

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

The Abbey School, Reading

Reviewed by:	Assistant Head Junior School Deputy Head Senior School	September 2023
Ratified by:	Whole School Leadership Committee and Governor Audit	September 2023
Next review: September 2024		

1. Introduction

The intention of this policy is to provide clear guidance for all staff and parents and to define The Abbey School's approach to RSE (relationships and sex education). Many of the pressing issues facing young people today fall within the remit of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) and Citizenship Education as well as important learning around RSE. We believe that effective RSE is essential if our students are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives. It contributes to promoting the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, emotional, mental and physical development of our students, preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it is in line with current Government guidance and legislation. This policy takes particular account of:

- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (DfE July 2021)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)
- Equality Act (2010)

The Equality Act places duties on schools to address prejudice-based bullying and to help prevent it from happening, and in doing so to keep protected characteristic groups safe. RSE and PSHE education, with its focus on identity and equality, forms part of the way the school seeks to fulfil this duty.

The policy is also reviewed regularly to ensure that the RSE programme continues to meet the needs of students.

This policy is available via the school website for parents and carers to view.

2. Definition

RSE is 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 wellbeing. The teaching of relationship and sex education is applicable to all sexual orientations. RSE is an identifiable part of the PSHE education curriculum, which has planned, timetabled lessons across all the Key Stages.

3. Rationale and Ethos

Students at The Abbey School are growing up in an increasingly complex world. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. Our aim is to ensure that in this environment, our students know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way. Much of this is managed through our PSHE programme, in which RSE is embedded.

The topics covered within the RSE curriculum are wide-ranging and at times there may be understandable and legitimate areas of contention. This policy is designed to outline the

purpose and content of RSE, whilst ensuring that all of the compulsory subject content is age and developmentally appropriate.

We aim to teach RSE sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of students and parents while always with the aim of providing students with the knowledge they need of the law and the legal implications of their actions.

In the Senior School, teaching will build on the knowledge acquired in the younger years and develop further students' understanding with an increased focus on risk areas such as intimate relationships and sex. Our belief is that mental wellbeing is central to a student's success and will enable them to build positive relationships. We know that children and young people are increasingly experiencing challenges, and that young people are at particular risk of feeling lonely.

The RSE curriculum will give them the knowledge and capability to take care of themselves and receive support if problems arise. RSE is taught in a wider context of helping to foster students' wellbeing and develop resilience and character that we know are fundamental to them being happy, successful and productive members of society. Central to this is students' belief that they can achieve goals, both academic and personal; to stick to tasks that will help them achieve those goals, and to recover from challenging periods in their lives. We promote positive personal attributes including courage, honesty, kindness.

RSE provision is intended to:

- Give a positive view of human sexuality, with honest and medically accurate information, so that students can learn about their bodies and sexual and reproductive health in ways that are appropriate to their age and maturity.
- Foster gender equality and LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans) equality and challenge all forms of discrimination in RSE lessons and in every-day school life.
- Give students opportunities to reflect on values and influences (such as from peers, media, faith and culture) that may shape their attitudes to relationships and sex, and nurtures respect for different views.
- Promote safe, equal, caring and enjoyable relationships and discusses real-life issues appropriate to the age and stage of students, including friendships, families, consent, relationship abuse, sexual exploitation and safe relationships online.
- Provide reliable sources of information, including about the law and legal rights, and distinguishes between fact and opinion.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Heads of PSHE, Life Education and Skills for Life across the stages of the School have direct responsibility for the RSE programme, working closely with others, such as the Heads of Science, Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), School nurses, etc. This work is supported by the management teams, with specific responsibilities for the oversight of RSE allocated to Assistant Heads at the Junior School and to the Deputy Head at the Senior School.

RSE is delivered by form teachers and tutors during PSHE and Skills for Life lessons and also as part of the science curriculum. Teachers, Teaching Assistants (TAs) and support staff take part in INSET sessions to ensure awareness and understanding of this critical aspect of our curriculum. External speakers and experts are also invited to deliver aspects of the programme.

Teachers are aware that effective RSE, which brings an understanding of what is and what is not appropriate in a relationship, can lead to a disclosure of a child protection issue. In the event of any disclosure, the School's safeguarding procedure will be followed and the DSLs informed as appropriate.

5. Curriculum Design

Junior School approach

All staff are trained in the correct vocabulary to be used for names of external body parts and are made aware of the importance of RSE teaching and its links to safeguarding.

In order to keep our students safe, it is vital that their learning about the social and emotional aspects of sexual reproduction begins in the early stages of primary school. At this time, and throughout the primary phase, students will have many different relationships: acquaintances, friends, close friends, 'best friends', distant and close family relations and classmates. Often, there may be some sort of physical contact with some of these people, from handshakes, to holding hands, to hugging, cuddling and kissing. Learning to judge what is appropriate and feels right for themselves and others is a skill that is partly inherent, and partly learnt over time.

A planned, developmental PSHE curriculum which includes RSE is the best way of teaching children and young people about recognising what type of physical contact they and others are comfortable with within their relationships. Further, as part of our PSHE curriculum, RSE is the learning that helps students to recognise healthy relationships. It helps them to understand and manage the changes that can happen in, and to, relationships as they grow up, the new feelings that may come as these relationships alter, and how to manage feelings and relationships in order to keep themselves and others they care about healthy and safe.

Children should learn that their body belongs to them and that they can say who has access to it. Learning to respect boundaries – their own and other people's – helps children and young people to understand the need to obtain consent and that everyone has the right to give or not give their consent for any activity, sexual or otherwise. It is important that our students are empowered with the knowledge they need to recognise and to report abuse, including emotional, physical and sexual abuse. At all stages it will be important to balance teaching children about making sensible decisions to stay safe (including online) whilst being clear it is never the fault of a child who is abused and why victim blaming is always wrong. As part of a comprehensive programme and whole school approach, this knowledge can support safeguarding of children.

6. Junior School RSE Programme Outline

See Appendix 1 for key objectives of the statutory Relationships Education curriculum for Primary Schools (DFE July 2021).

Nursery

Learning includes:

- Naming body parts, including external genitalia, what areas of the body are private and should not be touched (unless the child gives consent).

Reception-Lower I

Learning includes:

- Naming body parts, including external genitalia and discussion of what makes girls and boys different.
- What areas of the body are private and should not be touched (unless the child gives consent).
- Situations which may be risky and who they can talk to if they are worried.
- The concept of 'keeping something confidential or secret'.

Upper I

Learning includes:

- The emotional and physical changes of growing up, coping with strong emotions (puberty)
- Looking after our bodies (including personal hygiene), how to be safe and healthy.
- Discuss issues covered in previous years: names of body parts, acceptable and unacceptable contact and keeping secrets.
- Body image

Upper II and Lower III

Learning includes:

- Puberty - Learning that we all go through physical and emotional changes but the age at which changes happen will depend on their own personal 'body clock'.
- Menstruation
- Reproduction
- Body Image
- Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships
- Go back over issues from previous years: names of body parts, acceptable and unacceptable contact and keeping secrets.

Senior School approach

RSE is delivered through a bespoke programme which responds to the needs of our students. It is taught within weekly Skills for Life lessons every Wednesday morning for 50 minutes, mainly by form teachers but also through vetted guest speakers. Occasionally qualified staff who are trained and confident in talking about relevant, age-appropriate issues lead specialist sessions such as healthy and unhealthy relationships, equality, pleasure, abuse, sexuality, prejudice, gender identity, online safety, sex and consent, whilst always recognising the unique nature of each individual.

The school nurse and our trained mindfulness practitioners also deliver sessions. Our school assemblies will also cover topics relevant to RSE, and there is crossover within other subjects such as philosophy and theology and biology in particular.

Matters such as puberty, abortion, assisted conception are presented in a clear, impartial and scientific way, and the law is addressed on issues such as forced marriage and FGM.

Our RSE is designed to promote gender equality through challenging gender stereotypes and sexism and sexual harassment in schools. We take these issues seriously and ensure that we embed content on gender equality throughout the curriculum.

We are also committed to a PSHE programme that makes every student feel valued and included and is relevant to them. This means we are committed to an LGBT+ inclusive and SEND-inclusive curriculum and are mindful of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 when planning

for this subject. We also ensure that we consider the religious and cultural background of all students when teaching RSE.

The school's RSE programme is a schematic spiral programme, beginning in Upper III and concluding in the Upper VI. It builds cohesively on the RSE and PSHE framework introduced in the Junior School with key themes of:

- Living in the wider world
- Relationships
- Health & wellbeing

All Sixth Form students have scheduled weekly Skills for Life lessons too. These are either directed towards Lower Sixth, Upper Sixth or combined Sixth Form. They are delivered in Form classes or to whole year groups and often include debate or are led by the students. Often, there are visiting speakers who are experts in their field, including our alumnae. The Director and Assistant Directors of Sixth Form oversees the Sixth form programme of PSHE and RSE in conjunction with the Head of PSHE.

7. Safe & Effective Practice

At the heart of many subjects within RSE there is a focus on keeping our students safe, and we are aware that the School can play an important role in preventative education. Good practice allows our students to have an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues.

- **Personal Beliefs**

The personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence their teaching of RSE.

- **Language and Ground Rules in Lessons**

Ground rules help to minimise inappropriate and unintended disclosures and comments of a negative nature made towards other students, whether intentional or not. They are also paramount to effectively managing discussions that might elicit strong opinions.

To be effective, students and teachers need to develop ground rules together and then test them in discussion and group activities, amending them as necessary. Examples of ground rules include:

- **Openness:** We will be open and honest, but not discuss directly our own or others' personal/private lives. We will discuss examples but will not use names or descriptions that could identify anyone.
- **Keep the conversation in the room:** We feel safe discussing issues and we know that our teacher will not repeat what is said in the classroom unless they are concerned we are at risk, in which case they will follow the school's safeguarding policy.
- **Non-judgmental approach:** It is okay for us to disagree with another person's point of view but we will not judge, make fun of, or put anybody down. We will 'challenge the opinion, not the person'.
- **Right to pass:** Taking part is important. However, we have the right to pass on answering a question or participating in an activity and we will not put anyone 'on the spot'.

- **Make no assumptions:** We will not make assumptions about people's values, attitudes, behaviours, identity, life experiences or feelings. We will listen to the other person's point of view respectfully and expect to be listened to ourselves.
 - **Using appropriate language:** We will use correct terms rather than slang terms, as they can be offensive. If we are not sure what the correct term is, we will ask our teacher.
 - **Asking questions:** We are encouraged to ask questions and they are valued by our teacher. However, we do not ask personal questions or anything intended to deliberately try to embarrass someone.
- Seeking help and advice:** If we need further help or advice, we know how and where to seek it - both in school and in the community. We will encourage friends to seek help if we think they need it.

▪ **Dealing with difficult questions**

It is important to encourage students to ask questions but this requires the teacher to feel confident to handle the questions raised. We cannot predict the questions that the students will ask us and particular topics do not always come up when we expect them to. When spontaneous discussion arises, we will answer the students' questions in a sensitive, honest and age-appropriate manner.

We should also take into consideration the fact that if we leave a question unanswered, that students will seek their information from another source such as the internet, which may lead them to inappropriate content.

We have a variety of strategies for dealing with difficult questions. For example:

- **'Ask it basket' / anonymous question box:** Available before, during and after all lessons, so students can ask questions anonymously at any time. Teachers may look at and prepare answers for questions before the lesson. If teachers are concerned about a question, they may ask anyone whose question has not been answered to come and see them privately.
- **Conscious messages:** Being conscious of the messages teachers may give the rest of the group when responding to a question. Staff may feel that a question has been put in an attempt to embarrass or put them on the spot but a dismissive answer could dissuade others from asking genuine questions.
- **Age-appropriate answers:** Giving factual, age-appropriate answers when this is possible.
- **Buying time if necessary:** It may be appropriate for staff to explain that they are not sure how best to answer and that they will respond later. If a question is too explicit or is inappropriate, the teacher will attend to it later, on an individual basis and a decision will be taken after consultation with a member of SLT/JLT as to whether or not to inform the child's parents/carers. In the event of a disclosure, the School's safeguarding procedure will be invoked and teachers will speak to the DSL as soon as possible.

▪ **Distancing**

Using distancing techniques such as stories, scenarios, clips from TV programmes or case studies can provide fictional characters and storylines that stimulate discussion whilst 'de-personalising' discussions. This allows students to engage more objectively with the lesson content.

The following or similar questions may be used to support distanced discussion:

- What is happening to them?
- Why might this be happening?

- How are they feeling?
- What are they thinking?
- What do other people think of them?
- Who could help them?
- What would you tell them to do if they asked for help?
- What could you say or do to persuade them to act differently?

▪ **Menstruation**

Our programme includes preparation for menstruation from U11 (year 5). We make appropriate and sensitive arrangements for the changing and disposal of sanitary wear for students (eg requests for sanitary protection are dealt with by the school nurse or by Junior School Form Teachers). There are trained First Aid staff in the office who are used to dealing with sensitive issues. Sanitary towels are made available for students in Upper II and Lower III in their toilet block.

▪ **Contraceptive Advice**

General advice on contraception forms part of the RSE programme in the Senior School. If a student seeks contraceptive advice, even if they have been withdrawn from the Sex Education programme, they may be referred to a health professional.

▪ **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)**

LGBT content is addressed as part of the RSE programme in order to ensure that LGBT children and young people, and children and young people with LGBT families, see themselves reflected in what they learn. It also encourages all young people to grow up with inclusive and accepting attitudes.

At the point at which we consider it appropriate to teach our students about LGBT, we will ensure that this content is fully integrated into our programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson.

In the Junior School this will involve teaching students about the society in which they are growing up, in order to foster respect for others and for difference, and to educate students about healthy relationships. We aim to challenge stereotypes and celebrate differences when teaching children about relationships and families including LGBT families, which means teaching children about families with different kinds of structures, e.g. two Mums or two Dads.

▪ **Confidentiality and safeguarding**

Good practice allows students an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues. Such discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. Students should be made aware of how to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This should include processes when they have a concern about a friend or peer.

All staff should know what to do if a student tells them that they are being abused or neglected or are witnessing abuse. Staff should know how to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality and involve only those who need to be involved, e.g. the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Students are made aware that not all information can be kept confidential, and they will be helped to understand that if certain disclosures are made, certain actions will follow. Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.

In the event of disclosure of abuse, the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures will be followed.

In the event of disclosure of pregnancy, information and advice will be sought from a health professional. The School will always encourage students to talk to their parents /carers and will provide help in doing so if the student requests this. If the student tells her parent(s)/carers, the responsibility lies with the parent(s)/carer. If the student refuses to tell her parent(s)/carer, staff will refer her to a health professional if a health professional is not already involved. If the student is under sixteen, the member of staff who has been informed should report the incident to the Head who will consult about informing parent(s)/carer.

- **Outside Agencies and Visitors**

Visitors who may be invited to help with the delivery of Sex Education will be made aware of the ethos of the school and will work within the guidelines of this policy.

- **Complaints Procedure**

Any concerns about the Relationship and Sex Education curriculum may be reported to the appropriate member of staff or directly to the Head. See Section 8 below.

8. Safeguarding

All teachers at The Abbey School are made aware of the safeguarding procedures regarding all types of abuse and receive regular safeguarding training. Any queries regarding safeguarding policy or procedures should be referred to the DSL or Deputy DSL. The Safeguarding Policy is available to all on the school website.

9. Engaging Stakeholders

PSHE education is a partnership between schools and parents. Engaging with parents about the content of our PSHE programme, including RSE, is an important part of providing a high-quality programme.

In the Junior School, staff work closely with parents to ensure that they are aware of what is being taught. All parents from Nursery-Lower III are sent a copy of our document, 'PSHE and RSE at the Abbey Junior School' - see Appendix 2 for further information.

Parents of Upper Junior students are invited to attend a consultation meeting to discuss the school's RSE programme and to view the teaching materials and resources that will be used. A parent who is concerned about any element of this policy, or is unhappy about their child's participation, should discuss their feelings with the Head. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of those aspects of the Sex Education programme which are NOT part of the statutory National Curriculum Science Orders. If requested, alternative arrangements will be made for individual students. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships or Health Education.

Parents should be made aware of the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child, for example, hearing their peers' version of what was said in class rather than what was said by the teacher, and any social and emotional effects of being excluded.

In the Senior School written communication is provided to parents regarding more sensitive topics at the beginning of the school year. We also provide webinars and talks for parents relating to topics covered within RSE such as healthy eating and managing stress. Any parent

who wishes to discuss the curriculum content is welcome to meet with the Director of Upper School and Life Education or Deputy Head Ethos and Pastoral to discuss their concerns.

10. Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

We regularly monitor our RSE scheme of work to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistent, that the curriculum is meeting the national requirements under the Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education guidance, and that learning outcomes are reflective of student need.

To ensure that this policy and the RSE programme are effective, there is opportunity for student 1-1 reflection (both for the start of year and end) and this is built into the scheme of work for all year groups. Student voice is central to the culture and ethos of The Abbey School. We use student voice to evaluate how relevant and engaging RSE is to children's lives.

Throughout our RSE scheme of work we embed student voice practices to enable students to express their views on the range of topics and issues that RSE covers and to ensure that they listen to other opinions and evidence, reflect on their own perspectives and take a broader view. We want to ensure that all voices are heard but that those views that are hurtful, offensive or exclusionary do not dominate and are addressed. We want to ensure a culture where human rights, social justice, inclusion and diversity are promoted.

In addition, form teachers and members of staff delivering the content are asked to provide directed, written feedback on topics covered, and to provide recommendations for improvement.

As members of The PSHE Association we are able to access the most up to date resources, and ensure that we are monitoring and informed of statutory changes as they arise.

11. Equal Opportunities

RSE is inclusive of all students; they have an equal entitlement to good quality RSE. The programme is delivered in line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy within an atmosphere of mutual respect. The whole school community supports an approach that ensures that no individual will be discriminated against on grounds of gender, race, disability, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

If a student is absent from school and does not participate in the RSE programme, the school will ensure that teaching materials are made available. In the Junior School, 'catch up' Science sessions will be delivered.

Resources selected to support the programme will be free from cultural bias wherever possible and will avoid gender, race, disability or sexual orientation stereotyping. The programme will be sensitive to the needs of all students in the school. We aim to celebrate differences and challenge gender stereotypes.

12. Additional Resources

- <https://pshe-association.org.uk/>
- <https://pshe-association.org.uk/news/new-sre-guidance-published-pshe-association-brook>

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781150/Draft_guidance_Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education2.pdf

Appendix 1: Key objectives of the statutory Relationships Education curriculum for Primary Schools

Families and people who care for me

Children should know:

- 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

Children should know:

- 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 physically or verbally aggressive behaviour 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.

Respectful relationships

Children should know:

- 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 granting in relationships with friends, peers and adults.

Online relationships

Children should know:

- 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

Children should know:

- 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 and others.
- 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 2: Junior School parent guide

What is PSHE/RSE?

PSHE (Personal, Social, Health, Economic Education) gives students the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to keep themselves healthy and safe. It helps students to manage many of the most critical opportunities, challenges and responsibilities they will face growing up.

As part of the students' PSHE provision, we include lessons on RSE (Relationships and Sex Education). A planned, progressive programme of RSE gradually and appropriately begins to prepare students for adult life. It teaches the skills they need to fully manage the natural physical and emotional changes that they will experience as they grow and mature into healthy, confident and responsible adults, who are able to keep themselves safe.

Some elements of RSE are also part of our Science curriculum e.g. the biological and physiological aspects of puberty and reproduction.

Keeping Children Safe

As a school, we have a shared duty of care.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children (Keeping Children Safe in Education: 2023).

In order to keep our students safe, it is vital that their learning about the social and emotional aspects of sexual reproduction begins in the early stages of primary school. At this time, and throughout the primary phase, students will have many different relationships: acquaintances, friends, close friends, 'best friends', distant and close family relations and classmates. Often (and particularly when we do not need to social distance!), there may be some sort of physical contact with some of these people, from handshakes, to holding hands, to hugging, cuddling and kissing. Learning to judge what is appropriate and feels right for themselves and others is a skill that is partly inherent, and partly learnt over time.

A planned, developmental PSHE curriculum which includes RSE is the best way of teaching students about recognising what type of physical contact they and others are comfortable with within their relationships and what is appropriate. Further, as part of a PSHE curriculum, RSE is the learning that helps students to recognise healthy relationships. It helps them to understand and manage the changes that can happen in and to relationships as they grow up, the new feelings that may come with these relationship changes and how to manage feelings and relationships in order to keep themselves and others they care about healthy and safe.

Students should learn that their body belongs to them and that they can say who has access to it. This is a key element in a school's approach to safeguarding. Learning to respect boundaries – their own and other people's – helps children to understand the need to obtain consent and that everyone has the right to give or not give their consent for any activity, sexual or otherwise. It is a sad reality that many children of primary age are at risk of abuse and it is critical for their safety that they are educated early in order to keep themselves safe and to seek help if they feel at all threatened (The Association for Science Education and PSHE Association: March 2016).

Quality RSE will give our students:

- An awareness of what's OK / not OK;
- The ability to identify risk;

- Good positive body confidence;
- A vocabulary to care for and protect themselves;
- Resilience with peers and others;
- The confidence to know when to speak out;
- A platform to speak out.

Lack of high quality, age appropriate RSE is a concern, as it may leave children vulnerable to inappropriate sexual behaviours and sexual exploitation. This is because they have not been taught the appropriate language or developed the confidence to describe unwanted behaviours or where to go for help.

In our society, children are confronted with sexual images in advertising and stories and messages about celebrity lifestyles and relationships in the media. As your child gets older, they are going to hear about body changes and sex, from their friends, from surfing the internet and by watching the television. You may be surprised by the things that they have already learned through those avenues!

Using their natural curiosity combined with their imaginations, children often put together their own complex ideas about concepts such as where babies come from. This understanding can be a mixture of correct, almost correct and completely incorrect ideas. Our shared responsibility is to reinforce the facts and dispel the fiction!

What will RSE look like in the Classroom?

Nursery

- Naming body parts, including external genitalia, what areas of the body are private and should not be touched (unless the child gives consent).

Reception-Lower I

- Naming body parts, including external genitalia and discussion of what makes girls and boys different.
- What areas of the body are private and should not be touched (unless the child gives consent).
- Situations which may be risky and who they can talk to if they are worried.
- The concept of 'keeping something confidential or secret'.

Upper I

- The emotional and physical changes of growing up, coping with strong emotions (puberty) Looking after our bodies (including personal hygiene), how to be safe and healthy.
- Discuss issues covered in previous years: names of body parts, acceptable and unacceptable contact and keeping secrets.

Upper II and Lower III

- Reproduction and puberty - Learning that we all go through physical and emotional changes but the age at which changes happen will depend on their own personal 'body clock'.
- Body Image.
- Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships.
- Go back over issues from previous years: names of body parts, acceptable and unacceptable contact and keeping secrets.

We believe that it is essential that children learn the correct biological names for the genitalia. Having the right language to describe all parts of their body and knowing how to seek help if

they are worried or uncomfortable about something and having the vocabulary to describe why they are seeking help are vital for keeping them safe.

It is important to remember that children develop at different rates and therefore each child should be able to understand and empathise with the stage of development that one of her peers might be at.

We cannot predict the questions that the students will ask us and particular topics do not always come up when we expect them to. When spontaneous discussion arises, we will answer the students' questions in a sensitive, honest and age appropriate manner. Please remember, that children take on information as they are ready for it.

Who should deliver RSE to our children?

Studies show that children want their parents to be the first people to talk to them about growing up, sex and relationships. Many parents say they lack confidence to answer their children's questions frankly.

The School is here to help by delivering lessons and responding to the students' request for information.

We are also very happy to offer support to any parents who are not sure how to go about having conversations of this nature with their daughters.

When should we deliver RSE to our children?

As soon as they ask! They are asking because they want to know, and they are ready for truthful answers. How we respond is vital.

Why should we deliver RSE to our children?

We live in a rapidly changing world where keeping our children safe is more important than ever.

What if we do not deliver RSE to our children?

In the absence of quality RSE children may get their information from:

- Friends, peers, or older siblings from other families (who may well give them incorrect information!)
- Google (try it!). The reality is that this information will probably not be age appropriate.
- YouTube and other online platforms.
- Friends' parents.

Further Reading

- <https://www.todaysparent.com/family/parenting/age-by-age-guide-to-talking-to-kids-about-sex/>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/>
- <https://www.dove.com/uk/dove-self-esteem-project.html> advice on body image
- <http://always.com/en-us/tips-and-advice/puberty-101> Lots of information aimed at different stages of life and links to their #Like a girl campaign
- <https://www.lil-lets.com/uk/teens/advice-for-parents/> A useful starting point, then navigate around to advice pages aimed at girls and the schools' material (we use some of their video resources)
- <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/puberty/Pages/puberty-signs.aspx> Information for parents about puberty