

## RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

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| Last reviewed:   | September 2024    |
| Next review due: | September 2025    |
| Reviewed by:     | Pastoral Director |

### 1. Aims and introduction

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) became compulsory in all secondary schools in September 2020 (see DfE: [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance](#)). This policy covers d'Overbroeck's approach to Relationships and Sex Education.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) can be defined as:

*“learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It should equip children and young people with the information, skills and positive values to have safe, fulfilling relationships, to enjoy their sexuality and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.”* (Sex Education Forum)

Parents and guardians are often the prime educators for young people on many of these matters, and we are mindful that our students come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. We are committed to working closely and collaboratively with parents and guardians, to build on what students have learned at home, ensure that parents and guardians are aware of what is being taught in school and create a sense of active partnership in which parents feel involved and well informed; in this way, we are all best able to support sensitive conversations with the young people in our care.

RSE at d'Overbroeck's is set in the context of our wider whole-school approach to ensuring our students feel engaged, happy and at ease with themselves and their environment. We want them to be stimulated to develop academically and personally and to grow into themselves as confident, thoughtful and considerate people well equipped for their next steps. Our teaching and learning encourage attributes such as honesty, kindness, tolerance, courtesy, resilience and self-efficacy. The curriculum on relationships and on sex therefore complements d'Overbroeck's broader ethos and approach to developing students socially, morally, spiritually and culturally, and our pastoral care.

The d'Overbroeck's RSE policy should be understood and implemented alongside these other d'Overbroeck's policies, all of which are available from the [school website](#):

- Anti-bullying policy
- Behaviour, rules, rewards and sanctions policy
- Curriculum policy
- e-Safety policy
- Equal opportunities policy for students
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children policy
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural policy (SMSC)
- Special educational needs and disabilities policy (SEND)
- Visiting speakers policy

Our Relationships and Sex Education programme gives our students the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. We want them to understand what a healthy relationship looks like, including what makes a good friend, a good colleague, and a successful long-term committed relationship, civil partnership or marriage.

Our programme includes information about consent and what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships; we believe this will help our students understand the positive effects that good relationships have on their mental wellbeing and also identify and manage situations when relationships are not right.

The principles underpinning our RSE programme include that we will:

- acknowledge, and be sensitive to, the wide cultural spectrum that our students come from and their potentially different starting points in terms of their current relationships and sex education;
- be accurate, factual, and non-judgemental, covering a comprehensive range of information about sex, relationships, the law and sexual health;
- be positively inclusive in terms of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, culture, age, religion or belief or other life-experience;
- provide scope, via the approaches outlined above, for our students to ask questions, either publicly or anonymously (eg, through question boxes or questionnaires);
- include the development of skills to support healthy and safe relationships and ensure good communication about these issues;
- promote a critical awareness of the different attitudes and views on sex and relationships within society such as peer norms and those portrayed in the media;
- provide opportunities for reflection in order to nurture personal values based on mutual respect and care;
- support our students in making informed, reasoned and responsible decisions.

## **2. Roles and responsibilities**

The RSE programme is overseen by the Director of Pastoral Care and the Deputy Director- Student Wellbeing and led by members of the Senior Leadership and pastoral teams in each of the three sections of the school.

The School Nurse and the School Counsellors also play key roles in advising on and contributing to the programme. The RSE programme is taught by a number of members of staff with different roles, including Personal Tutors, the School Nurse, the School Counsellors, some subject teachers (where the content may overlap, eg, Biology) and, where appropriate, external speakers.

Much of the content is delivered in Personal Development (PD) sessions. These sessions are supported by assemblies, Form time activities, questionnaires, school communications such as posters, whole school events (eg, in recognition of national events such as Anti-bullying week, Safer Internet day, LGBT History month) and opportunities for 1:1 conversations (eg, with Personal Tutor, Director of Studies, Sixth Form Pastoral Mentor, Boarding staff, School Nurse, etc).

### **3. Curriculum design**

Relationship and Sex Education is part of lifelong learning, starting early in childhood and continuing throughout life. It is important that it reflects the age and level of the learner and, for this reason, topics may be re-visited throughout the programme at d'Overbroeck's and/or when an issue becomes topical (eg, in the media or local community). RSE is an integral part of the curriculum throughout the school.

Selected resources, such as film clips, are used which support and promote understanding within a values context and provide opportunity for facilitated discussion between students. Where appropriate (eg, where students would benefit from the knowledge of a more 'specialist' organisation), external speakers and organisations deliver aspects of the programme. Whenever external speakers and organisations are involved, the school liaises with the speaker in advance to ensure that the content of the session is appropriately matched to the needs of our students. Appropriate checks are also made on all external speakers and organisations, who sign an agreement and guidelines document in advance (see d'Overbroeck's Visiting Speakers Policy).

Versatility and flexibility in the curriculum are important as they allow us to be attuned to the different needs of students and local circumstances, including public health, circumstances within the school community and the needs of individual students, if appropriate. In addition, we ensure that RSE is matched to the needs of our students by seeking their views and feedback (eg, questionnaires and via School Councils) and also via close liaison with staff.

### **4. Learning outcomes**

By the end of Key Stage 5 (Sixth Form), and in accordance with the Department for Education guidance, d'Overbroeck's students should know:

- that there are different types of committed, stable relationships;
- how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children;
- what marriage is, including its legal status – for example, that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony;
- why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into;
- the characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships;
- the roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting;
- how to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships), how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed;
- the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships, in all contexts including online, such as:
  - trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict,
  - reconciliation and ending relationships, this includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship;

- practical steps that can be taken in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships;
- how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (for example, how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice);
- 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 people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs;
- about different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help;
- that some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control;
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable;
- the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal;
- their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online;
- about online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online;
- not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material that is sent to them;
- what to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online;
- the impact of viewing harmful content;
- that specifically sexually explicit material, for example pornography, presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners;
- that sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail;
- how information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online;
- the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and how these can affect current and future relationships;
- how people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn, in all contexts, including online;
- how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship;

- that all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, for example physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing;
- the facts about reproductive health, including fertility and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women, and menopause;
- that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others;
- that they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex;
- the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available;
- the facts around pregnancy including miscarriage;
- that there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, 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 and AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing;
- about the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment;
- how the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour;
- how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

## 5. Examples of the RSE content

**Year 7:** transition to secondary school and personal safety in and outside school, including first aid; self-worth, romance and friendships (including online) and relationship boundaries; healthy routines, influences on health, puberty, unwanted contact, and FGM; diversity, prejudice, and bullying.

In addition, the Year 7 Science curriculum includes: puberty and adolescence, reproductive organs, the menstrual cycle, sexual intercourse, fertilisation, pregnancy, birth.

**Year 8:** Mental health and emotional wellbeing, including body image and coping strategies; gender identity, sexual orientation, consent, 'sexting', and an introduction to contraception; alcohol and drug misuse and pressures relating to drug use; discrimination in all its forms; online safety and digital literacy.

**Year 9 / 9i:** Diet, exercise, lifestyle balance and healthy choices, and first aid; relationships and sex education including consent, contraception, the risks of STIs, and attitudes to pornography; healthy and unhealthy friendships, assertiveness, substance misuse, and gang exploitation; families and parenting, healthy relationships, conflict resolution, and relationship changes.

**Year 10 / 10i:** The influence and impact of drugs, gangs, role models and the media; communities, belonging and challenging extremism; mental health and ill health, stigma, safeguarding health, including during periods of transition or change; relationships and sex expectations, myths, pleasure and challenges, including the impact of the media and pornography.

**Year 11 / 11i:** responsible health choices, and safety in independent contexts; different families and parental responsibilities, pregnancy, marriage and forced marriage and changing relationships; self-efficacy, stress management, and future opportunities; personal values, assertive communication (including in relation to contraception and sexual health), relationship challenges and abuse.

**Recent Sixth Form Personal Development has included the following sessions/speakers:**

- Consent and healthy relationships (including a session led by School Counsellor and small group discussions with staff).
- Developing a healthy relationship with self and creating healthy relationships with others via sessions such as: healthy nutrition (external speaker), Mental health, wellbeing and managing stress (School Counsellor), online safety awareness.

## **6. Safe and effective practice**

It is particularly important in RSE discussions that students feel that the learning environment is safe and that potentially sensitive or controversial issues will be managed well. As in all our lessons, prejudice, discrimination and bullying are unacceptable. Teachers and students will therefore agree 'ground rules' around any discussion before it begins; these will include how to ensure that the views of all learners are respected, that topics are 'distanced' from particular students or issues, and that there is an opportunity for learners to ask questions anonymously, either in advance of the lesson or following it.

All staff teaching RSE will be supported by the pastoral team; staff will have opportunity to ask questions and seek advice on how best to deliver the sessions and have access to appropriate resources and training to support them.

## **7. Safeguarding**

A focus on healthy relationships and broader relationships education can help young people understand acceptable (and unacceptable) behaviours in relationships.

The government's statutory guidance on Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) (Secondary) makes a number of references to safeguarding issues which should be addressed sensitively and clearly within RSE:

- grooming, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour;
- the physical and emotional damage caused by female genital mutilation (FGM);
- recognising when relationships (including family relationships) are unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of neglect, emotional, sexual and physical abuse and violence, including honour-based violence and forced marriage) and strategies to manage this or access support;
- recognising risks, harmful content and contact online, and how and to whom to report issues;
- harmful behaviours online, and via other forms of media, which may normalise violent sexual behaviours.

Staff are aware that effective RSE, including education around some of the topics listed above, could lead to a disclosure of a child protection issue. Students are clearly informed about how they can access confidential advice and health services within the boundaries of safeguarding.

All staff are trained in safeguarding, including how to handle a disclosure and, were a disclosure to be made, staff would follow the school's Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children Policy. Visitors and external agencies who support the delivery of RSE are also made familiar with this policy, including how to contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead or member of the safeguarding team (please see our Visiting Speakers Policy). Both policies are available from the [school website](#).

## **8. Engaging stakeholders**

Parents and guardians have access to this RSE policy via the school website. A copy of it is available to anyone who would like us to send them one. Parents and guardians will be notified (by email and newsletters) when particular topics are being covered in school. Parents are encouraged to view the materials and resources and to ask staff about the plans for different sessions.

Governors are consulted about the RSE policy and curriculum through governor meetings.

We believe that our students should be actively involved as participants, advocates and evaluators in developing good quality RSE provision. The student voice (eg, via questionnaires, Student Council meetings, etc) will be used to review and tailor our RSE programme to match the different needs of students in each section of the school.

## **9. Right to withdraw**

There is no right to withdraw from the Relationships content of RSE, as these topics – such as family, friendship, safety (including online safety) – are important for all young people to be taught. However, parents have the right to withdraw their child from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE until three terms before the child turns 16 (Point 47 of the [DfE guidance](#)).

If a parent/guardian wishes to request that their child be removed from RSE, they should write to the Principal. Before granting any such request, the Principal (or other member of the Senior Leadership Team) will invite the parent/guardian to discuss the request, to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum.

In such situations, it is good practice for the Principal to discuss with parents the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the student. This could include any social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly said by the teacher. The detrimental effects may be mitigated if parents propose to deliver sex education at home instead.

Once these discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, we will respect the parent/guardian's request to withdraw the student, up to and until three terms before the student turns 16. After that point, if the student wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, we will make arrangements to provide this.

If a student is excused from sex education, we will ensure that the student receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

## 10. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

We have the same high expectations of the quality of students' work in RSE as for other curriculum areas. As in other subjects, a strong curriculum builds on the knowledge students have previously acquired, including in other subjects, with regular feedback provided on student progress. Lessons will be planned to ensure that students of differing abilities are suitably challenged. The monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the RSE programme will include:

- monitoring and evaluating the contribution of visitors and external agencies to RSE provision via feedback from both students and staff;
- students having opportunities to review and reflect on their learning during lessons and feed this back to the teacher/session leader;
- lesson observations where appropriate (and where this would not impact negatively on the student's ability to speak openly in the session);
- student voice being influential in adapting and amending planned learning activities;
- staff having the opportunity for professional dialogue to reflect critically on their work in delivering RSE.

## 11. RSE policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Pastoral Director to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of students, staff and parents and that it is in line with current Department for Education advice and guidance.

## 12. Useful resources

Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education: Statutory guidance – Department for Education: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

Relationships and sex education (RSE) (Secondary) – Department for Education: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-secondary>

[Understanding Relationships, Sex and Health Education at your child's secondary school: a guide for parents](#) – Department for Education

It Happens Education: RSHE for Schools: <https://ithappens.education/>

[www.sexeducationforum.org.uk](http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk)

Gender Questioning Children: Non statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England-  
Department for Education

[Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.education.gov.uk/guidance/gender-questioning-children)

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