In RSE lessons, and across the wider school, the following principles are continuously reinforced:

- Respect for self and others
- Acceptance of diversity, including sexual orientation and gender identity
- Understanding that consent and mutual respect are essential in relationships
- Recognition that kindness and care require more than just consent
- Appreciation of family life in its various forms

1.4 Intended Outcomes

Pupils will:

- Understand physical, emotional and social changes during adolescence
- Develop skills to maintain healthy relationships and make informed decisions about sexual health
- Know how to recognise and report risks, abuse and exploitation (online and offline)
- Understand the law relating to relationships, sex, consent and sexual health
- Know how to access support services
- Develop critical thinking to challenge stereotypes and misinformation
- Respect diversity and understand protected characteristics

1.5 Equality and Inclusivity

We comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

LGBTQ+ Inclusivity: We teach about all protected characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Same-sex relationships are integrated throughout the curriculum (not as standalone lessons). We teach the facts and law about biological sex and gender reassignment, acknowledging significant debate exists without endorsing any particular view. We avoid materials that oversimplify topics, perpetuate stereotypes.

SEND: High-quality teaching ensures accessibility for all pupils. We recognise pupils with SEND may be more vulnerable to exploitation and bullying. The curriculum is adapted in partnership with our SENCO, with additional pastoral support for vulnerable pupils.

Cultural and Religious Sensitivity: We respect diverse cultural and religious beliefs. We may teach faith perspectives while ensuring all teaching reflects the law. We are clear when delivering content that reflects religious belief.

Families: We recognise families of many forms (single parent, same-sex parents, grandparents, adoptive/foster parents, kinship carers). We ensure no stigmatisation based on home circumstances.

1.7 Guiding Principles

Our curriculum is developed through:

- Engagement with pupils to ensure relevance
- Transparency with parents about all materials used
- Positivity - promoting healthy norms, avoiding language that normalises harmful behaviour

- Careful sequencing - equipping pupils before experiences occur, to prevent harms
- Relevance - age/stage appropriate, responsive to local issues
- Skilled delivery - participative education by trained staff who create safe environments
- Whole school approach - supported by behaviour and safeguarding policies, creating zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny, homophobia and sexual violence/harassment

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Governing Body

- Ensures the school has an up-to-date RSE policy meeting statutory requirements
- Ensures adequate resourcing
- Receives regular reports on provision and impact
- **Named governor with oversight: [ADD NAME]**

2.2 Headteacher

- Ensures effective policy implementation
- Manages withdrawal requests from parents
- Ensures staff training and support
- Monitors quality of provision
- Reports to governors

2.3 RSHE Lead: Stephanie Larnier-Pickin

- Coordinates planning and delivery across the school
- Ensures curriculum meets statutory requirements
- Supports staff with planning, resources and training
- Monitors and evaluates quality
- Manages external provider relationships
- Liaises with parents
- Works closely with the DSL

2.4 Teachers:

- Deliver lessons in line with policy and scheme of work
- Create safe, supportive learning environments
- Respond appropriately to questions
- Follow safeguarding procedures for disclosures
- Differentiate for all pupils
- Assess learning and provide feedback

2.5 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Supports staff with safeguarding issues arising from RSE
- Has knowledge of local resources and issues
- Maintains links with police and other agencies

2.6 All Staff

- Model positive behaviours and respectful relationships

- Challenge sexism, misogyny, homophobia and harmful stereotypes
- Follow safeguarding procedures
- Reinforce RSE messages across the curriculum

2.7 Staff Training

Staff receive RSE training on a variety of topics to support the effective delivery of curriculum content in a way which supports pupil development.

Training includes:

- Statutory curriculum requirements
- Safeguarding and handling disclosures
- Creating safe learning environments and establishing ground rules
- Understanding and responding to SEND needs
- Using distancing techniques and managing sensitive discussions
- Challenging harmful stereotypes and promoting equality
- Other specific topics according to the needs of pupils throughout the academic year

Staff receive training at induction and annual updates.

3. Curriculum Design

3.1 Overview

RSE is embedded in our PSHE curriculum and supported by science. We use PSHE Association resources, which are evidence-based and aligned with statutory requirements. The curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced so pupils build knowledge and skills cumulatively.

3.2 Data Informing Our Programme

We use:

- PSHE Association Resources
- NSPCC Resources
- NHS England
- Local Crime data
- CPS
- This list is not exhaustive

3.3 Key Topics by Key Stage

Details of when specific topics are taught can be found in the curriculum learning journey and in planning documentation.

Key Stage 3:

Families and Relationships

- Different types of families and relationships
- Healthy friendships and managing conflict
- Respect, boundaries and consent
- Recognising and reporting unhealthy relationships

Puberty and Emotional Changes

- Physical and emotional changes during puberty
- Menstruation and gynaecological health
- Managing emotions and building resilience
- Body confidence and self-esteem

Online Safety and Relationships

- Online relationships and digital friendships
- Recognising online risks (grooming, exploitation)
- Sharing images online and the law
- Managing peer pressure online

Introduction to Sexual Health

- Basic understanding of contraception
- Introduction to STIs
- Where to access sexual health services

Key Stage 4:

Healthy Relationships and Consent

- Characteristics of healthy intimate relationships
- Understanding consent, including the law
- That sex can and should be enjoyable and positive for those ready and over the age of consent
- That many young people wait until they are older
- Recognising and resisting pressure
- That kindness and care require more than just consent

Sexual Health and Accessing Services

- Detailed contraception (including male and female condoms)
- STIs including HIV (transmission, prevention, testing)
- HIV prevention drugs (PrEP and PEP) and how to access them
- Accessing sexual health services confidentially
- All pregnancy options with medically accurate information (keeping baby, adoption, abortion)
- Countering misinformation and accessing accurate information
- How alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour

Recognising and Responding to Harm

- Sexual harassment (unsolicited sexual language/attention/touching, upskirting, pressuring others)
- Sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour, domestic abuse (concepts and laws)
- That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences
- FGM, virginity testing and hymenoplasty (damage caused and that they're criminal offences)
- Grooming, exploitation and forced marriage (concepts and laws)
- Where to seek support

Managing Peer Pressure and Challenging Harmful Norms

- How pornography presents distorted views of sexual behaviour
- Challenging sexism, misogyny and harmful gender stereotypes
- Links between sexism, misogyny and violence against women and girls
- Understanding most boys and young men are respectful
- Positive conceptions of masculinity and femininity

Diverse Relationships and Gender Roles

- Different types of committed relationships
- Marriage, civil partnership and their legal status
- That 'common-law marriage' is a myth
- That forced marriage and marrying before 18 are illegal
- Same-sex relationships and LGBTQ+ inclusivity
- Facts and law about biological sex and gender reassignment
- Roles and responsibilities of parents

The Law and Relationships

- Age of consent
- Laws relating to sexual violence, harassment, domestic abuse
- Forced marriage and FGM
- Online safety laws

3.4 Links to Other Curriculum Areas

RSE links to:

- **Science:** [ADD - e.g., "Puberty, reproduction, STIs, menstrual cycle"]
- **Computing:** [ADD - e.g., "Online safety, digital relationships, data protection"]
- **Citizenship:** [ADD - e.g., "Rights and responsibilities, the law, equality"]
- **PE:** [ADD - e.g., "Physical health, body image, healthy lifestyles"]

The PSHE/RSE lead works with colleagues to ensure RSE complements (not duplicates) other curriculum areas.

3.5 Differentiation and Assessment

Lessons are differentiated through:

- Additional support for SEND pupils (working with SENCO)
- Range of teaching methods (visual aids, discussion, role play, case studies, multimedia)
- Adaptive teaching methods
- Pre-teaching where needed
- Small group/one-to-one support where appropriate

RSE is assessed through:

- End-of-unit assessments
- Pupil self-evaluation
- Teacher assessment of knowledge and skills
- Observation of participation

4. Safe and Effective Practice

4.1 Creating a Safe Learning Environment

We ensure safety by:

- Establishing clear ground rules at the start of each unit
- Using distancing techniques (such as case studies and scenarios rather than personal examples)
- Providing question boxes for anonymous questions

- Providing factual information backed-up with data
- Creating an atmosphere encouraging openness while maintaining boundaries
- Ensuring pupils understand how confidentiality will be handled
- Never promising confidentiality

4.2 Ground Rules

Ground rules are shown to pupils at the start of every RSHE lesson on the following slide:



The slide features a dark blue background with a green and white wavy graphic on the left. The title 'RSHE Ground Rules' is in large white text. Below it, eight ground rules are listed in white and green text. At the bottom left, the text 'Inclusion | Communication | Aspiration | Nurture' is displayed. At the bottom right is the 'WATERSIDE ACADEMY' logo, which includes a stylized green and white wave icon and the text 'WATERSIDE ACADEMY'.

RSHE Ground Rules

1. We all have the right not share anything we are not comfortable with
2. We will not ask each other personal questions or intentionally embarrass each other
3. We agree to contribute positively to Waterside RSHE lessons
4. We will listen to each other without interrupting and show respect for other people's views even if they are different to our own
5. We do not assume that we know what somebody else's feelings, experiences or opinions might be
6. What is shared in the room stays in the room, unless somebody is at risk of harm
7. We will support each other and let adults know if we need to talk more about a particular topic or issue
8. We challenge opinions, not people

Inclusion | Communication | Aspiration | Nurture

WATERSIDE ACADEMY

4.4 Answering Questions

Questions are answered honestly, age-appropriately, using correct terminology. If a question goes beyond our sex education curriculum or relates to content from which a pupil is withdrawn, teachers will:

- Acknowledge and thank the pupil
- Explain the topic isn't covered or the pupil is withdrawn
- Suggest discussing with parents/carers or trusted adult
- Signpost to support services (school nurse, Childline)
- Not ignore the question
-

Anonymous questions **may** be used as part of lesson content and these are reviewed by teachers, and answered appropriately or referred to DSL if raising safeguarding concerns.

4.5 Single-Gender Sessions

Sessions delivered to single genders may be offered where appropriate (e.g., menstruation, puberty) but used in ways that avoid stigmatising boys or making girls feel responsible for protecting themselves. Both genders have opportunities to understand experiences different from their own.

4.6 Staff Protocol

All staff delivering RSE content:

- Follow safeguarding policy
- Are supported by the PSHE lead and DSL
- Have access to centralised planning, resources and lesson plans for each lesson
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Model positive behaviours and how to respond to opinions different to our own
- Challenge inappropriate language/behaviour
- Know how to respond to disclosures

5.5 Engaging with Governors

Governors contribute to the RSE policy and are informed about the curriculum through:

- Annual presentation of the RSE policy to the governing body for review
- Review of curriculum content by governors
- Governor link visits

5.6 Policy Development

This policy was produced by the PSHE Lead in consultation with SLT, staff, governors, pupils and parents through surveys, focus groups and information evenings to ensure the voices of all stakeholders have been given the opportunity to be heard in developing the RSE policy across the school.

6. Right to Withdraw from Sex Education

6.1 The Right to Withdraw

Parents have the right to request withdrawal from some or all sex education content, but not:

- Relationships education
- Health education
- Biological aspects of reproduction taught in science

6.2 The Process

To request withdrawal, parents should contact the Headteacher by calling the office phone on 01512575985 to discuss withdrawal

Before granting a request, the RSHE lead and Headteacher will:

- Meet with parent/carers (and child if appropriate)
- Discuss the benefits of sex education and detrimental effects of withdrawal (including social/emotional impacts and likelihood the child will hear peers' version of lessons)
- Clarify which parts are sex education (can be withdrawn) vs relationships/health education (cannot be withdrawn)
- Document the discussion

6.3 Exceptional Circumstances

The Headteacher can refuse a request in exceptional circumstances (e.g., where there are safeguarding concerns or specific vulnerabilities relating to the child). Reasons will be explained clearly to parents.

6.4 Pupils' Right to Opt Back In

Three terms before turning 16, pupils can opt back into sex education. The school will:

- Inform pupils of this right
- Provide opportunity to discuss their options with a trusted adult
- Respect the pupil's decision
- Make arrangements to provide sex education if they opt back in

6.5 Alternative Provision

Pupils withdrawn from sex education will receive purposeful education during withdrawal. Their learning will link to other aspects of RSHE and focus on embedding curriculum content in a meaningful way.

7. Safeguarding

7.1 Links to Safeguarding

This policy supports our safeguarding approach and links to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (statutory guidance)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (statutory guidance)
- Waterside's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Waterside's Anti-Bullying Policy
- School Online Safety Policy
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools (DfE advice)

7.2 RSE and Prevention

RSE has a key role in preventative education by:

- Teaching about healthy relationships and what constitutes abusive behaviour
- Helping children understand consent, boundaries and respect
- Teaching how to recognise risks and harms (online and offline)
- Equipping children with knowledge and confidence to report concerns
- Challenging harmful attitudes (sexism, misogyny, homophobia, gender stereotypes)

7.3 Handling Disclosures

Effective RSE can lead to disclosures. If this occurs, staff will:

- Listen carefully without interrupting
- Reassure the child they're being taken seriously and will be supported
- Not promise confidentiality
- Make clear they'll share information with the DSL
- Record the disclosure accurately using the child's own words
- Report concerns to the DSL (or deputy) as soon as practically possible

Teachers should consult the DSL:

- If they have any concerns about a child's welfare
- If unsure whether something constitutes a safeguarding concern
- For advice on responding to sensitive questions/situations#

7.4 Confidentiality

Pupils are informed at the start of RSE units:

- How confidentiality will be handled
- That staff cannot keep safeguarding concerns confidential
- What might happen if they make a report
- Where to report concerns (including external services like Childline if they don't feel comfortable talking to school staff)

7.5 Supporting Vulnerable Pupils

Additional pastoral support is available to vulnerable pupils including:

- Those at risk of exploitation
- Those with experiences of trauma
- Those known (or previously known) to children's social care
- Those with SEND who may be more vulnerable
- Looked after and previously looked after children

Support is decided in partnership with SENCO, DSL and pastoral team.

7.6 Creating a Culture of Safety

We create a culture of safety by:

- Making clear sexual violence and harassment are unacceptable and never tolerated
- Ensuring pupils understand anyone can be a victim regardless of personal characteristics (eg: being male, older etc)
- Making clear victims are never to blame
- Challenging everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes
- Modelling positive behaviours
- Taking all reports seriously and acting quickly, consistently and effectively
- Creating an environment where pupils feel they can report concerns and will be supported

7.7 Addressing Sexual Harassment and Violence

Our RSE curriculum:

- Teaches about consent, boundaries and respect
- Helps pupils understand what constitutes sexual harassment and violence
- Makes clear such behaviour is unacceptable and never the victim's fault
- Teaches how to recognise unhealthy/abusive relationships
- Equips pupils with knowledge and confidence to report concerns and where to seek support
- Challenges harmful attitudes and behaviours

This is supported by our whole-school approach, including safeguarding procedures, creating zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny, homophobia and sexual violence/harassment.

8. Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

8.1 Responsibility

RSE provision is monitored and evaluated by the RSHE lead and reported on by senior leaders to governors annually.

8.2 Monitoring Methods

Monitoring includes, but is not limited to:

- **Lesson observations by PSHE lead and senior leaders**
- **Review of pupil work**
- **Staff feedback through meetings and surveys**
- **Pupil voice surveys and focus groups**
- **Learning walks**
- **Review of planning and resources**
- **Analysis of assessment data**

8.4 External Contributors

Contributions from external partners are carefully chosen and evaluated through:

- Review of materials and lesson plans in advance
- Staff feedback on quality and impact
- Observation of sessions by school staff
- Pupil feedback surveys after sessions
- Follow-up discussions with providers

8.5 Working with External Agencies

We work with external agencies such as Merseyside Fire & Rescue, LFC foundation, Know Knife Crime, PSHE association and others, who deliver specific content to pupils to enhance RSE delivery. Waterside Academy are responsible for ensuring:

- Credentials and qualifications are checked
- Lesson plans and materials are reviewed in advance
- Materials are age-appropriate, accurate and unbiased
- Visitors work within our RSE policy and whole-school approach
- Safeguarding procedures are understood and followed
- Visitors are briefed on who to contact if safeguarding concerns arise
- Visitors are supervised by school staff and never left alone with pupils where DBS certificates have not been provided

External contributors enhance (not replace) teaching by school staff.

8.6 Pupil Voice

Pupil voice influences curriculum through:

- Pupil Voice meetings and discussions
- Pupil Voice surveys
- Focus groups with specific year groups
- End of topic discussions in class

8.8 Quality Assurance

The governing body ensures:

- All pupils make progress in achieving expected outcomes
- RSE is well led, effectively managed and well planned

- Quality of provision is subject to regular self-evaluation
- Teaching is accessible to all pupils with SEND
- Clear information is provided for parents
- RSE is adequately resourced, staffed and timetabled

9. Policy Review

9.1 Review Date and Process

This policy will be reviewed annually

It will be reviewed by the RSHE Lead in consultation with staff, pupils, parents and governors

As part of the review, we will:

- Consult with staff, pupils, parents and governors
- Review feedback and evaluation data
- Check for changes to statutory guidance or legislation
- Consider emerging issues in the school or wider community
- Update curriculum content and resources
- Ensure the policy reflects our school's values and ethos

This ensures the policy continues to meet the needs of pupils, staff and parents and remains in line with current DfE advice and guidance.

9.2 Policy Approval

This policy was approved by the governing body on **(Date)** _____

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Chair of Governors (Name): _____

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Headteacher (Name): _____

9.3 Publication

This policy is:

- Published on the school website at **www.watersideacademy.co.uk**
- Available in hard copy from the school office on request
- Provided to all staff at induction
- Shared with parents through the school website and at progress days

9.4 Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- PSHE Curriculum Overview
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

END OF POLICY