Phoenix
FEDERATION

Relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) policy

Executive Headteacher: Mr. Dean Gordon NPQEL
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Date to be reviewed: September 2027

Introduction

At the Phoenix Federation, we believe it is important to provide every pupil with the knowledge, skills and understanding relating to relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) that they need to make informed choices and to lead confident, healthy and independent lives within their community. All pupils, whatever their barriers to learning, are entitled to RSHE. Our curriculum has been developed to reflect the diversity of our school communities and to meet the needs of all our pupils, and it is delivered in a factual, honest, age-appropriate and inclusive way. We consult parents and carers on the content and delivery, and we review our teaching materials regularly, drawing where appropriate on the expertise of health professionals such as the school nurse.

RSHE is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development; the importance of family life and of stable, loving relationships; and respect, love and care for oneself and others. It is not about the promotion of any particular sexual orientation or of sexual activity. In line with the guiding principles of the 2025 statutory guidance, we teach RSHE positively and sensitively, sequence it carefully, engage pupils and parents, avoid fear-based approaches, and recognise the vital role it plays in safeguarding, so that children grow into kind, caring adults who respect others and know how to keep themselves and others safe.

Definition

RSHE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils and involves learning about relationships, healthy lifestyles, diversity, personal identity and, in an age-appropriate way, human growth and reproduction. It combines the sharing of information with the exploration of issues and values. RSHE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

Aims and objectives

Our RSHE programme, which is firmly embedded within PSHE, supports pupils through their physical, emotional and moral development so that they learn to respect themselves and others and move with confidence from childhood towards adolescence. It has three elements.

1. Attitudes and values

- Learning the importance of values, individual conscience and moral considerations.
- Learning the value of family life and of stable, loving relationships.
- Learning the value of respect, love and care, and exploring moral dilemmas.
- Developing critical thinking as part of decision-making.

2. Personal and social skills

- Learning to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively.
- Developing self-respect, confidence and empathy.
- Making choices based on an understanding of difference and free from prejudice and stereotyping.
- Understanding the consequences of choices, managing conflict, and learning to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse.

3. Knowledge and understanding

- Learning about physical development and emotions at appropriate stages.
- Being prepared for puberty and understanding the importance of health and hygiene.

Statutory requirements

As primary schools within the Phoenix Federation, we must provide Relationships Education to all pupils, and Health Education is likewise statutory, under the Children and Social Work Act 2017. We teach RSHE in line with the Department for Education's updated statutory guidance, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2025), which replaces the 2019 guidance and which schools implement from September 2026. Sex education is not compulsory at the primary phase, although the Department for Education recommends that primary schools teach some age-appropriate sex education, and now recommends that this takes place in Year 5 and/or Year 6; the parental right to withdraw from the non-statutory elements of sex education remains. In teaching RSHE we also have regard to section 403 of the Education Act 1996, to Keeping Children Safe in Education, and to our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Policy development

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils, parents and governors. The process involved reviewing relevant national and local guidance, staff consultation, parent and stakeholder consultation, pupil consultation, and ratification by the governing body.

Curriculum

RSHE is taught within the wider PSHE curriculum, which is based on the PSHE Association programme of study and organised across the three core themes of Health and Wellbeing, Relationships, and Living in the Wider World. Some aspects of RSHE are also taught within the science curriculum, for example in EYFS and Key Stage 1 through topics such as "Ourselves," and in Key Stage 2 through the study of life processes and the human life cycle. The curriculum is planned and progressive, sequenced so that knowledge, vocabulary and skills build year on year, and is adapted to the age, needs and maturity of our pupils. The federation's PSHE long-term overview identifies where the RSHE units are taught, and the sex education element is taught in Year 6.

New and strengthened content in the 2025 guidance

Our curriculum reflects the new and strengthened requirements of the 2025 statutory guidance, including:

- a greater focus on online safety and wellbeing, including online financial harms such as in-game spending, scams and fraud, the reasons for age restrictions on content such as gambling and social media, critical engagement with what pupils see online, and rights around privacy, consent and personal data, including location settings;
- strategies for recognising and resisting pressure to share information or images online;
- personal safety, including recognising and reducing risk in the context of fire and travel safety, for example around water, roads and railways;
- learning about change and loss, including bereavement, recognising that this brings a range of feelings and that everyone grieves differently;
- within health education, vaping and nicotine addiction within teaching about drugs and alcohol;

- an increased emphasis on skills alongside knowledge, including communicating effectively, being assertive, expressing needs and boundaries, and managing difficult feelings such as disappointment, frustration and loneliness, including in online contexts;
- the correct names for the parts of the body, including genitalia, taught as part of our safeguarding approach.

Delivery of RSHE

RSHE is delivered by class teachers, supported where appropriate by the school nurse, for example in Years 5 and 6, using a variety of active and participatory approaches including discussion, stories, film and quizzes. Before teaching, teachers establish ground rules to ensure a safe and comfortable learning environment, taking account of the gender balance, ethnicity, diversity, language stage and maturity of the class. Pupils are taught in mixed-gender groups for most RSHE, although single-gender groupings are used where more appropriate, for example when teaching about menstruation. An anonymous question box is available so that pupils can ask questions they may not wish to raise in a group, and distancing techniques are used so that learning does not become personal. In line with the 2025 guidance, teachers exercise professional judgement about how and when to teach content, sequencing and adapting it to the needs of their pupils and community and ensuring that lessons are participative and interactive. Teachers make clear that, while lessons are a safe space, they cannot promise confidentiality where a pupil may be at risk, and they follow our safeguarding procedures at all times.

Teaching sensitive and specific themes

- **Naming parts of the body.** In Key Stage 1, in Year 2, pupils learn to name the main parts of the body and, in age-appropriate terms, the correct names for external genitalia. In line with the 2025 statutory guidance, this is taught as part of our safeguarding approach, because it helps children to understand their bodies, to identify and report abuse, and to reduce stigma.
- **Puberty.** Puberty, including the physical and emotional changes it brings, personal hygiene routines and support with puberty, is taught in Year 4, before most pupils experience the onset of these changes. Pupils learn about the changes for both sexes.
- **Menstruation.** Menstruation is taught within the Year 4 puberty unit, before it is likely to begin, with strategies for managing it. It is approached sensitively and, where appropriate, in single-gender groups.
- **Human reproduction.** Sex education is not compulsory at the primary phase, but the Department for Education recommends that some age-appropriate sex education is taught in Year 5 and/or Year 6. In our federation, pupils learn about human reproduction and birth in Year 6, in the context of the human life cycle, in an age-appropriate and factual way. This is the element of RSHE that includes non-statutory sex education, from which parents may request that their child be withdrawn.
- **Contraception and abortion.** These are not taught as part of the primary curriculum. If a pupil raises a question, teachers respond briefly and factually as appropriate to the pupil's age and maturity, and may signpost the pupil to a parent, a trusted adult or the school nurse.

Decisions on any non-statutory sex education beyond the science curriculum are made in consultation with parents and governors and are kept under review.

Inclusion and equality

RSHE is for all pupils. Teachers adapt the curriculum and their teaching so that pupils with SEND and those facing other barriers can access learning fully, while maintaining high expectations. Our teaching reflects the diversity of our community, including different family structures, and promotes respect for all in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics, so that every pupil feels represented, included and safe.

Assessment and evaluation

Assessment is an integral part of RSHE. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills through discussion, pupil work and self-assessment, and the programme is evaluated by the subject leader, teachers, pupils and parents to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of pupils and to reflect the values of our school communities.

Expected outcomes

- **By the end of EYFS,** pupils know that boys and girls are different, can name parts of the body, and understand basic hygiene such as washing their hands.
- **By the end of Key Stage 1,** pupils recognise and compare the main external parts of the body, understand similarities and differences between themselves and others, and know how to keep clean.
- **By the end of Key Stage 2,** pupils understand how their bodies change during puberty and strategies for managing those changes, understand human reproduction and the human life cycle, and understand the importance of personal hygiene.

Child protection, safeguarding and confidentiality

RSHE is an important part of the school's wider safeguarding arrangements and supports our statutory duties under Keeping Children Safe in Education. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we maintain a vigilant, child-centred culture. Through RSHE, pupils are taught, in an age-appropriate way, to understand their bodies and to use the correct names for parts of the body, to recognise the difference between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe contact, to understand privacy, boundaries and consent, to recognise abuse, neglect and exploitation, and to know that they can and should seek help and who to ask. This knowledge helps to keep children safe and gives them the vocabulary and confidence to report concerns.

Consistent with Keeping Children Safe in Education, our teaching contributes to the prevention of child-on-child abuse, including bullying, sexual harassment and, where age-appropriate, harmful sexual behaviour, by promoting respect, kindness and consent and by challenging harmful attitudes and stereotypes. Online safety is taught and reinforced so that pupils understand online risks, know that the same principles of respect apply online, and know how to report harmful content or contact. We take a whole-school approach and assume that concerns can arise, acting even where there has been no specific report.

Teachers teach RSHE sensitively and make clear that, while lessons are a safe space, they cannot promise confidentiality where a pupil may be at risk. If a pupil discloses, or a member of staff becomes

concerned, that a pupil may be involved in or at risk of harm, abuse or exploitation, the member of staff does not investigate but records the concern and reports it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or to a deputy in their absence, in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The Designated Safeguarding Lead acts without delay and, where necessary, in consultation with children's social care and other agencies.

Because RSHE can touch on experiences that are sensitive for individual pupils, teachers plan with care and are alert to pupils who may be affected, for example those who are looked after, those who have experienced abuse or loss, or those with particular needs, liaising with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the SENCo as appropriate. All staff receive safeguarding training and know how to recognise and respond to concerns.

Home and school partnership

Parents and carers have a vital role in RSHE. An information session is offered so that parents can view the programme and the resources used, ask questions and discuss any concerns, including where the programme may relate to their religious or cultural beliefs. Parents and carers with concerns are encouraged to speak to their child's class teacher or to the PSHE subject leader.

Parents' right to withdraw

Parents and carers do not have the right to withdraw their children from Relationships Education or Health Education, nor from the sex education taught within the science national curriculum. Parents do have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory, non-science elements of sex education within RSHE. Requests should be made in writing to the Executive Headteacher, using the form in Appendix 2, and a meeting will then be arranged to discuss the request. Alternative work is provided for any pupil who is withdrawn from sex education.

Training

Staff are trained to deliver RSHE as part of their induction and through the school's continuing professional development programme. The Executive Headteacher may invite external professionals, such as the school nurse, to support staff training and delivery.

Roles and responsibilities

- **Governors** approve this policy and hold the Executive Headteacher to account for its implementation, ensure the curriculum is implemented and that parents are consulted on content and resources, and receive an annual report from the subject leader on its impact.
- **The Executive Headteacher** ensures RSHE is taught consistently across the federation, manages requests to withdraw pupils from the non-statutory, non-science elements of sex education, monitors the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and ensures effective resources, training and outcomes for every pupil in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- **The Subject Leader** ensures the policy is implemented effectively, keeps staff and parents informed of the policy and practice, ensures staff have the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver RSHE and to handle sensitive issues, ensures assessment is carried out, and reports on the impact of the curriculum to governors.
- **Class Teachers** plan and deliver RSHE in line with this policy, treat each theme with honesty and sensitivity, adapt the curriculum for all pupils, model positive attitudes, monitor

progress, respond appropriately to pupils withdrawn from sex education, and keep the subject leader and Designated Safeguarding Lead informed of any concerns. Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSHE, but any concerns can be discussed with the Executive Headteacher.

Related policies

This policy should be read alongside the following, with which it is consistent:

- PSHE Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (and Keeping Children Safe in Education)
- Online Safety Policy
- Positive Behaviour and Trusting Relationships Policy
- Equality, and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) provision

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the PSHE subject leader, the senior leadership team and the relevant committee of the governing body, or sooner in response to changes in national guidance. Recommended amendments are reported to the full governing body and modifications made as necessary. The delivery of RSHE is monitored through lesson observations, planning scrutiny, learning walks and book scrutiny, and pupils' development is monitored by class teachers as part of the federation2019s internal assessment system.

Appendix 1: By the end of primary school, pupils should know

This statutory content, from the Department for Education Relationships Education guidance, is taught across our RSHE and PSHE curriculum in an age-appropriate way.

Families and people who care for me

- That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability, and the characteristics of healthy family life.
- That others' families sometimes look different from their own, but that they should respect those differences and know that other families are also characterised by love and care.
- That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and that marriage represents a formal, legally recognised and intended lifelong commitment.
- How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help.

Caring friendships

- How important friendships are, how people make friends, and the characteristics of positive friendships, including mutual respect, trust, kindness and honesty.
- That most friendships have ups and downs that can be worked through, and that resorting to violence is never right.
- How to recognise who to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them uncomfortable, and how to manage conflict and seek help.

Respectful relationships

- The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different, and practical steps to improve or support respectful relationships.
- The conventions of courtesy and manners, the importance of self-respect, and that they should treat, and expect to be treated by, others with respect.
- About different types of bullying, including cyberbullying, its impact, the responsibility of bystanders to report it, and what stereotypes are and how they can be unfair or negative.
- The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults.

Online relationships

- That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not, and that the same principles of respect apply online as offline.
- The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks and harmful content and contact, and how to report them.
- How to consider critically their online friendships and sources of information, and how information and data are shared and used online.

Being safe

- What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others, including online, and the concept of privacy, including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.

- That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe contact.
- How to respond safely to adults they do not know, how to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe, and how to ask for help and keep trying until they are heard.
- How to report concerns or abuse and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so, and where to get advice.

Appendix 2: Parent form, withdrawal from sex education within RSHE

To be completed by parents and carers	
Name of child	
Class	
Name of parent or carer	
Date	
I have reviewed the curriculum, lesson plans and resources	Yes / No
I wish to withdraw my child from the non-statutory sex education lessons	Yes / No (please specify lessons below)
Lessons from which withdrawal is requested	
Reason for withdrawal	
Any other information you would like the school to consider	
Parent or carer signature	

To be completed by the school	
Agreed actions from discussion with parents	
Date of meeting	