



Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

Author / Responsible Person	Principal
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1. Aims

The aims of Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) at Gracewood Academy are to:

1. Help pupils to live happy, safe and healthy lives, and to develop respectful, healthy relationships of all kinds.
2. Equip pupils with accurate knowledge to recognise unhealthy relationships, sexual harassment, coercion, abuse, exploitation and harmful online behaviour, and to know how to seek help.
3. Develop pupils' confidence, self-respect, empathy and capacity to make responsible decisions.
4. Ensure pupils can use accurate vocabulary to describe themselves, their bodies, relationships and health.
5. Prepare pupils for puberty and adulthood, including physical health, mental wellbeing, sexual and reproductive health, and the importance of hygiene and accessing support.
6. Provide a safe, respectful framework in which sensitive discussions can take place.
7. Deliver a planned, age-appropriate, inclusive and evidence-informed programme which is accessible to all pupils, supports safeguarding and prepares pupils for adult life.

2. Statutory requirements

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 make Relationships and Sex Education compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education. Health Education is compulsory in state-funded schools.

This policy has been prepared with regard to the Department for Education statutory guidance, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, published in July 2025 and effective from 1 September 2026.

At Gracewood Academy, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education are statutory. They are delivered through a planned programme of PSHE and through relevant curriculum subjects and wider school experiences.

3. Policy development

This policy was reviewed in June 2026 following the publication of revised statutory guidance for implementation from September 2026.

The review included consultation with staff, pupils, parents/carers and Trust representatives. Parents/carers were proactively invited to consider the proposed curriculum overview, including the proposed RSHE and wider PSHE curriculum, its approach to sex education, and representative teaching materials, through information session.

Feedback received through the consultation informed the final policy and curriculum map. A summary of the consultation process and the school's response to key themes is available from the school on request.

This policy is approved by the CEO under delegated authority from the Trust Board and is published on the school website. A copy is available free of charge on request.

4. Curriculum definition

At [school name], RSHE comprises two statutory and closely connected elements: Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education.

Relationships and Sex Education enables pupils to understand respectful relationships, including friendships, family relationships, intimate relationships, online relationships, equality, consent, sexual harassment, abuse, exploitation, sexual health and seeking help.

Health Education enables pupils to understand physical health, mental wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, puberty, reproductive health, first aid, substance use, online safety and access to health support.

RSHE is taught through a carefully sequenced programme. Some topics appropriately integrate relationships education and sex education within a single lesson or unit. The school will not artificially separate these elements where doing so would make teaching less coherent or less effective.

Some RSHE content is also taught through science, computing, citizenship, physical education, religious education and the wider life of the school. The RSHE lead will ensure that curriculum content is coherent, progressive and does not unnecessarily duplicate learning elsewhere.

Appendix 1 sets out the school's curriculum, including the content taught, the year group and sequence in which it is taught, and the principal delivery route.

Parents/carers may request that their child is excused from some or all sex education delivered as part of RSE. They cannot withdraw their child from Relationships Education, Health Education or science.

5. Curriculum

Gracewood Academy delivers a coherent programme of PSHE and RSHE which draws on the Life Lessons Secondary PSHE curriculum, and school-developed resources, and relevant learning in science, computing, citizenship, physical education, religious education, tutor time, assemblies and enrichment.

Life Lessons is one important source of curriculum resources. The school selects, sequences, adapts and supplements these materials in order to meet the needs of its pupils and community. No single provider determines the school's full PSHE or RSHE curriculum.

The detailed curriculum is set out in Appendix 1. This identifies the core content taught in each year group, its sequence and the main teaching route. It includes both Life Lessons content and school-developed provision.

The curriculum is planned progressively, is age- and stage-appropriate, and is designed to complement rather than duplicate learning in other subjects.

Where the school needs to make a significant change to planned RSHE content in response to an emerging issue or identified pupil need, it will assess the material carefully, update the curriculum map where appropriate, and inform parents/carers of material changes.

The curriculum may need to be adapted as necessary to ensure it is responsive to issues as they arise and meets the needs and maturity of our pupils, and to ensure that any gaps in knowledge or understanding that are identified are addressed.

Staff will answer pupils' questions in an age-appropriate, factual and non-judgemental way. Staff will not draw on personal experiences or present personal opinions as fact.

Where a pupil asks a question which goes beyond the planned curriculum, relates to Sex Education from which they have been withdrawn, or requires individual support, staff will respond sensitively and in the best interests of the pupil. This may include providing a brief age-appropriate response, encouraging the pupil to speak to a parent/carer or trusted adult, signposting further support, or seeking advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Staff will not promise confidentiality. Any disclosure or concern about a pupil's welfare will be managed in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Pupils who have been excused from specific sex education content may still ask questions of staff. Staff will respond in accordance with the principles above, taking account of the pupil's age, needs and circumstances. Pupils will be encouraged, where appropriate, to speak with a parent/carer or another trusted adult.

6. Delivery of RSHE

RSHE is delivered through planned PSHE lessons and through relevant curriculum subjects and wider school experiences. It may be taught by subject specialists, form tutors, PSHE teachers and other appropriately trained members of staff. The school's RSHE lead is Cristina Careddu, who is responsible for curriculum planning, staff support, resource quality assurance and evaluation.

The school uses a range of resources, including Life Lessons materials, school-developed materials and, where appropriate, resources from other reputable organisations. All materials are reviewed before use to ensure that they are accurate, age-appropriate, accessible, unbiased, aligned with statutory guidance and suitable for the needs of pupils.

Where an external visitor or organisation contributes to RSHE, this will enhance rather than replace teaching by school staff. The Principal and RSHE lead will approve the contribution in advance, review materials and lesson plans, ensure appropriate safeguarding arrangements, and ensure that parents/carers can view the materials used.

Teaching is adapted so that all pupils, including pupils with SEND, can access the curriculum. Adaptations may include pre-teaching vocabulary, visual or concrete supports, carefully structured discussion, revisiting key ideas, adjusted materials and additional adult support. Adaptation will not mean that pupils are denied access to important safeguarding, relationships or health knowledge.

All RSHE teaching complies with the Equality Act 2010. The curriculum promotes respect for all pupils and families, and it addresses harmful stereotypes, prejudice, bullying and discrimination. Bullying, discriminatory language and disrespectful behaviour are not tolerated.

6.1 Safeguarding and confidentiality

RSHE is delivered in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Staff recognise that sensitive content may lead to questions or disclosures. Staff must pass safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay and must never promise that information will be kept secret.

Pupils will be reminded how confidentiality works in RSHE lessons, how to seek help, and which trusted adults or services they can approach in school.

7. Working with parents/carers and requests for excusal from sex education

The school recognises parents/carers as children's first and most important educators. We will communicate openly about RSHE and provide clear information about what pupils will learn.

Parents/carers will be directed to the curriculum overview in Appendix 1 each academic year. They will be shown representative RSHE materials and may request to view the materials used to teach their child, including slides, videos, worksheets and teacher guidance. Copyright restrictions may limit onward copying or sharing, but will not prevent parents/carers from viewing materials.

Parents/carers have the right to request that their child is excused from some or all sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. This right does not apply to Relationships Education, Health Education or science, including sex education taught as part of science.

Requests should be made in writing to the Principal using Appendix 2, by email or by letter. The Principal will normally meet with the parent/carer and, where appropriate, the pupil, to clarify the nature and purpose of the teaching, understand the request, and discuss the educational, social and emotional implications of being excused.

Once those discussions have taken place, the school will respect a parent/carer's request unless exceptional circumstances apply. In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may refuse a request, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or because of a pupil's particular vulnerability. Any decision to refuse a request will be recorded, with reasons, and communicated to the parent/carer.

From three terms before a pupil turns 16, a pupil may choose to receive sex education despite a parent/carer request for withdrawal. The school will make suitable arrangements for the pupil to receive the relevant education during one of those terms. The school will ensure that pupils approaching this point are made aware of their right to opt back into sex education.

Where a pupil is excused from sex education, the school will record the decision and ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful alternative education. This will not normally include excusal from any Relationships Education or Health Education contained within a wider lesson or unit.

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The Trust Board

The Trust Board, through its delegated arrangements, is responsible for ensuring that the school's RSHE policy, curriculum and teaching materials comply with statutory guidance. The approving body is responsible for ensuring that clear information is available to parents/carers about curriculum content, resources, any external providers and the right to request that a pupil is excused from sex education within RSE.

8.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that RSHE is taught consistently, that staff are trained and supported, that curriculum materials are appropriate, and that parents/carers can access relevant information and resources. The Principal is also responsible for managing requests for excusal from sex education in accordance with section 7, including discussions with parents/carers and pupils where appropriate.

8.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSHE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSHE
- Checking pupils' understanding to inform future teaching.
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Following the school's procedures for questions, disclosures, safeguarding concerns and requests for excusal from sex education.
- Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSHE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSHE are encouraged to discuss this with the Principal.

8.4 Pupils

Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSHE and, when discussing issues related to RSHE, treat others with respect and sensitivity. This is subject to any formal arrangements made under section 7.

9. Training

Staff who teach RSHE will receive appropriate training and support. This will include familiarity with the curriculum and resources, the use of correct vocabulary, the handling of sensitive questions, agreed classroom ground rules, safeguarding and disclosures, SEND adaptations, Equality Act duties and the school's withdrawal procedures.

New staff will receive appropriate induction before teaching RSHE. Training needs will be reviewed regularly by the Principal and RSHE lead.

10. Monitoring arrangements

The RSHE lead and Principal will monitor implementation through curriculum and resource review, planning scrutiny, lesson visits, pupil work, pupil voice, staff feedback and parent/carer feedback. Monitoring will evaluate curriculum coverage, age-appropriateness, accessibility, pupils' understanding and the quality of teaching.

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner where statutory guidance, legislation or the school curriculum changes materially. Parents/carers will be proactively consulted during each substantive review.

The policy will be approved by the CEO in accordance with the Trust's scheme of delegation.

Appendix 1: Curriculum map

Please see attached curriculum overview.

This appendix forms part of the policy. It sets out the planned PSHE and RSHE curriculum by year group and sequence.

The map identifies the principal content and delivery route for each unit. It makes clear which units include sex education content for the purpose of parental requests under section 7.

Appendix 2: Parent/carer request for excusal from sex education within RSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS/CARERS			
Name of child		Class	
Name of parent/carer		Date	
Sex education content or session(s) from which excusal is requested: Year group: Unit / topic / session: Date(s), if known:			
Optional information that you would like the school to consider			
Parent signature			

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL	
Discussion with parent/carer offered / held: Pupil involved in discussion, where appropriate:	

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL

Decision and rationale:

Outcome:	☐ Request granted: pupil excused from the identified sex-education content ☐ Request refused in exceptional circumstances: written rationale attached
Period and content covered by excusal:	
Purposeful alternative education arranged:	
Does the pupil have a right to opt back in during the relevant period?	
Copy of outcome provided to parent/carer:	
Member of staff responsible:	
Principal signature and date	

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