

RSE and MHAW Policy

(Relationships and Sex Education
/ Mental Health and Wellbeing)



Groveside
School

Updated 1 September 2025

Document History

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1.0 AIMS

At Groveside School, we aim to provide each pupil with a programme of learning which is suited to their needs that is age-appropriate and differentiated to match their stage of development. We believe that Healthy Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is a whole school focus and that it is the responsibility of all staff to make sure that pupils are not exposed to misinformation and that wherever possible misinformation is dealt with immediately so that it does not lead to misunderstanding.

Groveside School provides a safe and supportive environment in which pupils can explore and develop their relationships and their social and emotional wellbeing.

As part of our programme of RSE we aim to give all pupils the opportunity to discuss values, attitudes and behaviour so that they can gain the knowledge, understanding and information needed to make healthy decisions.

The aims of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) at our school are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- Prepare pupils for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies

2.0 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

We provide RSE to all pupils as per the [Children and Social Work Act 2017. In teaching RSE, we must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996](#)

3.0 DEFINITION

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity. RSE involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values. RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

4.0 DELIVERY OF RSE

Our RSE curriculum is delivered in different ways across the Key Stages to ensure the appropriate delivery of information. Pupils at Groveside school may have complex SEMH needs and a range of adverse childhood experiences and/or trauma, therefore our the delivering of our curriculum, whilst planned in Key stages, will be appropriate and adapted to the needs of the pupils.

4.1 Primary Phase – Key Stage 2, age 7 - 11

At Key Stage 2, our curriculum provides a holistic approach to meeting statutory requirements and is broken down into 6 categories

- Families and relationships
- Health and wellbeing
- Safety and the changing body
- Citizenship
- Economic wellbeing
- Wellbeing

4.2 Secondary Phase – Key Stage 3 and 4, age 11-16

At Key Stage 3 and 4, RSE is taught within the Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum. Additionally, Social Thinking is delivered weekly by tutors.

Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the Science curriculum and other aspects may be included in the Humanities, PSHE and the ICT curriculum.

Pupils also receive stand-alone sex education and first aid sessions delivered by a trained professional.

In Years 7 to 8 Relationships and Sex Education focuses on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships including:

- Families and people who care for me
- Caring friendships
- Respectful relationships
- Wellbeing online
- Being safe

In Years 9-11 Relationships and Sex Education focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds including:

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online safety and awareness
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life, taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures) along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example: looked after children or young carers).

5.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory components of RSE (see section 6.4).

5.2 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory components of RSE
- Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSE are encouraged to discuss this with the Headteacher.

5.3 Pupils

Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

5.4 Parents' right to withdraw

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the **non-statutory** components of sex education within RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in Appendix 4 of this policy and addressed to the Headteacher. A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The Headteacher will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action.

Alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education.

6.0 TRAINING

Staff are trained on the delivery of RSE as part of our continuing professional development calendar. The school will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE.

7.0 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The delivery of RSE is monitored by the Headteacher and SLT.

Pupils' development in RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems. Appendix 1: Curriculum Map
Relationships and Sex Education Curriculum Map

Yr 3-6	Years 7&8		Years 9-11	
	RSE	Mental Health and Wellbeing	RSE	Mental Health and Wellbeing
Families and relationships Health and Wellbeing Citizenship Economic Wellbeing Wellbeing All areas taught through Cross-Curricular Input and Subject specific input	Families and people who care for me including single-parent, same-sex, kinship, foster, and adoptive families (PSHE) (Cross-Curricular Input) (Social Thinking)	Mental Wellbeing including emotions, common mental ill health (PSHE) (Cross-Curricular Input) Clinical Support	Families including marriage and civil partnerships, common-law marriage, forced marriage, roles and responsibilities of parents (PSHE) (Cross-Curricular Input)	Mental Wellbeing including gambling and addictive behaviours. Grief, loss and loneliness (PSHE) (Cross-Curricular Input) Clinical Support
	Caring friendships including consent and respecting others (PSHE) (Cross-Curricular Input) (Social Thinking)	Wellbeing online including differences between online and physical world, how much time spent online (ICT) (Cross-Curricular Input)	Respectful relationships, including friendships, misogyny, incel culture, consent (Cross-Curricular Input) (Social Thinking)	Online Safety including emerging technologies / AI, deep fakes, toxic digital subcultures and harmful influencers. (ICT) (Cross-Curricular Input)
	Respectful relationships including characteristics of positive relationships, caring friendships (Cross-Curricular Input) (Social Thinking)	Physical health and fitness including what is a healthy lifestyle (PSHE) (PE)	Online safety and awareness including online gaming and social media (ICT) (Cross-Curricular Input)	Physical health and fitness including how physical activity promotes wellbeing. Also, the science relating to blood, organ and stem cell donation (PSHE) (PE) (SCIENCE)

Yr 3-6	Years 7&8		Years 9-11	
	RSE	Mental Health and Wellbeing	RSE	Mental Health and Wellbeing
Safety and the changing Body Puberty may be taught if necessary and appropriate to year 5 or year 6 pupils, in conjunction with support from the Clinical Team Parents have the right to withdraw their child from these lessons	Online safety and awareness including wellbeing online, online behaviours (ICT)	Health eating including links between poor diet and health risks and links to tooth decay, unhealthy weight gain and heart disease (Food Studies)	Being safe, including violence and personal safety – sexual assault, domestic abuse, economic abuse, coercive control and scams, forced marriage, FGM (PSHE) (Social Thinking) (IT)	Healthy eating including risks of unhealthy weight gain - cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. How to make healthier choices (Food Studies)
	Being safe including road, rail and water safety, and fire safety, personal safety in the community around strangers, (PSHE) (Cross-Curricular Input)	Drugs Alcohol, Tobacco and vaping including laws, dangers and risks (PSHE) (Science)	Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health, consent and sexual ethics, sexually transmitted infections, using drugs or alcohol and risk taking in sexual behaviours (PSHE) (Science) This Unit is non-statutory up to and until 3 terms before a child turns 16. Please see section 8	Illegal risks including substance abuse, vaping, knife crime and exploitation including gangs, county lines and hate crimes and grooming (PSHE)
		Health protection and prevention including Basic First Aid and how to make emergency calls, dental hygiene, sun safety (PSHE)		Health and Prevention Basic First Aid including life-saving skills/personal hygiene/accessing healthcare system (PSHE)
		Changing adolescent body including puberty, and emotional changes (PSHE and Science)		Changing adolescent body including reproductive health (PSHE) (Science)

Appendix 2: By the end of Year 8 pupils should know

Topic	Pupils should know
Families and people who care about me	• That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability • The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives • That others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's 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 are important for children's security as they grow up • That marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong • How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed
Caring friendships	• How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends • The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties • That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded • That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right • How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed

Topic	Pupils should know
Respectful relationships	- The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs - Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships • The conventions of courtesy and manners - The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness - That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority - About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help - What a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive - 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 - That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous - The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them - How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met - How information and data is shared and used online
Being safe	- What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context) - About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; 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 physical, and other, contact - How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know - How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult - How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard - How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so • Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources

Appendix 3: By the end of Secondary School pupils should know

Topic	Pupils should know
Families	• That there are different types of committed, stable relationships. • How these relationships might contribute to wellbeing, and their importance for bringing up children. • Why marriage or civil partnership is an important relationship choice for many couples. The legal status of marriage and civil partnership, including that they carry legal rights, benefits and protections that are not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have, for example, undergone a non-legally binding religious ceremony. • That 'common-law marriage' is a myth and cohabitants do not obtain marriage-like status or rights from living together or by having children. • That forced marriage and marrying before the age of 18 are illegal.⁸ • How families and relationships change over time, including through birth, death, separation and new relationships. • The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting and the importance of the early years of a child's life for brain development. • How to judge when a relationship is unsafe and where to seek help when needed, including when pupils are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust
Respectful relationships, including friendships	• The characteristics of positive relationships of all kinds, online and offline, including romantic relationships. For example, pupils should understand the role of consent, trust, mutual respect, honesty, kindness, loyalty, shared interests and outlooks, generosity, boundaries, tolerance, privacy, and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. • How to evaluate their impact on other people and treat others with kindness and respect, including in public spaces and including strangers. Pupils should understand the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, and that everyone is unique and equal. • The importance of self-esteem, independence and having a positive relationship with oneself, and how these characteristics support healthy relationships with others. This includes developing one's own interests, hobbies, friendship groups, and skills. Pupils should understand what it means to be treated with respect by others. • What tolerance requires, including the importance of tolerance of other people's beliefs. • The practical steps pupils can take and skills they can develop to support respectful and kind relationships. This includes skills for communicating respectfully within relationships and with strangers, including in situations of conflict. • The different types of bullying (including online bullying), the impact of bullying, the responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help. • Skills for ending relationships or friendships with kindness and managing the difficult feelings that endings might bring, including disappointment, hurt or frustration. • The role of consent, including in romantic and sexual relationships. Pupils should understand that ethical behaviour goes beyond consent and involves kindness, care, attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of the other person, as well as an awareness of power dynamics. Pupils should understand that just because someone says yes to doing something, that doesn't automatically make it ethically ok.

Topic	Pupils should know
Respectful relationships, including friendships	- How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender reassignment, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). Pupils should be equipped to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice. - How inequalities of power can impact behaviour within relationships, including sexual relationships. For example, how people who are disempowered can feel they are not entitled to be treated with respect by others or how those who enjoy an unequal amount of power might, with or without realising it, impose their preferences on others. - How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, including by normalising harmful sexual behaviours and by disempowering some people, especially women, to feel a sense of autonomy over their own body and providing some people with a sense of sexual entitlement to the bodies of others. - Pupils should have an opportunity to discuss how some sub-cultures might influence our understanding of sexual ethics, including the sexual norms endorsed by so-called “involuntary celibates” (incels) or online influencers.
Online Safety and awareness	- Rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online. - Online risks, including the importance of being cautious about sharing personal information online and of using privacy and location settings appropriately to protect information online. Pupils should also understand the difference between public and private online spaces and related safety issues. - The characteristics of social media, including that some social media accounts are fake, and / or may post things which aren't real / have been created with AI. That social media users may say things in more extreme ways than they might in face-to-face situations, and that some users present highly exaggerated or idealised profiles of themselves online. - Not to provide material to others that they would not want to be distributed further and not to pass on personal material which is sent to them. Pupils should understand that any material provided online might be circulated, and that once this has happened there is no way of controlling where it ends up. Pupils should understand the serious risks of sending material to others, including the law concerning the sharing of images. - That keeping or forwarding indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime, even if the photo is of themselves or of someone who has consented, and even if the image was created by the child and/or using AI generated imagery. Pupils should understand the potentially serious consequences of acquiring or generating indecent or sexual images of someone under 18, including the potential for criminal charges and severe penalties including imprisonment. Pupils should know how to seek support and should understand that they will not be in trouble for asking for help, either at school or with the police, if an image of themselves has been shared. Pupils should also understand that sharing indecent images of people over 18 without consent is a crime.

Topic	Pupils should know
Online Safety and awareness	• What to do and how to report when they are concerned about material that has been circulated, including personal information, images or videos, and how to manage issues online. • About the prevalence of deepfakes including videos and photos, how deepfakes can be used maliciously as well as for entertainment, the harms that can be caused by deepfakes and how to identify them. • That the internet contains inappropriate and upsetting content, some of which is illegal, including unacceptable content that encourages misogyny, violence or use of weapons. Pupils should be taught where to go for advice and support about something they have seen online. Pupils should understand that online content can present a distorted picture of the world and normalise or glamorise behaviours which are unhealthy and wrong. • That social media can lead to escalations in conflicts, how to avoid these escalations and where to go for help and advice. • How to identify when technology and social media is used as part of bullying, harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and other forms of abusive and/or illegal behaviour and how to seek support about concerns. • That pornography, and other online content, often presents a distorted picture of people and their sexual behaviours and can negatively affect how people behave towards sexual partners. This can affect pupils who see pornographic content accidentally as well as those who see it deliberately. Pornography can also portray misogynistic behaviours and attitudes which can negatively influence those who see it. • How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online. • That websites may share personal data about their users, and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes (e.g. to enable targeted advertising). • That criminals can operate online scams, for example using fake websites or emails to extort money or valuable personal information. This information can be used to the detriment of the person or wider society. About risks of sextortion, how to identify online scams relating to sex, and how to seek support if they have been scammed or involved in sextortion. • That AI chatbots are an example of how AI is rapidly developing, and that these can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice. It is important to be able to critically think about new types of technology as they appear online and how they might pose a risk

Topic	Pupils should know
Being safe	- How to recognise, respect and communicate consent and boundaries in relationships, including in early romantic relationships (in all contexts, including online) and early sexual relationships that might involve kissing or touching. That kindness and care for others requires more than just consent. - That there are a range of strategies for identifying, resisting and understanding pressure in relationships from peers or others, including sexual pressure, and how to avoid putting pressure on others. - How to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, how to judge when a relationship is unsafe (and recognise this in the relationships of others); how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed. - How to increase their personal safety in public spaces, including when socialising with friends, family, the wider community or strangers. Pupils should learn ways of seeking help when needed and how to report harmful behaviour. Pupils should understand that there are strategies they can use to increase their safety, and that this does not mean they will be blamed if they are victims of harmful behaviour. Pupils might reflect on the importance of trusting their instincts when something doesn't feel right, and should understand that in some situations a person might appear trustworthy but have harmful intentions. - What constitutes sexual harassment or sexual violence, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it. - That sexual harassment includes unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching, taking and/or sharing intimate or sexual images without consent, public sexual harassment, pressuring other people to do sexual things, and upskirting. - The concepts and laws relating to sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault. - The concepts and laws relating to harmful sexual behaviour, which includes all types of sexual harassment and sexual violence among young people but also includes other forms of concerning behaviour like using age-inappropriate sexual language. - The concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour. - That fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviours can be criminal, and where to get help if needed. - The concepts and laws relating to harms which are exploitative, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and abuse, grooming, and financial exploitation. - The concepts and laws relating to forced marriage. - The physical and emotional damage which can be caused by female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty, where to find support, and the law around these areas. This should include that it is a criminal offence for anyone to perform or assist in the performance of FGM, virginity testing or hymenoplasty, in the UK or abroad, or to fail to protect a person under 16 for whom they are responsible.

Topic	Pupils should know
Being safe	• That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences, and that strangulation (applying pressure to the neck) is an offence, regardless of whether it causes injury. That any activity that involves applying force or pressure to someone's neck or covering someone's mouth and nose is dangerous and can lead to serious injury or death. • That pornography presents some activities as normal which many people do not and will never engage in, some of which can be emotionally and/or physically harmful. How to seek support for their own worrying or abusive behaviour or for worrying or abusive behaviour they have experienced from others, including information on where to report abuse, and where to seek medical attention when required, for example after an assault.
Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	• That sex, for people who feel ready and are over the age of consent, can and should be enjoyable and positive. • The law about the age of consent, that they have a choice about whether to have sex, that many young people wait until they are older, and that people of all ages can enjoy intimate and romantic relationships without sex. • Sexual consent and their capacity to give, withhold or remove consent at any time, even if initially given, as well as the considerations that people might take into account prior to sexual activity, e.g. the law, faith and family values. That kindness and care for others require more than just consent. • That all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing. • That some sexual behaviours can be harmful. • The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available, including male and female condoms, and signposting towards medically accurate online information about sexual and reproductive health to support contraceptive decisionmaking. • That there are choices in relation to pregnancy. Pupils should be given medically and legally accurate and impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help. • How the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, are transmitted. How risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use). The use and availability of the HIV prevention drugs Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and how and where to access them. The importance of, and facts about, regular testing and the role of stigma • The prevalence of STIs, the short and long term impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment. • How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead people to take risks in their sexual behaviour. • How and where to seek support for concerns around sexual relationships including sexual violence or harms. • How to counter misinformation, including signposting towards medically accurate information and further advice, and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment

Appendix 4: Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within RSE

To be completed by parents			
Name of child		Class	
Name of parent		Date	
Reason for withdrawing from sex education within relationships and sex education			
Any other information you would like the school to consider			
Parent signature			

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