



Bedford Inclusive Learning and Training Trust

Achieving • Believing • Collaborating

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy Template

Policy Status: Recommended

Review Cycle: Annually

Owner: Catherine Assink

Date: September 2026

Approved by: Trust Board

Date: September 2026

Review Date: September 2027

This policy sets out the Trust-wide approach to Relationships, Sex Education and Health Education. The policy explains what is taught, how and when, who is responsible, how the curriculum is made accessible, how parents may view materials, how withdrawal requests are managed, and how provision is monitored and reviewed.

Our commitment

All BILTT schools are committed to equipping pupils with the character, knowledge and skills needed for a happy, safe and successful life. We provide high-quality, evidence-based, inclusive and developmentally appropriate RSHE that:

- prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life;
- promotes moral, social, mental and physical development and positive characteristics including resilience, self-worth, honesty, integrity, courage, kindness and trustworthiness;
- helps pupils form and sustain positive relationships, make informed and ethical decisions, recognise when things are not right and seek help;
- is carefully sequenced so knowledge and skills are taught before pupils are likely to need them, without normalising harmful behaviour or causing unreasonable alarm;
- is relevant and responsive to pupils' lived contexts and local safeguarding needs;
- is accessible to every pupil, with precise adjustments for communication, cognition, sensory, physical and social-emotional needs; and
- is delivered as part of a whole-school culture of safeguarding, equality, kindness and respect.

Legal framework and national guidance

This policy has been prepared with regard to the:

- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, section 80A of the Education Act 2002, section 403 of the Education Act 1996, and the revised DfE statutory guidance published July 2025 for introduction from 1 September 2026.
- Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, current edition;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, current edition;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- National curriculum, including science, computing, citizenship and PE;
- Online Safety Act and related law on online harms;
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and statutory guidance;
- Behaviour in Schools and Teaching Online Safety in Schools guidance; and
- Relevant local safeguarding partnership procedures and public health intelligence.

RSHE curriculum aims, design and sequencing:

We ensure that the content and materials are appropriate for the age and cognition of pupils and sensitive to their needs. We acknowledge that although, in legal guidance, some topics are classed as primary or secondary, for our pupils, we must use professional judgment to adapt this and introduce them when are pupils are ready.

Our RSHE curriculum is based on the following aims, that:

- All pupils can access RSHE and learn in the most appropriate way to progress towards the end of phase goals and our long term curriculum aims.
- Core knowledge and skills will be broken into manageable steps, revisited and generalised

across contexts.

- Learning will include structured opportunities to practise communication, boundary setting, help-seeking, decision-making and respectful disagreement.
- Assessment and feedback will identify misconceptions, gaps and pupils requiring additional support or intervention.
- Assessment will be through discussion, work produced, and how well they apply learning in real life situations.
- RSHE topics are discussed and reinforced throughout the curriculum and every day situations.
- New or emerging local issues may be addressed responsively. Parents will be informed in advance of any substantive departure from the published policy and relevant materials will remain available on request.

'Primary phase' curriculum

Teaching focuses on the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, It does not involve explaining the details of different forms of sexual activity, although it may include sensitive safeguarding content that helps children recognise and report abuse.

At a level appropriate to each pupil's needs and stage of development, pupils will be taught the following statutory areas.

Families and people who care for me:

- the importance and characteristics of safe, stable and caring family life;
- respect for different family structures, including single-parent, same-sex parent, kinship, adoptive, foster and grandparent-led families;
- marriage and civil partnership as formal, legally recognised commitments intended to be lifelong;
- how to recognise unsafe or unhappy family relationships and seek help.

Caring friendships and respectful, kind relationships:

- how friendships are formed, maintained, repaired and sometimes ended;
- kindness, honesty, trust, loyalty, inclusion, generosity, boundaries and mutual respect;
- managing conflict without violence, expressing needs assertively and recognising controlling behaviour;
- courtesy, manners, self-respect, stereotypes, bullying, bystander responsibility and help-seeking.

Online safety and awareness:

- respectful behaviour online, peer pressure and the risks posed by people who conceal or misrepresent their identity;
- age restrictions, privacy and location settings, personal information and the permanence and onward circulation of online content;
- recognising harmful content or contact and knowing how and where to report concerns.

Being safe:

- privacy, healthy boundaries, bodily autonomy and the difference between appropriate and unsafe contact;
- correct names for private body parts, taught factually and accessibly;
- recognising emotional, physical and sexual abuse, understanding that abuse is never the victim's fault, and seeking help persistently until heard;
- responding safely to people encountered in person and online, including people who appear trustworthy but may have harmful intentions.

Health and wellbeing:

- general wellbeing, emotions, loneliness, change, loss, bereavement and early help;
- online wellbeing, screen use, online gaming, monetisation, gambling-style content, scams,

fraud, privacy and reporting;

- physical activity, time outdoors, sleep, healthy eating and a healthy relationship with food;
- legal and illegal harmful substances, smoking, vaping, alcohol, drugs, nicotine addiction and nicotine pouches;
- health protection, sun safety, dental health, hygiene, germs, vaccination and immunisation;
- personal safety around fire, roads, railways and water;
- basic first aid, emergency calls, common injuries and the importance of reporting rather than filming incidents; and
- growth, puberty, correct body-part vocabulary and menstruation before pupils are likely to experience it.

Sex Education primary phase:

Sex Education is not compulsory at this age. If deemed appropriate, the content, timing and resources will be clearly identified and parents will be consulted. It will be distinct from statutory Relationships Education, Health Education and science. Depending on pupil needs we may cover appropriate content about conception and birth.

Content about online sexual material or pressure to share naked images will be taught only where we feel pupils need this to protect themselves, and in a way that does not cause unreasonable alarm. Parents/Carers will be informed of any planned departure from the published programme.

Secondary phase curriculum

Secondary provision will build on previous learning as pupils are ready and will cover the following statutory content:

Families:

- different committed and stable relationships and their contribution to wellbeing and raising children;
- the legal status of marriage and civil partnership, the myth of “common-law marriage”, and the law on forced marriage and marriage under 18;
- how families change through birth, death, separation and new relationships;
- parental responsibilities, successful parenting and the importance of early childhood;
- recognising unsafe relationships and seeking support.

Respectful relationships:

- positive relationships online and offline, consent, trust, respect, honesty, kindness, boundaries, privacy, reconciliation and ending relationships;
- self-esteem, independence, tolerance, respectful communication and conflict management;
- how ethical behaviour goes beyond consent and includes kindness, care, attention to vulnerability and awareness of power imbalances;
- bullying and bystander responsibility; harmful stereotypes; sexism, misogyny and other prejudice;
- how unequal power can shape behaviour and how pornography may distort attitudes, normalise harm, reinforce misogyny or create sexual entitlement;
- how online subcultures, including “incel” narratives and harmful influencers, may shape attitudes and how to respond critically without directing pupils to harmful content.

Online safety and awareness:

- rights, responsibilities, opportunities, privacy and location settings in public and private online spaces;
- fake accounts, exaggerated profiles, misinformation, disinformation and content created or altered using artificial intelligence;
- law and risks relating to sharing, keeping, forwarding or generating indecent or sexual images, including AI-generated images, and routes to support where an image has been shared;

- deepfakes, how they can cause harm, and how pupils may identify and report them;
- online misogyny, violence, weapons content, conflict escalation, stalking, harassment, coercive control and abusive behaviour;
- pornography as a distorted representation of people and sexual behaviour, including its potential impact on attitudes and partners;
- online scams, sextortion and routes to support without blame; and
- AI chatbots and the risks of fake intimacy, manipulation or harmful advice.

Being safe and subject-specific safeguarding:

- consent and boundaries, including in early romantic and sexual relationships, and strategies to resist and avoid applying pressure;
- personal safety in public and social spaces, with explicit teaching that precautions never transfer blame to a victim;
- sexual harassment, public sexual harassment, sexual violence, rape, sexual assault, upskirting and harmful sexual behaviour;
- domestic abuse, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, grooming, sexual and criminal exploitation, financial exploitation, forced marriage and hate crime;
- FGM, virginity testing and hymenoplasty, their harms, support routes and the law;
- strangulation and suffocation as criminal and dangerous acts; and
- how pupils can seek help for harmful behaviour they have experienced or are worried they may display themselves, including when medical help is needed.

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health:

The curriculum provides pupils with the knowledge and skills to develop healthy, safe and nurturing relationships, understand consent and the law, protect sexual and reproductive health, resist pressure, recognise abuse and seek support including:

- age of consent, readiness, choice, abstinence and the fact that intimate relationships do not have to involve sexual activity;
- giving, withholding and withdrawing consent, including the influence of law, faith and family values;
- the full range and effectiveness of contraception and how to find medically accurate information;
- impartial and legally and medically accurate information about pregnancy options, including keeping a baby, adoption and abortion;
- STIs, including HIV, safer sex, condoms, testing, treatment, stigma, and HIV prevention through PrEP and PEP;
- how alcohol and drugs can affect sexual risk and decision-making; and
- confidential sexual and reproductive health advice, treatment and support.

The core focus of this aspect of the curriculum is to:

- Give our pupils the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. We ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender specific content is included within the delivery of our programme.
- Make explicit that that sexual violence and sexual harassment (including online) are not acceptable, will never be tolerated, and are not an inevitable part of growing up

As a result, pupils are able to

- develop safe, fulfilling and healthy relationships, including sexual relationships at the appropriate time. They learn to respect themselves and others. It does not encourage early sexual experience or experimentation.
- Understand the law, taking into account age, physical and emotional maturity, cognition, religious background and developmental differences when planning and delivering our learning.
- Become well informed about the range of aspects of the law which relate to sex including: the age of consent, what consent is and is not, the definitions of rape, sexual

- assault and harassment, and choices permitted by the law around pregnancy.
- Build awareness of grooming, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour.
- Understand the physical and emotional damage caused by female genital mutilation (FGM) and the context of the law surrounding this and other forms of 'honour or faith based abuse'.

Secondary health and wellbeing:

- mental wellbeing, accurate emotional vocabulary, loneliness, anxiety, depression and the difference between normal feelings and mental health conditions;
- gambling harms, including the mental health impact of gambling and debt risks from online gambling and gambling-like gaming content;
- online comparison, body image, misinformation, illegal online markets and content promoting self-harm, suicide or violence;
- physical activity, healthy weight, healthy eating, cardiovascular health, and blood, organ and stem-cell donation;
- illegal drugs, synthetic substances, illicit vapes, counterfeit medicines, alcohol, drink spiking, smoking, vaping and routes to cessation support;
- hygiene, infection, antibiotics, antimicrobial resistance, vaccinations, screening, sleep and dental health;
- pre-conception health, folic acid, pelvic-floor health, miscarriage and pregnancy loss;
- navigating local healthcare, including GPs, pharmacies, urgent and emergency care, sexual health services, family planning and third-sector support;
- medical consent, parental responsibility, capacity and Gillick competence;
- personal safety relating to roads, railways, water, unfamiliar settings, knives, violence, peer influence, grooming and exploitation;
- first aid, CPR and defibrillators; and
- puberty, adolescent brain development, menstrual and gynaecological health including PMS, heavy menstrual bleeding, endometriosis and PCOS, and reproductive health including fertility and menopause.

All BILTT schools deliver aspects of the National Curriculum for science at an appropriate level. This includes teaching about reproduction in humans, for example the structure and function of the male and female reproductive systems, menstrual cycles, gametes, fertilisation, gestation, birth and HIV/AIDS.

- There is no right for parents to withdraw children from the National Curriculum for science.
- Our curriculum for teaching science can be viewed online on our school websites.

Teaching sensitive and contested topics

Teaching will be factual, balanced, age and developmentally appropriate and within the law. Staff will distinguish between legal facts, established evidence, religious belief and matters on which there is significant public debate.

Pupils will be supported to express views respectfully and to understand that bullying, harassment and disrespect are never acceptable.

Teaching about biological sex, gender reassignment and related legal rights will be accurate and respectful. Staff will not present contested views as fact, will avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes, and will not suggest that social transition is a simple solution to distress or discomfort. External materials on these topics will be scrutinised carefully, discussed with parents in advance where used, and made available on request.

Same sex parents and a wide range of family arrangements will be represented positively in primary Relationships Education. At secondary, pupils will have equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships, integrated across the programme rather than isolated in a standalone lesson. Sexual health teaching will be relevant to all pupils.

Faith perspectives may be taught, but staff will clearly identify when a view reflects religious belief. Teaching will respect the protected characteristic of religion or belief and will remain compliant with equality law.

Delivery, pedagogy and staff competence

Our RSHE curriculum is taught within classes by school staff. This delivery is enhanced by visits from external organisations and guest speakers where appropriate.

Sex Education teaching

- We provide a non-judgmental, factual approach within a safe environment that allows scope for pupils to ask questions in confidence. Staff are trained to use distancing techniques, to set ground rules and anonymous question boxes to help manage sensitive discussion and receive responses to these questions.
- It is important that responses are given that satisfy pupils' curiosity in order to prevent pupils seeking that information online, through a potentially harmful source that may contain inappropriate content, and encourage contact and conduct that is unsafe.
- Our online policy applies to all aspects of RSHE
- Language will be clear, factual and non-stigmatising. Teaching will not normalise harmful behaviour, stigmatise boys or suggest that girls are responsible for preventing abuse.
- Pupils will have opportunities to practise respectful communication and consider experiences different from their own. Single-sex grouping may be used exceptionally where it creates a safer space for a specific topic and does not stigmatise pupils.
- Staff know the curriculum boundaries, safeguarding procedure, disclosure response, confidentiality limits and sources of reliable support.

Equality statement

We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice as outlined within the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. We ensure that there is no discrimination towards anyone because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

In planning for delivery of Relationship, sex and health education, we make appropriate adjustments to alleviate disadvantage and adhere to the SEND Code of Practice.

We are also aware that some of our pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND. Therefore, RSHE is especially important for those pupils, for example those with social, emotional and mental health needs or learning disabilities. This is reflected within our planning for this subject.

Safeguarding and confidentiality

RSHE can increase safeguarding reports. All staff and visitors must follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and current Keeping Children Safe in Education. Concerns must be acted on immediately and passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy. Staff must never promise absolute confidentiality.

Before sensitive teaching, pupils will be told in an accessible way how confidentiality works, what staff must do if a concern is disclosed, and where they can seek help inside and outside school. Victim blaming language is never used and pupils will be taught that abuse is never the victim's fault. Staff understand mandatory reporting duties, including FGM, and will remain alert to domestic abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour and online harms.

Managing questions and disclosures

Teachers will answer questions honestly, factually and in a way that is appropriate to the pupil's age, stage, developmental understanding and the planned curriculum. Questions will not be used to invite personal disclosure in a group setting.

- If a question is suitable for the class, it will be answered using agreed language and within the lesson's learning objectives.
- If a question is unsuitable for a whole-class response, the teacher will acknowledge it and arrange a private, supported response, signposting the pupil to a parent, trusted adult, DSL, health professional or reliable service as appropriate.
- Questions relating to sex education not covered in primary, or content from which a pupil has been withdrawn, will be handled with emphasis on safeguarding and support rather than dismissal.
- Any question or disclosure indicating possible harm will be managed immediately under safeguarding procedures.
- Staff will receive support and training where questions require specialist handling.

Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher:

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that RSHE is taught consistently across the school and for managing any requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory components. They are also responsible for ensuring that staff have appropriate training and are given opportunities to keep up to date with local and national guidance.

Board of Trustees and Local Governing Bodies:

The LGB must:

- approve and keep this policy under review;
- ensure statutory duties are met and monitor pupil progress;
- seek quality assurance that the curriculum content and teaching is accessible and aligns with statutory guidance;
- ensure clear information is provided to parents about content, materials, external providers and withdrawal rights;
- support the headteacher to manage withdrawal requests fairly, lawfully and with written records;

RSHE Leads:

Every school has their own nominated RSHE Lead who holds the responsibility for leading the curriculum. In collaboration with other senior staff, the RSHE lead has responsibility for:

- Implementing, monitoring and evaluating the impact and appropriateness of the RSHE curriculum, reviewing provision as appropriate;
- Providing or sourcing appropriate training for colleagues as appropriate.
- Encouraging teachers to explore how new pedagogies and technology can be fully utilised to support the subjects;
- Ensuring that teaching is delivered in ways that are accessible to all pupils with SEND;
- Ensuring that clear information is provided for parents on the subject content and the right to request that their child is withdrawn through regular consultation.

Designated Safeguarding Leads:

- advise on local and pupil-specific risks, safe sequencing and routes to support;
- ensure staff know how to respond to concerns and disclosures;
- review safeguarding themes arising from RSHE without compromising confidentiality, and inform curriculum improvement.

Teaching staff:

- deliver agreed content accurately, safely and accessibly;
- use approved resources and agreed vocabulary;
- assess learning, address misconceptions and identify pupils needing additional support;
- follow safeguarding procedures immediately and preserve appropriate confidentiality

Working with parents, carers and the wider community:

- We recognise the vital role of parents in the development of their children's understanding about relationships is vital and that they have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships.
- We provide opportunities for parents to collaborate with the academy on planning and delivering RSHE via questionnaires and meetings.
- We ensure that parents are advised what will be taught and when and clearly communicate the fact that parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some aspects RSHE.
- We provide parents/carers every opportunity to understand the purpose and content of RSHE through the content on our website, parents' / carers' consultations and personal communications.
- We welcome any questions about the school's approach to RSHE from parents/ carers to help increase confidence in the curriculum. We will also provide opportunities for parents to discuss what their children will be taught, address any concerns and help support parents in managing conversations with their children on these issues.
- Curriculum materials used to teach RSHE will be available for parents to view on request. Parents cannot veto statutory curriculum content.
- We will ensure that our parents and carers are fully informed about the RSHE curriculum through updates on our website and DOJO. Families will be informed in advance about sensitive content and any substantive change from the published programme.

Right to request withdrawal from sex education

Parents have the right to request withdrawal from some or all sex education delivered as part of RSE. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education, Health Education or science, including science content relating to puberty or sexual reproduction.

- A parent should submit the request to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will discuss it with the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil, explain the purpose and benefits of the curriculum, explore concerns and possible adverse social or emotional effects, and document the discussion.
- Up to Year 6, a request to withdraw from sex education will be granted automatically, except for content taught as part of science.
- From Year 7, the Headteacher may refuse a request in exceptional circumstances, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or a pupil has a specific vulnerability. Any decision will be reasoned, recorded and communicated sensitively. Headteachers will apply this with flexibility linked to pupils SEND needs. SEND, including having an Education, Health and Care Plan, will not by itself determine a withdrawal decision. The Headteacher may consider an individual pupil's needs and vulnerability where relevant, particularly in exceptional secondary cases.
- From three terms before the pupil turns 16, the pupil may choose to receive sex education even where a parent has requested withdrawal. Pupils will be told about this right in an accessible way.
- Where a pupil is withdrawn, the academy will provide appropriate, purposeful education for the period of withdrawal and will protect the pupil from stigma.

Working with external organisations or visitors

External providers may enhance but will not replace school-led curriculum delivery. The academy remains responsible for content, resources, safeguarding and pupils' learning.

To ensure best practice:

- Credentials, expertise, safeguarding suitability and any wider commercial or partisan

interests will be checked.

- Lesson plans and all materials will be reviewed in advance for factual accuracy, impartiality, age and stage appropriateness, accessibility and alignment with this policy.
- The academy and visitors will agree confidentiality and safeguarding reporting arrangements before delivery.
- Visitors will be briefed on communication needs, reasonable adjustments and how to respond to questions and disclosures.
- Provider contracts will permit parental access to all content, subject to lawful copyright controls.

Monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance

Provision will be monitored at least termly and more frequently where safeguarding, pupil need or national guidance requires. Evidence may include curriculum and resource audits, lesson visits, work scrutiny, assessment information, pupil and parent feedback, staff confidence, safeguarding themes, participation and accessibility checks.

Evaluation will consider whether pupils remember and apply essential knowledge and skills, can communicate boundaries and seek help, understand equality and the law at an appropriate level, and are prepared for increasing independence. It will not rely solely on completion of lessons or worksheets.

Findings and actions will be reported through academy and Trust governance. Any gap in statutory coverage, accessibility or safeguarding practice will be addressed through a time-bound action plan.

Review process

This policy will be reviewed annually. At every review, it will be approved by the BILTT Board of Trustees and individual Academy LGB.