

EDSTART SCHOOLS

RSE & Health Education Policy

CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT & OUTCOMES

Policy owner	EdStart Specialist Education Ltd
Applies to	EdStart Schools - All Sites
Category	Curriculum, assessment & outcomes
Approval and validity	September 2026 – September 2027
Review trigger	Annual review, or earlier following statutory, regulatory or operational change

Status: This 2026 version supersedes all previous versions.

Trust-wide implementation statement. This policy applies to all pupils, staff, leaders, contractors and visitors at EdStart Schools - All Sites. The Headteacher is responsible for implementation; the proprietor retains oversight and assurance. Where legislation or statutory guidance changes during the validity period, the current legal requirement takes precedence and this policy will be reviewed without delay.

September 2026 compliance update

Status of this section. The following provisions are explicit additions for EdStart Schools - All Sites. They supplement and, where wording conflicts, supersede the legacy source text reproduced below.

RSHE 2026 update

The Department for Education's updated Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) statutory guidance comes into force on 1 September 2026, replacing the 2019 guidance the legacy text below was written against. The curriculum is reviewed to include the new guidance content: the influence of misogyny and the 'manosphere' on attitudes to relationships, positive male role models, AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes, and updated content on LGBTQ+ relationships. Content on gender questioning children is delivered consistently with the trust-wide Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Transgender Policy, and is not taught as settled fact where DfE guidance on the point remains subject to change. Parents continue to be consulted on the RSE curriculum and retain their right to withdraw their child from RSE (not health education) up to and including three terms before the child turns 16, in line with the guidance. Staff delivering RSHE receive training on the updated content before it is taught. The curriculum names the following as explicit new content areas, taught age-appropriately at KS3/KS4: nicotine pouches alongside

tobacco and vaping (Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026); gaming monetisation and online gambling-related harms; sextortion, alongside the existing deepfake and AI-generated imagery content; positive masculinity and male role models; and knife crime, taught without fear-based framing. Fraser Guidelines and Gillick competence (Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech AHA, 1985) are named explicitly where the curriculum covers confidential health advice and a pupil's capacity to consent. Implementation is reviewed through the proprietor's annual compliance cycle, termly safeguarding and quality- assurance activity, incident analysis, pupil and parent voice, and earlier whenever legislation, statutory guidance or local arrangements change.

Additional themes named in the July 2025 guidance

The curriculum also explicitly names ethics beyond consent — that ethical, respectful behaviour in relationships goes further than the legal minimum set by consent law — and online misogyny, including incel culture, as a named influence on attitudes to relationships that pupils are taught to recognise and challenge.

On gender identity, EdStart follows the July 2025 statutory wording precisely: schools should not teach as fact that all people have a gender identity. Where this topic arises, it is handled sensitively, factually, and in line with the trust-wide Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Transgender Policy; pupils are always treated with dignity and respect regardless of how they identify.

At EdStart, we understand the importance of educating pupils about sex, relationships, and their health, so they can make responsible and well-informed decisions in their lives. RSE and health education helps to prepare pupils for opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life, whilst promoting the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils at school and in wider society. We have an obligation to provide pupils with high-quality, evidence and age-appropriate teaching of these subjects. The DfE states that children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal, and social lives in a positive way. RSE informs them about how to develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It enables them to know what a healthy relationship looks like; what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship. It covers contraception and developing safe intimate relationships. Aim of RSE and the Mission Statement Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and we believe that RSE is an integral part of this education. Furthermore, our school aims state that we will endeavour to raise pupils' self-esteem, help them to grow in knowledge and understanding, recognise the value of all persons and develop caring and sensitive attitudes. It is in this context that we strive to provide children and young people with a positive and prudent sexual education, which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological and emotional maturity, and rooted in EdStart's mission to support the whole child. This policy outlines how the school's RSE and health education curriculum will be organised and delivered, to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils.

Legal Framework

1.1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 from 1 September 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- DfE, 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education', July 2025 (in force from 1 September 2026, replacing the 2019 guidance)
- DfE (2015) 'National curriculum in England: science programmes of study'
- The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England)

Regulations 2019, as applied to independent schools via paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

- Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

1.1.2. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behavioural Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- E-safety Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Acceptable Terms of Use Agreement

Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. The governing body is responsible for:

- Ensuring all pupils make progress in achieving the expected educational outcomes.
- Ensuring the RSE and health education curriculum is well-led, effectively managed, and well-planned.
- Evaluating the quality of provision through regular and effective self-evaluation.
- Ensuring that teaching is delivered in ways that are accessible to all pupils with SEND.
- Providing clear information to parents on the subject content and the right to request that their child is withdrawn.
- Ensuring RSE and health education is resourced, staffed, and timetabled in a way that ensures the school can fulfil its legal obligations.

2.2. The headteacher is responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring all staff are suitably trained to deliver the subjects.
- Ensuring parents are fully informed of this policy.
- Reviewing all requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory elements of the RSE and health education curriculum.
- Discussing withdrawal requests with parents, and the child if appropriate, to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum, including the benefits of receiving the education.
- Ensuring withdrawn pupils receive appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.
- Encouraging parents to be involved in consultations regarding the school's RSE and health education curriculum.
- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis.
- Reporting to the governing board on the effectiveness of this policy and the curriculum.

2.3. The RSE and health education subject leader is responsible for:

- Overseeing the delivery of RSE and health education.

- Working closely with colleagues in related curriculum areas to ensure the RSE and health education curriculum compliments, and does not duplicate, the content covered in national curriculum subjects.
- Ensuring the curriculum is age-appropriate and of high-quality.
- Reviewing changes to the RSE and health education curriculum and advising on their implementation.
- Monitoring the learning and teaching of RSE and health education, providing support to staff where necessary.
- Ensuring the continuity and progression between each year group.
- Helping to develop colleagues' expertise in the subject.
- Ensuring teachers are provided with adequate resources to support teaching of the curriculum.
- Ensuring the school meets its statutory requirements in relation to RSE and health education.
- Leading staff meetings and ensuring all members of staff involved in the curriculum have received the appropriate training.
- Organising, providing and monitoring CPD opportunities in the subject.
- Ensuring the correct standards are met for recording and assessing pupil performance.
- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the subjects and providing reports to the Senior Leadership Team.

2.4. Subject teachers are responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with, and promoting, this policy
- Delivering RSE and health education in a sensitive way that is of a high-quality and appropriate for each year group.
- Ensuring they do not express personal views or beliefs when delivering the curriculum.
- Planning lessons effectively, ensuring a range of appropriate teaching methods and resources are used to cover the content.
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE and health education.
- Liaising with the SENDCO about identifying and responding to the individual needs of pupils with Send.
- Liaising with the RSE and health education subject leader about key topics, resources, and support for individual pupils.
- Monitoring pupil progress in RSE and health education.
- Reporting any concerns regarding the teaching of RSE or health education to the RSE and health education subject leader, the Head of Year, or a member of the SLT.
- Reporting any safeguarding concerns or disclosures that pupils may make as a result of the subject content to the DSL or Deputy DSL.
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents have requested to withdraw them from the non-statutory components of RSE, by providing them with alternative education opportunities.

2.5. The SENDCO is responsible for:

- Advising teaching staff how best to identify and support pupils' individual needs.
- Advising staff on the use of TAs in order to meet pupils' individual needs.

Organisation of the RSE and Health Education Curriculum

3.1. All schools providing secondary education, including independent schools such as EdStart, are required to deliver statutory Relationships Education and RSE, via paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Health education guidance does not formally apply to independent schools in the same way, but EdStart delivers it as good practice, consistent with pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

3.2. For the purpose of this policy, "relationships and sex education" is defined as teaching pupils about developing healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, and helping them to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others.

3.3. For the purpose of this policy, "health education" is defined as teaching pupils about how they can make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, and how physical health and mental wellbeing are interlinked.

3.4. The RSE and health education curriculum will be developed in consultation with teachers, pupils, and parents, and in accordance with DfE recommendations.

3.5. We will gather the views of teachers, pupils, and parents in the following ways:

- Questionnaires
- Meetings
- Letters
- Training sessions

3.6. The majority of the RSE and health education curriculum will be delivered through SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) Drop Down Days, tutor periods, assemblies, or dedicated additional lessons as required, with statutory elements taught via the science curriculum.

3.7. The RSE and health education subject leader will work closely with their colleagues in related curriculum areas to ensure the curriculum complements and does not duplicate the content covered in national curriculum subjects.

3.8. The curriculum has been developed in line with the DfE's 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' guidance.

3.9. The school will consider the context and views of the wider local community when developing the curriculum to ensure it is reflective of issues in the local area.

3.10. The school will consider the religious background of all pupils when planning teaching, to ensure all topics included are appropriately handled.

3.11. The RSE and health education curriculum is informed by topical issues in the school and wider community, to ensure it is tailored to pupils' needs, for example, if there was a local prevalence of specific sexually transmitted infections, our curriculum would be tailored to address this issue.

RSE subject overview

Statutory RSE and PSHE content map

The table below maps EdStart's RSE and PSHE provision against the July 2025 statutory guidance areas, as set out in the wider curriculum overview.

Statutory area	Content covered at EdStart
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Families	Types of families; marriage and civil partnership; forced marriage (illegal); common-law marriage myth; healthy family relationships
Respectful relationships	Healthy/unhealthy relationships; coercion; consent (including ethics beyond consent); pornography's influence; online misogyny and incel culture; positive masculinity; sexism
Online safety and awareness	Sharing intimate images; deepfakes; AI-generated imagery; sextortion; gaming/grooming; cyberbullying; media literacy; online gambling
Being safe	CSE; CCE; county lines; FGM; grooming; sexual exploitation; reporting routes (CEOP)
Intimate & sexual relationships, incl. sexual health	Consent; contraception; Fraser Guidelines and Gillick competence; STIs; pregnancy choices; sexual health services
Mental wellbeing	Characteristics of good mental health; coping strategies; resilience; stigma; help-seeking; gambling harms
Physical health and fitness	Activity levels; cardiovascular health; sleep; diet (cross-curricular with PE/Science)
Healthy eating	Diet; eating disorders; body image and media (cross-curricular with Science/Food)
Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping	Health and legal risks; nicotine pouches; peer pressure; help-seeking
Wellbeing online	Gaming monetisation; loot boxes and microtransactions; online gambling harms
Health protection and healthcare system	NHS navigation; Gillick competence; Fraser Guidelines; sexual health services
Personal safety	Knife crime (taught without fear-based framing); county lines; gangs; CCE; intimidation; anti-social behaviour; radicalisation and the Prevent duty
Basic first aid	DRABC; CPR; AED use; choking; burns; severe bleeding; calling 999

4.1. RSE will continue to develop pupils' knowledge on the topics taught at a primary level, in addition to the content outlined in this section. Families

4.2. By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- 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.
- The characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships.
- The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting.

4.3. Pupils will also know 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 recognise this in others' relationships.
- How to seek help or advice if needed, including reporting concerns about others.

Respectful relationships, including friendships

4.4. By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- 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 relationships.
- Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships.
- How stereotypes, particularly those based on sex, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, or disability, can cause damage, e.g., how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour.
- That in school and 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 seek help.
- The types of behaviour in relationships that can be criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control.
- What constitutes sexual harassment and violence and why these are always unacceptable.
- The legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, with reference to the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010, and that everyone is unique and equal. Online and media

4.5. By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- Their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities online, and that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts.
- About online risks, including that material shared with another person 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 they receive.

- 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 is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties, including jail.
- How information and data is generated, collected, shared, and used online.

Being safe

4.6. By the end of secondary school, pupils will be aware of:

- 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 – this includes online. Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

4.7. By the end of secondary school, pupils will be aware of:

- 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 and 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 both men and women.
- The 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 enjoy intimacy without sex.
- The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, their effectiveness, and options available.
- The facts around pregnancy including miscarriage.
- That there are choices in relation to pregnancy, with legally and medically 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) are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex and the importance of 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.

RSE Programmes of Study

The school is free to determine an age-appropriate, developmental curriculum which meets the needs of young people and includes the statutory content outlined in Relationships and Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education. 10 Health education subject overview The physical health and mental wellbeing curriculum will continue to develop pupils' knowledge on the topics taught at a primary level, in addition to the content outlined in this section. Mental wellbeing

By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- How to talk about their emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary.
- That happiness is linked to being connected to others.
- How to recognise the early signs of mental wellbeing concerns.
- Common types of mental ill health, e.g., anxiety and depression.
- How to critically evaluate when something they do or are involved in has a positive or negative effect on their own or others' mental health.
- The benefits and importance of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation and voluntary and service-based activities on mental wellbeing and happiness. Internet safety and harms

By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- The similarities and differences between the online world and the physical world, including the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparison with others online, over-reliance on online relationships, the risks related to online gambling, how information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online.
- How to identify harmful behaviours online, including bullying, abuse, or harassment, and how to report, or find support, if they have been affected by those behaviours. Physical health and fitness

By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- The positive associations between physical activity and promotion of mental wellbeing, including as an approach to combat stress.
- The characteristics and evidence of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, maintaining a healthy weight, including the links between an inactive lifestyle and ill health.
- About the science relating to blood, organ, and stem cell donation.

Healthy eating

By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- How to maintain healthy eating and the links between a poor diet and health risks, including tooth decay and cancer. Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco

By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- The facts about legal and illegal drugs and their associated risks, including the link between drug use and serious mental health conditions.
- The law relating to the supply and possession of illegal substances.
- The physical and psychological risks associated with alcohol consumption and what constitutes low risk alcohol consumption in adulthood.

- The physical and psychological consequences of addiction, including alcohol dependency.
- Awareness of the dangers of drugs which are prescribed but still present serious health risks.
- The facts about the harms from smoking tobacco, the benefits of quitting and how to access the support to do so. Health and prevention

By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- About personal hygiene, germs including bacteria, viruses, how they are spread, treatment and prevention of infection, and about antibiotics.
- About dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene and dental flossing, including healthy eating and regular check-ups at the dentist.
- During KS4, the benefits of regular self-examination and screening.
- The facts and science relating to immunisation and vaccination.
- The importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and how a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood, and ability to learn. Basic first aid

By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:

- Basic treatments for common injuries.
- Life-saving skills, including how to administer CPR.
- The purpose of defibrillators and when one might be needed. Changing adolescent body 8. By the end of secondary school, pupils will know:
- Key facts about puberty, the changing adolescent body and menstrual wellbeing. The main changes which take place in males and females, and the implications for emotional and physical health.

Delivery of the curriculum

6.1. The majority of the RSE and health education curriculum will be delivered through the SMSC Curriculum, but there are elements that will be delivered through other curriculum areas namely: PE, Science, Religious Education, and ICT.

6.2. Through effective organisation and delivery of the subject, we will ensure that:

- Core knowledge is sectioned into units of a manageable size.
- The required content is communicated to pupils clearly, in a carefully sequenced way, according to the curriculum map.
- Teaching includes sufficient and well-chosen opportunities and contexts for pupils to embed new knowledge so that can be used confidently in real-life situations.

6.3. RSE and health education complement several national curriculum subjects. Where appropriate, the school will look for opportunities to make links between the subjects and integrate teaching.

6.4. The RSE and health education curriculum will be delivered by appropriately trained members of staff.

6.5. The curriculum will proactively address issues in a timely way in line with current evidence on pupil's physical, emotional, and sexual development.

6.6. RSE and health education will be delivered in a non-judgemental, age-appropriate, factual, and inclusive way that allows pupils to ask questions in a safe environment.

6.7. Teaching of the curriculum reflects requirements set out in law, particularly in the Equality Act 2010, so that pupils understand what the law does and does not allow, and the wider legal implications of the decisions they make.

6.8. The school will integrate LGBTQ+ content into the RSE curriculum – this content will be taught as part of the overall curriculum, rather than a standalone topic or lesson. LGBTQ+ content will be approached in a sensitive, age-appropriate, and factual way that allows pupils to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships.

6.9. All teaching and resources are assessed by the RSE and health education subject leader to ensure they are appropriate for the age and maturity of pupils, are sensitive to their religious backgrounds and meet the needs of any SEND, if applicable.

6.10. Classes may be taught in gender-segregated groups dependent on the nature of the topic being delivered at the time, and the cultural background of pupils where it is only appropriate to discuss the body in single gender groups.

6.11. Throughout every year group, appropriate diagrams, videos, books, games, discussion, and practical activities will be used to assist learning.

6.12. Inappropriate images, videos, etc. will not be used, and resources will be selected with sensitivity given to the age and cultural background of pupils.

6.13. Pupils will be prevented from accessing inappropriate materials on the internet when using such to assist with their learning. The prevention measures taken to ensure this are outlined in the school's Acceptable Terms of Use Agreement.

6.14. Teachers will establish what is appropriate for one-to-one and whole class settings and alter their teaching of the programmes accordingly.

6.15. Teachers will ensure that pupils' views are listened to and will encourage them to ask questions and engage in discussion. Teachers will answer questions sensitively and honestly.

6.16. The curriculum will be designed to focus on boys as much as girls and activities will be planned to ensure both are actively involved, matching their different learning styles.

6.17. Teachers will focus heavily on the importance of marriage and healthy relationships when teaching RSE, though sensitivity will always be given as to not stigmatise pupils based on their home circumstances.

6.18. Teachers will ensure lesson plans focus on challenging perceived views of pupils based on protected characteristics, through exploration of, and developing mutual respect for, those different to themselves.

6.19. In teaching the curriculum, teachers will be aware that pupils may raise topics such as self-harm and suicide. When talking about these topics in lessons, teachers will be aware of the risks of encouraging these behaviours and will avoid any resources or material that appear as instructive rather than preventative.

6.20. At all points of delivery of the curriculum, parents will be consulted, and their views will be valued. What will be taught and how, will be planned in conjunction with parents.

Curriculum links

Differentiation and inclusion

- English as an Additional Language: key vocabulary is pre-taught, and translated materials are used where available, so that language is not a barrier to understanding safeguarding-critical content.
- Pupils who have experienced trauma: staff are aware of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and deliver sensitive topics with appropriate pastoral support in place before, during and after the lesson, reflecting EdStart's SEMH/AP specialism.

- Staff do not express personal opinions on controversial matters during RSE; they present a range of views, using factual, evidence-based information, and signpost appropriate support.

7.1. The school seeks opportunities to draw links between RSE and health education and other curriculum subjects wherever possible to enhance pupils' learning. See Curriculum Map on school website for further details.

Working with parents

8.1. The school understands that parents' role in the development of their children's understanding about relationships and health is vital.

8.2. Parents can access the content of the school's RSE and health education curriculum via the school website.

8.3. When in consultation with parents, the school will provide:

- The curriculum content, including what will be taught and when.
- Examples of the resources the school intends to use to deliver the curriculum.
- Information about parents' right to withdraw their child from non-statutory elements of RSE and health education.

8.4. Parents are welcome to ask questions about the school's approach to RSE and health education.

8.5. The school understands that the teaching of some aspects of the curriculum may be of concern to parents.

8.6. If parents have concerns regarding RSE and health education, they should contact their site's RSE and health education subject leader in the first instance, or their site Headteacher, on 0300 303 4414. Current named leads are held in each site's controlled annex, kept up to date centrally.

8.7. EdStart sends a letter to parents and carers at the start of each academic year outlining the RSE and health education content for that year (see Annex A for the template), and consults with parents and carers on this policy at least every two years, or sooner following significant changes such as new statutory guidance.

Working with external agencies

9.1. Working with external agencies can enhance our delivery of RSE and health education and bring in specialist knowledge and different ways of engaging pupils.

9.2. External experts may be invited to assist from time-to-time with the delivery of the RSE and health education curriculum but will be expected to comply with the provisions of this policy.

9.3. The school will check the visitor/visiting organisation's credentials of all external agencies.

9.4. The school will ensure the teaching delivered by the external experts fits with the planned curriculum and provisions of this policy.

9.5. The school will discuss with the visitor the details of how they intend to deliver their sessions and ensure the content is age-appropriate and accessible for all pupils.

9.6. The school will request copies of the materials and lesson plans the visitor will use, to ensure it meets the full range of pupils' needs.

9.7. The school and the visitor will agree on how confidentiality will work in any lesson and that the visitor understands how safeguarding reports must be dealt with in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

9.8. The school will use visitors to enhance teaching by an appropriate member of teaching staff, not to replace teaching by those staff. 10. Withdrawal from lessons

10.1. Parents have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

10.2. Parents do not have a right to withdraw their child from the relationships or health elements of the programmes.

10.3. Requests to withdraw a child from sex education will be made in writing to the headteacher.

10.4. Before granting a withdrawal request, the headteacher will discuss the request with the parents and, as appropriate, the child, to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum.

10.5. The headteacher will inform parents of the benefits of their child receiving RSE and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have.

10.6. All discussions with parents will be documented. These records will be kept securely and confidentially.

10.7. Following discussions with parents, the school will respect the parents' request to withdraw their child up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After this point, 15 if the child wishes to receive RSE rather than be withdrawn, the school will decide to provide the child with RSE.

10.8. Pupils who are withdrawn from RSE will receive appropriate education during the full period of withdrawal.

10.9. For requests concerning the withdrawal of a pupil with SEND, the headteacher may take the pupils' specific needs into account when making their decision. 11. Equality and accessibility

10.10. Where a pupil aged 15 wishes to attend RSE against their parent's wishes, this is considered in the context of the pupil's best interests and the Gillick competence framework (Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech AHA, 1985). EdStart aims to respond to withdrawal requests within 10 school days of receiving them in writing.

11.1. The school will comply with the relevant requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure the curriculum does not discriminate against pupils because of their:

- Age
- Sex
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Sexual orientation

11.2. The school will consider the backgrounds, gender, age range and needs of its pupils and determine whether it is necessary to put in place additional support for pupils with the above protected characteristics.

11.3. The school understands that pupils with SEND are entitled to learn about RSE and health education, and the curriculum will be designed to be inclusive of all pupils.

11.4. The school is aware that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND – teachers will understand that they may need to liaise with the SENDCO and be more explicit and adapt their planning or work to appropriately deliver the curriculum to pupils with SEND.

11.5. Where there is a need to tailor content and teaching to meet the needs of pupils at different developmental stages, the school will ensure the teaching remains sensitive, age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate and is delivered with reference to the law.

11.6. The school will take steps to foster healthy and respectful peer-to-peer communication and behaviour between boys and girls and provide an environment which challenges perceived limits on pupils based on their gender or any other characteristic.

11.7. The school will be actively aware of everyday issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture within the school in which these are not tolerated. Any occurrences of such issues will be identified and tackled promptly.

11.8. The school will make clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Any reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be handled in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

12.1. All pupils will be taught about keeping themselves safe, including online, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

12.2. Confidentiality within the classroom is an important component of RSE and health education, and teachers are expected to respect the confidentiality of their pupils as far as is possible.

12.3. Teachers will, however, understand that some aspects of RSE may lead to a pupil raising a safeguarding concern, e.g., disclosing that they are being abused, and that if a disclosure is made, the DSL or Deputy DSL will be alerted immediately.

12.4. Pupils will be made aware of how to raise their concerns or make a report, and how their report will be handled – this includes the process for when they have a concern about a peer.

Safeguarding support resources referenced in RSE lessons

Every sensitive RSE lesson signposts named sources of help so pupils always know where to turn, in addition to their site DSL:

- Childline — 0800 1111, [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)
- CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command) — ceop.police.uk, for reporting online sexual abuse or grooming
- FRANK — 0300 123 6600, talktofrank.com, for confidential drugs advice
- YoungMinds — youngminds.org.uk, for mental health support

Staff will never promise a pupil confidentiality during an RSE lesson. If a pupil discloses a safeguarding concern during or after an RSE lesson, the member of staff follows EdStart's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and refers to the DSL immediately.

Faith and cultural perspectives

EdStart respects the diversity of faiths, cultures and beliefs across our sites and recognises that RSE can raise sensitive issues for some families on this basis. In delivering RSE, EdStart:

- Acknowledges and respects the diversity of views that exist on relationships, sex and family life
- Presents factual, evidence-based content in a balanced and respectful way
- Does not privilege any one religious or cultural perspective over another
- Does not undermine or contradict any faith tradition's teachings, while ensuring statutory content is delivered in full

Where a family has a specific concern relating to their faith or cultural background, they are encouraged to speak with their site Headteacher, who will make every effort to address the concern within the bounds of EdStart's statutory duties.

Complaints about RSE provision

A parent, carer or pupil with a concern about RSE provision should first speak informally to the RSE and health education subject leader or class teacher. If unresolved, a formal complaint can be raised with the site Headteacher in writing, and followed through EdStart's Complaints Policy if still unresolved. EdStart aims to respond to concerns about RSE provision within 20 school days.

Assessment

13.1. The school has the same high expectations of the quality of pupils' work in RSE and health education as for other curriculum areas.

13.2. Lessons are planned to provide suitable challenge to pupils of all abilities.

13.3. For those pupils identified as needing additional support, Teaching Assistants, SENDCO or Key worker will provide targeted guidance.

13.4. There are no formal examinations for RSE and health education; however, to assess pupil outcomes, the school will capture progress in the following ways:

- Written and verbal assignments
- Self-evaluations
- Pupil and staff questionnaires

Staff training

14.1. Training will be provided by the RSE and health education subject leader to the relevant members of staff, in preparation for SMSC Drop Down Days, to ensure they are up-to date with the RSE and health education curriculum.

14.2. Training will also be scheduled around any updated guidance on the curriculum and any new developments, such as "sexting," which may need to be addressed in relation to the curriculum.

14.3. Appropriately trained staff will be able to give pupils information on where and how to obtain confidential advice, counselling, and treatment, as well as guidance on emergency contraception and their effectiveness.

Monitoring Quality

15.1. The RSE and health education subject leader is responsible for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning for the subject.

15.2. The RSE and health education subject leader will conduct subject assessments after a SMSC Drop Down Day, which will include a mixture of the following:

- Self-evaluations
- Learning walks
- Lesson planning feedback
- Student voice — termly pupil feedback on PSHE and RSE sessions
- Exit tickets and other formative assessment embedded in lessons
- Tracking of safeguarding referrals arising from RSE lessons, reviewed with the DSL

15.3. The RSE and health education subject leader will create annual subject reports for the headteacher and governing board to report on the quality of the subjects.

15.4. The RSE and health education subject leader will work regularly and consistently with the SLT and RSE link governor, e.g., through termly review meetings, to evaluate the effectiveness of the subjects and implement any changes.

Monitoring and review

16.1. This policy will be reviewed by the SLT Link in conjunction with the RSE and Health Education subject leader on an annual basis.

16.2. Any changes needed to the policy, including changes to the programmes, will be implemented by the headteacher.

16.3. Any changes to the policy will be clearly communicated to all members of staff and, where necessary, parents and pupils, involved in the RSE and health education curriculum. Version: September 2026

Annex A — Parent/Carer Letter Template: RSE and Health Education Programme (added September 2026)

This template is issued for each site to personalise with its own site name, address and Headteacher's name before sending, by post or email, at the start of the academic year.

EdStart Schools — [Site Name] | [Address] | Tel: 0300 303 4414 | admin@edstartschools.com

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Programme 2026–27

I am writing to tell you about the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education programme your child will be taught this year. Our programme reflects the Department for Education's statutory guidance published in July 2025, in force from 1 September 2026, and is delivered in a safe, age-appropriate and inclusive way.

What will my child learn? Our PSHE programme covers three main areas: Health and Wellbeing (mental health, coping strategies, first aid including CPR, drugs and alcohol, and online safety); Relationships and Sexual Health (healthy and unhealthy relationships, consent, online safety, safeguarding, and age-appropriate sex education); and Safeguarding and Living in the Wider World (exploitation, anti-social behaviour, and personal safety).

What is new this year? The updated guidance adds: online safety, including deepfakes, AI-generated images and sextortion; gambling and gaming, including the risks of in-game spending; nicotine pouches; CPR and defibrillator training, now required in all secondary schools; and a stronger focus on ethics in relationships, including positive masculinity, alongside consent.

Your rights as a parent or carer. You may view any RSE materials used — please contact the school office to arrange this. You may withdraw your child from Sex Education, but not from Relationships Education or Health Education, which are compulsory; to do so, please contact the school in writing. You are welcome to speak to us about any concerns or questions at any time.

A copy of our full RSE and Health Education Policy is available on request from the school office. If you have any questions, please contact us by telephone on 0300 303 4414, by email at admin@edstartschools.com, or in person through your child's key worker, form tutor or Headteacher.

Yours sincerely,

[Headteacher's name] — Headteacher, EdStart Schools [Site Name]

Note to staff before sending: insert the site name, address and Headteacher's name throughout; insert the current date; check whether any specific external providers should be named; attach a copy of the RSE Policy or a link to it if emailing; keep a record of when the letter was sent and to whom.