

# Relationships & Sex Education Policy

**2021-22**

*“Ensuring our students have the education and character to go on to live happy, fulfilled lives as the drivers of their own destinies.”*

## Purpose

This policy sets out the Ark Soane RSE curriculum & how it is delivered. It is a working document, providing guidance and information on all aspects of RSE (with the Character Education & PSHCE Programme) and aims to provide a secure framework within which staff can work.

Date of last review:	-	Author:	Principal
Date of next review:	May 2022	Owner:	Principal
Type of policy:	<input type="checkbox"/> Network-wide <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tailored by school	Approval:	Project Board
School:	Ark Soane Academy	Key Contact Name:	Matt Neuberger
Key Contact Email:	<a href="mailto:info@arksoane.org">info@arksoane.org</a>	Key Contact Phone:	0203 XXXXXXX

## ARK MODEL

Component	Element
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Leadership & Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring, Reporting & Data <input type="checkbox"/> Governance & Accountabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching & Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum & Assessment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Culture, Ethos & Wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> Pathways & Enrichment <input type="checkbox"/> Parents & Community <input type="checkbox"/> Finance, IT & Estates <input type="checkbox"/> Our People	Wellbeing

## 1. Introduction

### Statutory Requirements

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for all students receiving secondary education. They also make Health Education compulsory in all maintained schools. Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) continues to be compulsory in all schools and this policy should be read in conjunction with Ark Soane's Character Policy which sets out the school's approach to PSHE.

This policy sets out how Ark Soane Academy will deliver the content set out in statutory guidance, in the context of a broad and balanced curriculum. Effective teaching in PSHE and curriculum subjects will ensure that core knowledge is broken down into units of manageable size and communicated clearly to students, in a carefully sequenced way, within a planned of lessons.

This policy also sets out both the rights of parents/carers to withdraw students from sex education (but not Relationships or Health Education) and the process that head teachers should follow in considering a request from a parent. Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

### Relationships and Sex Education at Ark Schools

We firmly believe that Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) delivered via the curriculum, the school environment and the school ethos is an essential part of a child's development. Not only does it provide information, it helps children develop their skills and form positive beliefs, values and attitudes. It is our belief that effective RSE has a positive impact on self-esteem and enables our students to have a positive view of relationships, sexuality and sex and embeds a culture of both personal and mutual acceptance and respect. Although it is important that the RSE programme recognises that there may be different cultural or faith based views relating to this area of the curriculum it is essential that what is taught reflects the diverse society in which we live, which includes LGBT, and that all children have access to age appropriate information free from stereotyping or discrimination.

## 2. What is RSE?

RSE is lifelong learning about sex, sexuality, emotions, relationships and sexual health. It involves acquiring information, developing skills and forming positive beliefs, values and attitudes. RSE has a key part to play in the personal, social, moral and spiritual development of young people. It begins informally in the home with parents and carers long before any formal education takes place at school. Young people's entitlement to RSE is enshrined in the terms of the Education Act (1996).

The DfES Guidance 2000 offered this definition: "RSE is the lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity."

The National Sex Education Forum highlighted that RSE also involves:

- Developing positive values and a moral framework that will guide students' decisions, judgements and behaviour
- Having the confidence and self-esteem to value themselves and others
- Behaving responsibly within sexual and personal relationships
- Communicating effectively
- Having sufficient information and skills to protect themselves and their partner from unintended/unwanted conceptions and STIs including HIV
- Neither exploiting others nor being exploited

- Accessing confidential advice and support

## What are the aims and objectives of our RSE Programme?

The following aims are important to us as a school:

- Students are aware of sexual violence and sexual harassment and that there is a zero-tolerance approach to student-on-student sexual violence or harassment (see behaviour policy)
- Students have strong relationship skills
- Students are prepared for puberty and have a good knowledge of their own bodies
- Students have an understanding of prejudice and its negative effects
- Students are capable of seeking help and advice
- Students are able to express their feelings
- Students are aware of, and are able to, challenge the messages they receive from the media
- Students are aware of their rights over their own bodies
- Students are able to make informed choices that reduce risk
- All sex education will show recognition and understanding of:
  - Age of students
  - The diversity of cultural influence that exist in society and the world
  - The influence of religious beliefs

In addition, our RSE programme will promote:

- Self-respect
- Respect and tolerance towards others who may have different backgrounds, cultures, feelings, views and sexuality
- Honesty and openness
- An awareness of the way others feel
- Mutual support and co-operation
- Acceptance of the responsibility for and the consequences of personal actions
- The right of people to hold their own views, within the boundaries of respect for the rights of others
- The right not to be abused by or taken advantage of by other people
- The right to accurate information about sex and relationship issues

### 3. Why should RSE be taught?

Under the Education Act 2002/Academies Act 2010 all schools must provide a balanced and broadly-based curriculum which:

- *promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students at the school and of society, and*
- *prepares students at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.*

RSE is also set within a wider legislative context. The 2006 Education and Inspections Act laid a duty on Governing Bodies 'to promote the well-being of students at the school'. The duty came into effect in September 2007. Since that date, an equivalent requirement has been placed on new academies through their funding agreements.

The law in relation to RSE states:

- Governing bodies of schools are required to keep an up to date RSE Policy that describes content and the organisation of RSE provided outside the national curriculum science order
- Parents/Carers have the right to withdraw their children from RSE lessons
- RSE programmes must include (as a minimum) information about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDs

In addition to the legal requirements, we feel that effective RSE is essential for our young people. This is because RSE

- Supports them through their physical, emotional and moral development, as they move from childhood through adolescence into adulthood.
- Teaches them to respect themselves and others
- Ensures they are better prepared to make responsible and well informed decisions about their lives

## 4. The RSE Curriculum

**RSE** is taught through a spiral programme, revisiting themes, whilst increasing the challenge, broadening the scope and deepening students' thinking. It is not set of topics that can be delivered or learned in isolation from the **wider curriculum**.

- Our **Science** curriculum (based on the national curriculum) includes basic human biology and is statutory in maintained schools. This includes teaching students about conception and contraception.
- Our **Values and Character Education** programme will explore what lifestyle choices young people may wish to make, and having made those choices what language, strategies and skills they need to stay healthy and safe.
- Our **Religious Education** curriculum will explore the views of religious and secular groups on matters such as abortion and same-sex relationships.

The RSE curriculum content is based on the revised *National Curriculum Outcomes for Key stage 2-4*, *PSHE Association Guidance for PSHE Programme of Study July 2013*, *Ofsted Criteria July 2013* and best practice guidance issued by the *Sex Education Forum July, 2013*. (See Appendix for more detailed overview of specific content of RSE through PSHE, Core theme content from KS1-4, and specific guidance of "What will my child learn about in RSE?")

The content has been selected so that throughout the programme students explore life skills such as assertiveness, self-awareness, decision making, and consider all aspects of relationships and what affects them and also provides many opportunities for students to explore their own and others attitudes, values and opinions on a variety of issues

In Key Stage 3 students will learn how good relationships can promote mental well-being, how to manage their feelings positively and how to manage changing relationships. They will learn the law relating to sexual behaviour, how to develop skills of assertiveness in order to resist peer pressure and stereotyping, how to access sources of advice and support and when and where to get help, such as from a sexual health clinic.

In Key stage 4, students will learn to recognise the influences and pressures around sexual behaviour and how to respond appropriately and confidently seeking professional health advice where necessary. They will learn how HIV and other STIs affect the body, how different forms of contraception work, the risk of early sexual activity and the link with use of alcohol. Discussions around moral issues such as abortion, contraception and the age of consent are all considered.

**Technology:** As part of RSE it is important that students recognise ways they could put themselves at risk through the use of technology. These can include risks to their emotional and physical wellbeing and safety and their personal reputation. It is important to explore the risks, the law as it pertains to the sharing and downloading of images and information and safe ways of sharing personal information, social networking, online dating and sharing images.

**Diversity and Inclusion:** We are a non-selective mainstream secondary school. In any class we may have students from a wide variety of cultures and/or with a wide variety of faiths. These cultures and faiths often hold strong views about sexual behaviour. Our schemes of work, and the teachers delivering them, are sensitive to these views. We ensure our students have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals.

**Equality:** Ark Soane, like all public institutions, has specific responsibilities in relation to equality and protected characteristic groups. Our RSE caters for all students and is respectful of how students choose to identify themselves, understanding that depending on their age and maturity, their sexual orientation and gender identity that may be 'emerging'. This means that sex and relationships education is sensitive to the different needs of individual students and will evolve and adapt over time.

## 5. RSE Sensitive Content

### Abortion

The purpose of sex and relationship education is in preparing students 'for the responsibilities and challenges of adult life' and abortion is an aspect of this. For example, over 50% of teenage pregnancies ended in abortion in 2005. It is important, therefore, that as one aspect of a secondary sex and relationship education programme young people are aware of the choices that would be available in the event of an unplanned pregnancy, with abortion discussed as one of these choices.

The RSE programme will:

- provide factual information about abortion and the law as it relates to abortion
- provide information about what someone should do if they suspected they were pregnant
- develop an understanding of abortion and the reasons why someone would choose to have an abortion
- provide an opportunity for young people to explore the choices around unplanned pregnancy in a safe, non-judgmental environment e.g. adoption, abortion or bringing up the child
- develop communication skills to discuss sexual health issues, such as abortion with parents, carers and health professionals
- explore the differing religious, cultural and moral attitudes towards abortion

### Contraception

Britain has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in western Europe. A major part of the Government's strategy to reduce unintended teenage pregnancy is to teach teenagers, through the RSE curriculum, about the different types of contraception and give them knowledge of where to access it; this is equally relevant to boys and girls. The average age of first sex is 16, but teachers need to be aware that some students younger than 16 will be sexually active.

Under the National Curriculum 1999, teaching about hormonal contraception formed part of the National Curriculum in Science at Key Stage 4, which required that '*Students should be taught the way in which hormonal control occurs, including the effects of sex hormones, and some medical uses of hormones, including the control and promotion of fertility*'. The teaching of contraception is therefore compulsory for all students in maintained secondary schools and parents do not have the right to withdraw their children.

Hormonal contraception is also covered in the KS3 National Curriculum for science:

*3.3 Organisms, behaviour and health*

*b. the human reproductive cycle includes adolescence, fertilisation and foetal development*

*c. conception, growth, development, behaviour and health can be affected by diet, drugs and disease.*

The DfE guidance states that schools ought also to ensure that the young person 'has been adequately counselled and informed about contraception, including precise information about where young people can access contraception and advice services'. If the young person asks to visit a sexual health service during school time then the school needs consider this carefully and follow its own policy and procedures, which have been agreed by governors.

### Family life and cultural diversity

The importance of marriage and family life is stressed in the DfE RSE guidance 2000. Students should be taught about the nature and importance of marriage for family life and bringing up children. However, the guidance recognises that there are strong and mutually supportive relationships outside marriage and that '*teaching needs to be sensitive so as not to stigmatise children on the basis of their home circumstances*'.

It is important for schools to understand the broad range of experiences that children and young people have of family life, to be sensitive to them and to ensure that they are reflected in displays and teaching activities. For example, an activity about the family and who we look like in our family may be very difficult for an adopted child. A happy and caring family life can happen in a wide variety of settings. Equally any form of 'family' can be a source of oppression. The broad range of experiences that children and young people have of family life may include one or more of the following:

- living in nuclear or extended family groupings
- living in single parent families
- living with an adoptive family
- living with lesbian, gay or bisexual parents/carers
- living as refugees
- living in poverty and deprivation
- living in a family in which they are the main carer
- living with siblings or relatives other than parents
- living between two homes
- living in foster homes
- living in residential homes
- living in a home where there is domestic violence
- living with parents/carers/relatives/siblings who for example, are abusive, have mental illness or have learning difficulties

It is important that parents and students understand the responsibilities and commitment involved in child-rearing and the impact that parents and carers have on child development.

The Ofsted report on sex and relationships recommended that more attention should be given in secondary schools to education about parenthood. Teaching about family life could include:

- learning the value of family life, marriage, stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children
- opportunities to explore and value the range of families in society
- discussion about the roles and feelings of parents and carers
- teaching about the role and responsibilities of a parent and the qualities of good parenting
- opportunities to explore the impact of separation, divorce, step-families, bereavement and illness on families and how to adapt to changing circumstances
- information about where families can get support
- encouraging students to seek support from family members

### **Gender issues**

It may be necessary to create opportunities for single gender group work to address the different needs of girls and young women and boys and young men.

Research has shown that boys receive less information and support at home from parents and carers about RSE. Poor communication within relationships, can be a major hindrance to the adoption of safer sexual practices.

The underpinning issues for girls are self-esteem and the low aspirations. Girls can experience more problems related to depression and anxiety than boys and some feel they have less power than boys to determine sexual practice or whether to have sex at all. Girls can be under pressure from the media and friends to develop a perfect body image, which can be highly sexualised.

### **HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections and sexual health**

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, remain one of the strongest causes of illness due to infectious disease among young people. STIs can cause long-term fertility problems, long-term illness or even death. The age group most at risk of being diagnosed with an STI are young people aged 16-24. Young people need to be aware of the risks of contracting an STI and how to prevent it. Although the emphasis in

RSE should be on preventing infection by abstaining from or delaying sexual activity and on teaching the reasons for safer sex, students also need to know about the diagnosis and treatment of STIs.

Teaching about HIV/AIDS and STIs at secondary school level includes:

- an examination of young people's attitudes, values and their responsibility towards self and others
- information about the routes of transmission, symptoms and treatment for STIs and HIV/AIDS
- an understanding of which behaviour is risky and which is not
- development of student skills to avoid being pressured into unwanted or unprotected sex
- practice and development of condom skills and knowledge about where to access condoms
- developing student awareness of the impact of drinking and/or drug use on safer sexual practice
- provision of information about local services which provide diagnoses and treatment for STIs and
- opportunities to explore and challenge some of the ignorance, myths and prejudices about HIV and AIDS.

We will also provide knowledge and information about other health issues related to the sexual and reproductive organs such as:

- providing knowledge about other infections that affect the sexual organs, but are not necessarily sexually transmitted such as Candida (thrush) and cystitis
- discussing the importance of self-examination for early detection of breast and testicular cancer
- discussion of the need for women to have smear tests, starting in their early twenties
- discussion of issues around infertility, miscarriage and impotence.

### **Sexuality in the RSE programme**

The content of RSE will be inclusive, so that all young people's needs are met, whether they are heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. We will specifically challenge prejudice and homophobia through our taught curriculum and through the implementation of our behaviour policy.

We will use the RSE programme to build self-esteem and promote valuing caring, loving and healthy relationships avoiding prejudice and discrimination. This includes

- discussions about sexual identity and orientation
- developing an understanding that sexuality is an important part of an individual's personality, but not necessarily a defining part
- opportunities to begin to gain an understanding of the nature of sexuality, particularly during a period when they themselves are unsure about their own developing sexual identity
- information about the age of consent for intercourse
- discussion of issues related to 'coming out'
- developing tolerance and empathy towards people who are different
- opportunities to challenge prejudice and discrimination
- reference to local and national services that can support young lesbians, gays and bisexuals.

### **RSE Resources**

RSE resources are chosen and checked for

- Age appropriateness
- Accuracy
- Inclusivity
- Positive, healthy, unbiased messages

Occasionally, appropriate and suitably experienced, knowledgeable visitors from outside school may be invited to contribute to the delivery of RSE in school. Our school has a code of practice for using visitors to support the delivery of PSHE:

- Visitors are invited into school because of the particular expertise or contribution they are able to make

- All visitors are familiar with and understand the school's RSE policy and work within it
- All input to PSHE lessons are part of a planned programme and negotiated and agreed with staff in advance
- All visitors are supervised/supported by a member of staff at all times
- The input of visitors is monitored and evaluated by staff and students to inform future planning

## 6. RSE Class Groups

All students will learn the same things however on occasion it may be appropriate to provide opportunities for students to discuss matters further in single sex groups or individually

## 7. Monitoring the RSE programme

### Safeguarding Children Statement

RSE may bring about disclosures of safeguarding children issues and all staff are clear with the procedures for reporting any concern and how to respond to the child when a disclosure is made.

### Confidentiality statement

For any personal disclosure, that is not a safeguarding issue, a child's confidentiality is maintained by the teacher or member of staff concerned as a general rule.

However, if this person believes that the child is at risk or in danger, they will report this to the DSL in the same way as any safeguarding concern.

For issues about confidentiality and students wishing to access sexual health advice, refer to the school's confidentiality policy.

### Sexually explicit questions

Our school will:

- Answer only those questions that relate directly to the agreed programme/lesson
- Make it clear, through ground rules, that nobody should ask personal questions
- Be prepared to modify the programme if a certain question recurs (perhaps because of media coverage)
- Use a question box (a box in the classroom that students can 'post' written questions)
- Allow individual staff to use their professional judgement as to answering questions in front of the whole class or individually
- Encourage students to ask their parents/carers any question outside the planned programme
- Make provision for questions about sex, reproduction and puberty to be answered individually, as they arise, outside the planned programme

### Developing the curriculum

From September 2020 the DfE will require schools to consult with parents when developing or reviewing their RSE policies. The aim of this is to inform decision making about when or how content is covered. Consultation is an important process in helping schools to decide on how to proceed. However, this does not give parents a right of veto on any aspect of the RSE curriculum – the decision on what will be delivered rests with the school.

Each year, in the Autumn Term, ARK Soane Academy will publish its RSE curriculum to parents and invite responses through parent surveys and parent meetings. Responses will be collated and analysed and will inform development of the RSE curriculum.

## 8. Withdrawal from the RSE Programme

We recognise that parents will be concerned about information that is provided to their children on relationships and sex, so it is therefore essential that parents are provided with as much information as possible. It is also imperative parents have an opportunity to ask questions in a forum in which they feel comfortable. They can choose to contact the relevant SLT member or Head of Year by email or arrange an appointment to speak on the phone or meet at school.

All schools have a statutory duty to provide a level of RSE. There is a statutory duty to provide relationships, health and sex education. This will build on the topics that were covered at primary level.

- There is no parental right to withdraw children from science lessons, that meet the requirements of the national curriculum.
- There is no parental right to withdraw their child from the relationships or health aspects of the RSE curriculum
- Parents/Carers do have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the sex education aspect provided at school, except for those parts included in statutory National Curriculum Science (referenced above)
- Up and until three terms before a child's 16th birthday the right to withdraw is with the parent but then it is the child's decision on whether to take part in sex education lessons. If the child chooses to receive sex education, the school must provide those lessons during one of those three terms.

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from PSHE/ RSE lessons they need to write to the relevant head of year at the beginning of the academic year so that alternative provision can be made. Requests need to be made in writing.

Where requests are granted, a written record of any children who have been withdrawn will be retained as part of their educational record and all relevant teachers will be informed.

Further Information for parents, from the DFE can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs>