

(DRAFT) Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

1. Introduction, Vision and Values

Fortismere is a high-achieving, creative foundation secondary school (ages 11-18) where academic ambition and personal growth go hand in hand. Our community draws from diverse social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. We believe that high-quality Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is a fundamental right that equips our young people to become curious, critical thinkers and articulate, socially responsible individuals who can thrive in an increasingly complex world.

This policy aligns directly with our **5-Year Strategic Plan** and our **Personal Development and Wellbeing Strategy**. It meets all statutory requirements set out by the Department for Education's statutory guidance on *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education*, alongside the requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.

Rooted in our core school values, the Fortismere RSE programme ensures that:

- **We celebrate diversity and belonging:** Every individual is valued and included. RSE is fully inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities, varied family structures, and differing sexual orientations without promoting any singular model over another. The foundational metrics of our teaching are respect, kindness, and safety.
- **We encourage curiosity and creativity:** Students are encouraged to evaluate, debate, and share views openly, building their critical thinking skills around complex moral and relational dilemmas.
- **We build relationships on kindness and trust:** We cultivate an environment where questions can be explored honestly, safely, and free from embarrassment.

2. Core Elements of the RSE Curriculum

Our approach to RSE focuses on three essential pillars to prepare students for adult life:

Attitudes and Values

- Developing individual conscience, empathy, and informed moral frameworks.
- Learning the value of stable, loving, and respectful relationships in all their diverse structures.
- Challenging myths, sexism, misogyny, prejudice, and false social assumptions regarding relationship behaviours.

Personal and Social Skills

- Managing emotions and interpersonal dynamics with confidence, sensitivity, and self-respect.
- Understanding and identifying power dynamics, control, and the paramount importance of mutual consent in relationships.
- Empowering students with the assertive communication skills needed to resist inappropriate social pressures or advances.

Knowledge and Understanding

- Understanding physical development, human reproduction, and biology at age-appropriate stages.

(DRAFT) Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

- Acquiring factual, unbiased knowledge regarding contraception, sexual health, and local/national support frameworks.
- Exploring the physical, emotional, and legal reasons for choosing to delay sexual activity.
- Understanding the legal definitions, frameworks, and UK laws governing digital spaces, financial exploitation, and physical relationships.
- Navigating the impact of modern technology on wellbeing, including media literacy surrounding online safety, image sharing, artificial intelligence (AI)-generated imagery, and deepfakes.

3. Organisation and Delivery Infrastructure

RSE is not taught in isolation; it is a key component of Fortismere's Personal Development and Wellbeing Entitlement. To provide a balanced, thorough, and expert-led curriculum, the content is split across complementary delivery channels:

- **Philosophy, Religion, and Ethics (PRE) Lessons:** Ethical, moral, and cultural aspects of relationships, diversity, identity, and personal values are delivered by our specialist PRE teaching team during designated curriculum hours.
- **Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) and Tutor Provisions:** Practical health topics, safety, statutory laws regarding consent, online harms, media safety, and physical wellbeing are delivered through timetabled PSHE sessions, assemblies, and tutor-led units.
- **Cross-Curricular Science:** Biological aspects of human anatomy, puberty, and reproduction are delivered via the statutory National Curriculum for Science.

4. Equity of Access and Universal Inclusion

In accordance with our commitment to eliminate achievement and wellbeing gaps, our RSE curriculum is actively differentiated to be accessible to all students regardless of background or starting point.

For students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or those requiring targeted support, we apply proactive reasonable adjustments:

- Utilising autism-friendly, visually adapted RSE toolkits and concrete processing resources.
- Providing pre-teaching for sensitive or potentially distressing topics.
- Liaising closely with the LINC team, specialist support workers, and external health partners to deliver tailored individual support plans where necessary.

5. Safeguarding, Confidentiality and Online Harm

RSE lessons cultivate an open environment, but student safety remains paramount.

- **Working Agreements:** Teachers establish clear ground rules, boundaries, and distancing techniques with students at the start of every term to maintain a secure learning environment.
- **Limits to Confidentiality:** School staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality. If a student discloses information indicating they are at risk of harm, or if a teacher learns that a student under the age of 16 is engaging in or contemplating sexual intercourse, staff are required by school safeguarding protocols to log the concern immediately with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

(DRAFT) Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

- **Supportive Guidance:** In all instances, the student will be fully supported, guided sensitively to seek professional medical or pastoral counsel, and encouraged to discuss matters transparently with their parent or carer.

6. Parents/Carers as Partners: Right of Withdrawal

Fortismere recognises parents and carers as the primary educators of their children regarding relationships, sexual health, and growing up. We seek to build relationships rooted in trust and co-operation.

- **The Right to Request Withdrawal:** Parents have the statutory right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of the *sex education* components delivered within the RSE curriculum. There is no right of withdrawal from the statutory relationships or health education components of the curriculum, nor the biological aspects covered in National Curriculum Science.
- **Process:** Parents wishing to exercise this right must contact the Headteacher in writing to specify the exact curriculum areas they wish to opt out of. The Headteacher will invite the family to a discussion to review their concerns, outline the educational benefits of the lessons, and arrange appropriate supervised alternative provision during those specific sessions.
- **Age of Consent Exception:** Three terms before a student turns 16, they have a legal right under national guidelines to opt back into sex education lessons against their parents' wishes. In this scenario, the school will provide the student with sex education instruction.

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure it remains aligned with the latest statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). The Governing Board will approve the final policy.

Policy date: *September 2026 subject to consultation*