

# Durston House

## Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

### Aim of the Policy

- to set out the school's approach to statutory Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

### Objectives of the Policy

- to provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- to prepare pupils for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- to help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- to create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships
- to teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies
- to complement all relevant school policies and procedures found on DurstonNet, including the **Pastoral Care** and **Safeguarding Policies**

### Introduction

We aim to offer pupils a carefully planned programme on human development, relationships, sexuality and family life within a safe, comfortable atmosphere and in a relaxed relationship between teacher and pupil. The programme is set within a moral framework and matched to the pupils' level of maturity. It forms part of the school's aim to foster pupil well-being and to develop resilience and strength of character. This policy reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum and reflects the statutory guidance from the Department for Education "[Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education](#)" (DfE, 2019) and the PSHE Association's supplementary guidance "Writing your school's relationships and sex education (RSE) policy" (PSHE Association, September 2018).

### Rationale and Ethos

At Durston House School, RSE is underpinned by the ethos and values of our school. Our vision is to create a safe, positive and stimulating environment in which all members of the school community learn and grow in confidence, knowledge and skills.

Through our combined RSE and PSHME curriculum, we aim to provide children with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to lead confident, healthy, independent lives and to become informed, active, and responsible citizens. In providing children with an understanding of healthy and respectful relationships and appropriate boundaries, we consider effective RSE to be a fundamental part of our approach to supporting pupils to grow into confident, caring, responsible and respectful young citizens.

RSE is lifelong learning about personal, physical, moral and emotional development. It is set in the context of clear values about the understanding of the importance of stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care for family life. It should teach children and young people to develop and form positive values, attitudes, personal and social skills, and increase their

knowledge and understanding of how to make informed decisions and life choices.

Up to and including Key Stage 2 we define Relationships Education as learning about caring friendships, families and people who care for me, respectful relationships, online relationships, being safe, growing up, puberty and mental well-being. Sex Education is covered in Relationships Education as well as aspects of sex education being covered in the National Science Curriculum. Sex education is defined as preparing pupils for the changes that adolescence brings and the scientific process of how a baby is conceived and born. Relationships Education provides an excellent forum to provide pupils with life skills that will enable them to make informed decisions and protect themselves against harmful and exploitative situations. Relationships Education is therefore a tool to safeguard children.

In Years 7 & 8 (Key Stage 3) RSE is about the emotional, social, and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity, and personal identity. RSE should enable students to make informed and appropriate choices as they become young adults and to develop responsible attitudes to sexual activity and the development of their own stable, loving relationships. RSE contributes to the foundation of PSHE, Citizenship and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development and offers a valuable vehicle for promoting equality between individuals and groups. It involves an exploration of human and social diversity, and a fostering of self-worth whilst recognising, accepting and respecting differences.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is taught as part of the Personal, Social, Health, Moral and Economic (PSHME) education curriculum in our school. The RSE programme is overseen (and taught in Years 3 – 8) by the Head of PSHME. The Pre-Prep PSHME Coordinator leads the RSE programme from Reception to Year 2, while the Reception Teachers deliver this to their designated Form Classes and the Head of Pre-Prep to all pupils in Year 1 and 2.

Teaching staff will receive ongoing training in the delivery of the RSE curriculum through dedicated staff meetings, led by the Head of PSHME with the support of external experts as required.

As a school we recognise the need to work with parents and carers to ensure a shared understanding of RSE and to deliver an effective programme that meets the needs of our pupils.

The content of this policy is being developed in relation to the needs of our pupils and in consultation with school staff and Governors. As is required by the new statutory guidance, parents are consulted on the relevant content within the policy. This consultation is completed by way of an online questionnaire, the results are analysed by the Assistant Head (Academic) and Head of PSHME and, where necessary, adaptations are made to the policy. We believe that this process ensures that the curriculum we provide for our pupils is reflective of the requirements placed upon us and also of the needs of our school community.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Our aim is to provide RSE that is relevant and tailored to meet the needs of our pupils, depending on their age and stage of personal development. For this reason, we regularly

review the RSE curriculum to evaluate its effectiveness and will inform parents of any revisions to the school policy or curriculum as required.

Teachers will continually reflect on the effectiveness of our PSHME provision, and the Head of PSHME and the Pre-Prep PSHME Co-ordinator will gather staff views and feedback. Pupil feedback will also be used to inform reviews and updates to planning, resources and activities.

This policy will be reviewed by the Head of PSHME, in consultation with the Assistant Head (Academic), every two years. This is then approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT).

## **The RSE Curriculum**

Effective Relationships and Sex Education can make a significant contribution to the development of the personal skills needed by pupils if they are to establish and maintain positive, healthy relationships. It also enables young people to make responsible and informed decisions about their health and wellbeing

At Durston the RSE & PSHME curriculum has been created using specific programme building guidance from the PSHE Association, which was selected for its approach to topics from Year 1 – 8, the building blocks it provides our pupils for life moving to Senior School, and the variety of teaching methods and resources.

The programme consists of three core themes:

- *Health and Wellbeing*
- *Relationships*
- *Living in the Wider World*

All three themes are developed in an age-appropriate way and apply across topics. These include:

- *Families and Friendships*
- *Safe Relationships*
- *Respecting Ourselves and Others*
- *Belonging to a Community*
- *Media Literacy and Digital Resilience*
- *Money and Work*
- *Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing*
- *Growing and Changing*
- *Keeping Safe*

Within Years R-2, RSE is approached using the Questions Model, which is structured around an overarching question for each term or half term. These begin as ‘What?’ and ‘Who?’ questions and build throughout into ‘Why?’ and ‘How?’ questions. The three core themes from the programme are covered in each term. Teaching builds according to the age and needs of the pupils throughout the phase with suggested developmentally appropriate learning objectives given to respond to each key question.

Within Years 3-8, RSE is approached using the Cross-Phase Model and the Thematic Model, which is designed to support planning in preparatory or middle schools, covering all three of

the core themes of the Programme of Study over six half terms. The topics are arranged in a manner that allows for timely exploration at an appropriate point in the school year and pupils' experiences. It provides a carefully sequenced curriculum that builds knowledge, skills and attributes year on year, as the core themes are revisited. Whilst the curriculum covers all of the new statutory Relationships and Health education content for Key Stage 2 and Lower Key Stage 3, aspects of the Key Stage 3 curriculum more suitable for Year 9 pupils are not included.

## **SMSC**

The RSE programme enables SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) provision and the teaching of fundamental British values across all topics and year groups.

Respecting and valuing differences, embracing diversity, and challenging discrimination, recognising, and respecting feelings and boundaries, developing healthy relationships, and understanding rules, rights and responsibilities in school, family, and wider community, are all themes that recur throughout the programme.

Further information regarding the school's commitment to incorporating SMSC within the curriculum can be found in the **SMSC Policy**.

## **Non-Statutory Sex Education**

As part of statutory Health Education, children are taught in an age-appropriate way about puberty and the associated physical and emotional changes from Year 3 onwards. From Year 5, as part of the Science curriculum, pupils learn about how reproduction occurs in some plants and animals. The DfE guidance 2019 also recommends that all primary schools have a sex education programme tailored to the age and the physical and emotional maturity of pupils, and this should include how a baby is conceived and born. Although sex education is not compulsory in primary schools, we believe children should understand the facts about human reproduction. We therefore provide some non-statutory sex education, covering how human reproduction and conception occurs.

We recognise that children in younger year groups may ask questions that cannot be answered without reference to content from older year groups. Should this occur, we will respond by telling them that they will learn about that when they are older. Please see the relevant section within this policy for further information on how teachers manage difficult questions in RSE.

We believe that teaching this additional content to pupils will ensure that they are better prepared for transition to secondary school and support their personal and social development as they grow into young adults. As is legally prescribed, parents have a right to withdraw their children from these additional non- statutory sex education lessons – please see the relevant section within this policy regarding this process.

## **Delivery**

All elements of the RSE programme will be delivered in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner as part of our regular weekly timetabled PSHME lessons.

Occasionally, appropriate and suitably experienced and/or knowledgeable visitors from outside

school may be invited to contribute to the delivery of RSE in school. All visitors will be familiar with and understand the school's RSE and Safeguarding policies and be expected to work within them.

## **Teaching and Learning Strategies**

We aim to provide an environment and atmosphere for RSE where pupils feel safe, relaxed, unintimidated, and focused; and where they have confidence and trust in the knowledge, ability, and skills of staff in school. This ensures that both pupils and staff feel fully confident in engaging in age-appropriate discussions around potentially sensitive topics and themes.

We aim to build age-appropriate ground rules with all year groups which are revised regularly to ensure they are still relevant. They should also be revisited before the start of each lesson as a reminder to pupils.

Examples of ground rules are:

- listening to and respecting what other people say
- not saying personal things about other people
- using the correct words for all parts of the body
- having the right to pass
- establishing age-appropriate confidentiality and safeguarding.

Children and teachers are free to suggest and agree further ground rules as appropriate to the topic of each lesson.

Other teaching and learning strategies utilised in RSE (and across the PSHME curriculum) to establish a safe learning environment include the following techniques:

- Using 'distancing' techniques such as role play, case studies, videos to depersonalise sensitive issues.
- Anonymous question boxes. These can help children to have the confidence to ask sensitive questions, and they provide an opportunity for teachers to pre-empt questions that might not be age appropriate or that might raise safeguarding or child protection concerns.
- It will be emphasised to children that any voluntary sharing of information should be anonymous (for example "someone I know..." rather than "I" or naming names). Should personal questions be asked of either children or staff, children will be reminded that the ground rules for RSE prohibit personal questions. Although staff may draw on their personal experiences to answer certain questions, for example around menstruation, this should always be depersonalised and discussed in the third person rather than the first person. All staff teaching RSE will be supported and advised by the Head of PSHME, where necessary.

## **Managing Difficult Questions**

During both formal and informal RSE sessions, pupils are encouraged to ask questions. Any questions from pupils are answered according to the age and maturity of the pupil concerned, and if the teacher delivering the session deems it appropriate to answer.

Teaching staff will endeavour to answer questions as openly as possible but if faced with a question

they do not feel comfortable answering within the classroom, or that is not age-appropriate (or within the school's RSE policy), provision may be made to address the individual child/young person's requirements. The school believes that individual teachers must use their professional skill and discretion in this area and refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they are concerned about any question from a safeguarding perspective.

If a teacher does not know the answer to a question or if a question is felt to be inappropriate, this should be acknowledged and, if considered necessary, may be followed up outside the classroom environment with individual pupils.

Children may also be referred to their parents/carers who have ultimate responsibility in talking to their children about sensitive matters. We will also encourage parents to talk with school if they have any questions or queries, and if they would like advice on how to better support their child and continue learning outside of the classroom.

### **Recording and Assessment**

Pupils will have the opportunity to reflect on their learning within lessons and at the end of each unit. In addition to the pupils' self-assessment, teachers will assess through informal methods, such as observations and class or group discussions. Observations may have a particular focus; such as children's listening skills, empathy etc. Quizzes may be used before and after a unit of work to aid assessment.

Elements of RSE that occur in the science curriculum will be assessed through recorded work to establish age related expectations of knowledge and understanding.

### **Safeguarding**

In providing children with an understanding of healthy relationships and appropriate boundaries, we consider RSE to be an important part of our school's approach to safeguarding.

Teachers are aware that effective RSE, which brings an understanding of what is and what is not appropriate in a relationship, can lead to a disclosure of a child protection issue. Teachers will take these matters seriously and speak to the child away from the class as a matter of priority. Teachers will draw their concerns to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or the Assistant Head (Pastoral), the Head of Pre-School or Head of Pre-Prep (Deputy Safeguarding Leads). (See also *Safeguarding Policy*)

We may occasionally engage the expertise of other appropriate external partners to work with us to provide advice and support to children regarding RSE and Health Education. Such visits should be arranged in consultation with the Head of PSHME and the Head of Complementary Curriculum. These sessions are in addition to, and intended to complement, our existing RSE provision. Where external partners are involved, teachers will have discussed and shared the planning and content of the sessions with visitors in advance. A class teacher will always be present and responsible for classroom management. Visitors supporting the delivery of RSE will follow the agreed ground rules and the protocols set out above regarding any safeguarding or child protection concerns.

### **Inclusivity**

#### ***Special Educational Needs and Learning Differences***

Our pupils have different needs based on their emotional and physical development, life

experiences, and learning differences, but we aim to ensure that all pupils are properly included in RSE. Teachers will plan and deliver work in a variety of ways, to meet the needs of individual pupils with SEND or learning differences. We focus on activities that increase a pupil's assertiveness, communication and relationship skills, their self-esteem and understanding.

### ***Equalities and Diversity***

Schools, like all public institutions, have specific responsibilities in relation to equality and protected characteristics. Planning and resources are reviewed to ensure they comply with equalities legislation and the school's **Equal Opportunities Policy**.

All RSE is taught without bias and in line with legal responsibilities such as those contained within the Equality Act (2010). Topics are presented using a variety of views and beliefs so that pupils can form their own, informed opinions but also respect others who may have different opinions. The personal beliefs and attitudes of staff delivering RSE will not influence the teaching of the subject in school.

At Durston House we seek to recognise and embrace the diverse nature of our community. We aim to value and celebrate religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity as part of modern Britain. We will explore diverse cultural beliefs and values and encourage activities that challenge stereotypes and discrimination and present children with accurate information based on the law. We will use a range of teaching materials and resources that reflect the diversity of our community and encourage a sense of inclusiveness. We do not use RSE as a means of promoting any form of sexual orientation or gender.

### **The Role of Parents/Parental Right of Withdrawal**

We recognise that parents and carers are the primary providers of RSE for their children. Our RSE curriculum is designed to support and complement this. We aim to build a positive and supportive relationship with parents and carers through mutual understanding, trust, and co-operation.

In promoting this we will:

- Inform parents about the school's RSE policy and practice
- Answer any questions that parents may have about RSE for their child
- Take seriously any issues or concerns that parents raise.

We believe that all the content within our school's PSHME curriculum, including RSE, is of the utmost importance and relevance to all pupils. However, parents have the legal right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all **non-statutory** sex education other than that which is part of the National Curriculum for Science.

Please note there is no parental right of withdrawal from Relationships Education or Health Education content within the school curriculum, or from any **statutory** sex education that forms part of the National Curriculum for Science. These are statutory requirements which the DfE mandates schools to teach; please see the statutory guidance from the Department for Education "[Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education](#)" (DfE, 2019) if further information is required. This unit is taught throughout the year in all year groups.

Please note Sex Education lessons are kept entirely separate from Puberty lessons if any parents are exercising the right to withdraw their child from non-statutory sex education. Puberty forms part of statutory Health Education and therefore pupils cannot be withdrawn from these.

We will inform parents of the right to withdraw by letter in advance of non-statutory sex education lessons being taught. Parents and carers who wish to exercise their right to withdraw their child from non-statutory sex education should talk with the Form Teacher, the Head of PSHME or the Director of Studies who will explore any concerns and discuss resources being used.

If parents still wish to withdraw their child from non-statutory Sex Education lessons, this request will be recorded, and suitable alternative arrangements made for pupils during relevant lessons. The issue of withdrawal will be handled as sensitively as possible. Parents should also understand that the decision to remove their child from these lessons means that they themselves will assume responsibility for talking to their children about any related sex education themes covered outside of National Curriculum Science.

### **Location and Dissemination**

Copies of this policy will be provided for teachers. Further copies are available on the school website and from the school office on request from parents.

### **Staff Support and Training**

Durston House believes in the importance of appropriate staff training to enable staff to deliver effective RSE. The Head of PSHME and Pre-Prep PSHME Co-ordinator have already attended CPD on delivering the curriculum and will assist staff involved in the delivery of RSE.

### ***Evaluation of this Policy***

*This policy will be evaluated biennially by the school, amended where necessary and approved by SMT.*

<i>Updated for Co-educational School</i>	<i>September 2023</i>	<i>SMT</i>	<i>Version 1</i>
--	-----------------------	------------	------------------



## APPENDIX 1

### Teaching Strategies in RSE

Ground Rules – help to create a safe environment for both teacher and pupil. A basic template for ground rules is provided for staff to use as a starting point. These should be discussed, added to if necessary and agreed with each class before RSE lessons commence.

Distancing techniques – help to avoid embarrassment and protect privacy. Role play, case studies with invented characters, videos etc. can help children to discuss issues in a depersonalised, safe environment.

Dealing with questions - Where a topic is sensitive or potentially embarrassing, anonymous question boxes are a useful technique. Children's questions are written anonymously on paper. The following guidelines should be applied when responding to questions.

- The teacher should consider whether a question is appropriate before reading it out.
- If a question is very explicit, seems too old for a pupil, or inappropriate for a whole class session, explain that the question is not something that needs to be known at this age and move on.
- If a question is of a personal nature, remind the pupil of the ground rule: 'no personal questions'.
- If a teacher or member of staff does not know or is unsure of an answer, they will say so and explain that they will get back to the pupil later (and try to specify when).
- The Head of PSHME and the Pre-Prep PSHME Co-ordinator can always be consulted for support. It may be appropriate to liaise with parents/carers.
- Lengthy or complicated responses are not usually necessary. A simple and concrete piece of information offers clarity and may avoid confusion, for example, "At the moment we are looking at 'X', in secondary school you will look at 'Y' in more detail."
- Place within the context of the school's RSE curriculum. If the subject matter of a question does not fall within the appropriate RSE curriculum it should not be answered.
- If questions cause safeguarding or child protection concerns, follow the school's child protection procedures.

### Discussions

Discussion and reflection should be a part of the RSE lessons. Active learning ensures opportunities for considering beliefs and attitudes and for developing greater understanding. Watching a video or reading written material is used only to support or to complement wider structured activities.