

ODST Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Overview

The Education Reform Act (Section 1) states that schools should provide a curriculum which “promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils...and of society; and prepare such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.” Relationship and sex education is an important dimension of this statutory entitlement.

RSE is an umbrella term for all the teaching and learning we offer pupils to understand our own and others’ sexuality and to develop skills for relationships and informed decision making.

ODST believes that RSE is the entitlement of each child and is committed to deliver it within the context of a broad and balanced programme of health education¹.

Aims

In ODST we aim through implicit and explicit learning experiences to:

- Ensure that RSE is fully integrated into the PSHE and Science curriculum and not isolated, taken out of context or over-emphasised in any way.
- Foster self-esteem and respect for others as the cornerstone of good health education and of therefore good sex and relationship education.
- Encourage schools to provide a RSE programme tailored to the age and the physical and emotional maturity of the children.
- Nurture a partnership between caring adults – governors, teachers, other staff and parents – to ensure sensitive support for children and young people as they grow and mature.
- Ensure children have the ability to accept their own and others’ sexuality.
- Encourage children to enjoy relationships based upon mutual trust and respect, free from any abuse.
- Generate an atmosphere where questions and discussion on sexual matters can take place without embarrassment.
- Avoid sexual stereotyping and sexual discrimination.
- Adopt a whole school approach to RSE.

Benefits

Effective teaching of sex education will increase pupils’ knowledge of:

- Body language
- Human growth and development
- Families, parenting and life cycles.
- Safety and child protection.
- Helping agencies.

It will also enable pupils to:

- Improve their self-esteem.
- Make informed choices and decisions.
- Develop personal initiative and be able to take responsibility.

¹ Sex and relationship education (SRE) is compulsory from age 11 onwards. It involves teaching children about reproduction, sexuality and sexual health.

- Recognise personal skills and qualities in themselves and others.
- Maintain and develop relationships.
- Develop self-confidence.
- Develop assertiveness in appropriate situations.
- Develop the motivation to succeed.

Context

ODST recognises that a planned, appropriate and sensitive approach to the provision of sex education is a fundamental entitlement of all our pupils. This policy statement will be continually developed in consultation with parents, pupils and governors, to reflect that the Trust plays a supportive and complementary role to that of parents in preparing pupils to meet maturely, the challenges of adult life.

The aim of the RSE policy is to clarify the provision of RSE to all pupils (including education about growth, puberty, reproduction, sexuality and sexual health) in line with the Trust's underpinning Christian values and as set out in the guidance published by the Department for Education in July 2000. Relationship and sex education is delivered through the PSHE and other appropriate elements of the curriculum.

This policy statement is designed to be complementary to, and supportive of, the role of parents in educating their children about sexuality and relationships. It recognises that the prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with parents/carers.

We aim to teach RSE in the context of the Trust's aims and values framework and in the belief that:

- It is an integral part of the learning process, beginning in childhood and continuing into adult life
- It should be provided for all children and young people including those; with physical, learning or emotional difficulties.
- It should encourage consideration of values, moral issues, sexuality, personal relationships and the development of communication and decision-making skills.
- It should foster self-esteem, self-awareness, the skills to avoid and resist unwanted sexual experiences and a sense of moral responsibility.
- RSE is part of a wider social, personal, spiritual and moral education process.
- Children should be taught to have respect for their own bodies and learn about their responsibilities to others.
- It is important to build positive relationships with others, involving trust and respect and taught in the context of marriage and family life.

Relationships education expectations

By the end of primary, pupils will need to know:

Families and people who care for the pupil

- 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 characterized by love and care
- that stable, caring relationships, which may be different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up

- that marriage (available to both opposite and same sex couples) and civil partnerships represent a formal and legally recognized commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong
- how to recognize 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

Respectful relationships

- the importance of respecting others, even when they're very different (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 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 (primary 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're 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 sort 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's 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) who 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're 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)

Health education expectations

By the end of primary, pupils will need to know:

Mental wellbeing

- that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health
- that there is a normal range of emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, nervousness) and scale of emotions that all humans experience in relation to different experiences and situations
- how to recognize and talk about their emotions, including having a varied vocabulary of words to use when talking about their own and others' feelings
- how to judge whether what they're feeling and how they're behaving is appropriate and proportionate
- the benefits of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation, voluntary and service-based activity on mental wellbeing and happiness
- simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family, and the benefits of hobbies and interests
- isolation and loneliness can affect children and that it's very important for children to discuss their feelings with an adult and seek support
- that bullying (including cyberbullying) has a negative and often lasting impact on mental wellbeing
- where and how to seek support (including recognising the triggers for seeking support), including whom in school they should speak to if they're worried about their own or someone else's mental wellbeing or ability to control their emotions (including issues arising online)
- it's common for people to experience mental ill health. For many people who do, the problems can be resolved if the right support is made available, especially if accessed early enough

Internal safety and harms

- that for most people the internet is an integral part of life and has many benefits
- about the benefits of rationing time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing
- how to consider the effect of their online actions on others and know how to recognise and display respectful behavior online and the importance of keeping personal information private
- why social media, some computer games and online gaming, for example, are age restricted
- that the internet can also be a negative place where online abuse, trolling, bullying and harassment can take place, which can have a negative impact on mental health
- how to be a discerning consumer of information online including understanding that information, including that from search engines, is ranked, selected and targeted
- where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online

Physical health and fitness

- the characteristics and mental and physical benefits of an active lifestyle

- the importance of building regular exercise into daily and weekly routines and how to achieve this; for example, walking or cycling to school, a daily active mile or other forms of regular, vigorous exercise
- the risks associated with an inactive lifestyle (including obesity)
- how and when to seek support including which adults to speak to in school if they're worried about their health

Healthy eating

- what constitutes a healthy diet (including understanding calories and other nutritional content)
- the principles of planning and preparing a range of healthy meals
- the characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating (including, for example, obesity and tooth decay) and other behaviours (e.g. the impact of alcohol on diet or health)

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco

- the facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, alcohol use and drug-taking

Health and prevention

- how to recognise early signs of physical illness, such as weight loss or unexplained changes to the body
- about safe and unsafe exposure to the sun, and how to reduce the risk of sun damage, including skin cancer
- the importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and that a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn
- about dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene and dental flossing, including regular checks up at the dentist
- about personal hygiene and germs including bacteria, viruses, how they're spread and treated, and the importance of handwashing
- the facts and science relating to immunisation and vaccination

Basic first aid

- how to make a clear and efficient call to emergency services if necessary
- concepts of basic first aid, for example dealing with common injuries, including head injuries

Changing adolescent bodies

- key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, particularly from age 9 through to age 11, including physical and emotional changes
- about menstrual wellbeing including the key facts about the menstrual cycle

Sex education expectations

There's no list of expectations for sex education at the primary level, as it isn't compulsory, but if you choose to teach it then the DfE recommends that it should:

- make sure boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings
- draw on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in science lessons to explain how a baby is conceived and born

The role of parents

The Trust is well aware that the primary role in children's RSE lies with parents and carers. We wish to build a positive and supporting relationship with the parents of children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective we:

- Inform parents about the school's sex education policy and practice.
- Answer any questions that parents may have about the sex education programme for their child.
- Take seriously any issue that parents raise with teachers or governors about this policy or the arrangements for RSE in the school.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of any RSE provided in the Trust, but not from teaching the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction necessary under the Science National Curriculum. The Trust fully recognises that the views of parents need to be borne in mind when developing a RSE policy, and parents are welcome to comment on the extent to which this policy reflects their wishes and the culture of the community served by an ODST school.

If a parent wishes their child to be withdrawn from RSE lessons, they should discuss this with the headteacher, and make it clear which aspects of the programme they do not wish their child to participate in. The school always complies with the wishes of parents in this regard.

The role of the headteacher

It is the responsibility of the headteacher to ensure that both staff and parents are informed about our RSE policy, and that the policy is implemented effectively. It is also the headteacher's responsibility to ensure that members of staff are given sufficient training, so that they can teach effectively and handle any difficult issues with sensitivity.

Along with the governing body the headteacher will support the design of a programme of study which ensures that the central aims of this RSE policy are covered and which meet the needs of pupils in their individual school. In doing this the governing body and headteacher will have regard to guidance on teaching styles, appropriate curriculum content and the age and maturity of the pupils.

The headteacher may liaise with external agencies regarding the school RSE programme, and ensure that all adults who work with children on these issues are aware of the school policy, and that they work within this framework and that of the school safeguarding policies.

Confidentiality

Teachers conduct RSE lessons in a sensitive manner and in confidence. However, if a child makes a reference to being involved, or likely to be involved in sexual activity, then the teacher will take the matter seriously and deal with it as a matter of child protection. Teachers will respond in a similar way if a child indicates that s/he may have been a victim of abuse. In these circumstances the teacher will talk to the child as a matter of urgency. If the teacher has concerns, they will draw their concerns to the attention of the designated person (DP) for safeguarding in the school. The DP will then deal with the matter in consultation with health care professionals. (See also Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy.)

Implementation

The programme will teach about relationships, love and care and the responsibilities of parenthood as well as reproduction, sexuality and sexual health. Young people need a clear understanding of the arguments for delaying sexual activity and resisting pressure, including the various moral and practical issues which need to be considered. It may be necessary to link RSE with issues of peer pressure and other risk-taking behaviour,

such as drugs, smoking and alcohol, and ensure that young people understand how the law applies to sexual relationships.

Teachers have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils. RSE will be undertaken within the broad framework of the Trust's core underpinning Christian values listed above. The personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of RSE within the PSHE framework.

Pupils need to be taught to behave responsibly towards reproduction, sexuality and sexual health issues and be able to make informed decisions about relationships and their behaviour.

It is expected that a programme will be taught in the transition year for pupils moving to secondary school which should include:

- changes in the body related to puberty, such as periods and voice breaking;
- when these changes are likely to happen and what issues may cause young people anxiety and how they can deal with these; and
- how a baby is conceived and born.

Organisation

In order to help pupils make informed choices, establish a healthy lifestyle and build up a carefully considered system of values, the teaching methods used are as important as the content of the lesson. The participation of pupils in lessons is essential in order to encourage them to learn from others and to help them to use appropriate language in ways which are understood by others. This requires the use of a balanced range of teaching methods.

Delivery of sex education

RSE may be carried out in a variety of different ways and by different specialists as well as teachers including:

- Trained staff within the PSHE programme
- School Nurse Team
- Police Schools Liaison Officer
- By reference to sexuality in curriculum areas other than PSHE.
- Youth and Community workers
- Clergy or faith leaders

Certain lessons are compulsory under the National Curriculum in Science and are excluded from the right of parents to withdraw their children. Such lessons will not include material on AIDS, HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases, or any aspect, other than biological aspects, of human sexual behaviour.

RSE will not be isolated, taken out of context or over-emphasised in any way.

Morals and Morality

Morals and morality are essential dimensions of sexuality and relationships. The programme will respect individual differences - inspired by cultural, religious, ethnic and family backgrounds - and it will endeavour to promote those values of respect and dignity for human life which are common to all faiths and societies.

Other values drawn from the Academy's core beliefs include promoting respect for each individual, positive self-esteem, self-respect and care for others. Pupils will be encouraged to consider the implications of these core values within the context of their relationships and sexuality.

Relationships

Relationships have an important part to play in sex education. Friendship, making relationships, valuing friendship, will be topics in the early part of the programme. Choosing a partner, assessing personal qualities, considerations before marriage, together with relationships within the family, will be considered; together with roles, avoidance of stereotyping and acknowledging different attitudes and influences.

Sensitive issues

Avoiding sensitive or controversial issues does not make them go away and leaves children and young people confused and at risk. This policy sets out how topics such as contraception, abortion, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases are to be included in the school's support and guidance for young people and staff.

Menstruation

The onset of menstruation can be alarming for girls if they are not prepared. Research shows that about a third of girls are not told about periods by their parents and 10% receive no preparation at all before their first period. As with education about puberty our schools' programmes will include preparation for menstruation making adequate and sensitive arrangements to help girls cope with menstruation and with requests for sanitary protection.

Contraception

Teachers may not give personal, individual advice on contraception to those under 16 years for whom sexual intercourse is unlawful. Teachers must advise pupils to seek advice from parents, their general practitioner or the School Nurse Team.

Different types of contraceptive methods will be dealt with together with information about agencies offering help and advice.

Abortion

It is accepted that abortion is an emotive issue and accordingly any teaching must present a carefully balanced view which respects a range of religious beliefs and which takes into account the law relating to abortion.

Aspects of sexual behaviour raised outside the sex education programme

The teaching of apparently unrelated topics may occasionally lead to a discussion of aspects of sexual behaviour. Provided that such a discussion is relatively limited and set within the context of the other subject concerned, it will not necessarily form part of the school's RSE programme.

In such cases, particularly since they may involve pupils whose parents have withdrawn them from sex education as such, teachers will need to balance the need to give proper attention to relevant issues with the need to respect pupils' and parents' views and sensibilities.

The Governing Body expects that teachers will draw upon their professional judgement and common sense to deal effectively with such occurrences and that they will be conversant with this policy document and act accordingly.

HIV/AIDS/Sexually Transmitted Diseases

The publicity in public health campaigns and strong media attention has put AIDS into the language of even very young children.

For their own safety and wider awareness, students in all age groups need to know the difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, basic hygiene and risky behaviours (for young children, for example,

picking up discarded needles or any skin piercing, for older students sharing needles and specific sexual behaviour).

All need to learn that there are no risky groups, only risky behaviours, and that there is no danger from persons with AIDS in any normal social contact.

Although HIV/AIDS have received the majority of publicity in recent years, young people also need to know that there are other sexually transmitted diseases.

Homosexuality

Our schools recognise that within society there are a range of views with regard to homosexuality. Regardless of this, prejudice, victimisation and the use of homosexual slang as a form of abuse are contrary to our schools' values and will be actively discouraged. Explicit and implicit homophobia in schools has a negative impact on the attendance and attainment of LGBT young people and ODS schools will take a whole school approach to addressing prejudicial behaviour and attitudes.

Young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs. Our teachers should be able to deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support. There should be no direct promotion of sexual orientation.

Within the secondary phase sexual orientation is included as an aspect of Sex and Relationships Education ensuring that the viewpoints held by Anglicans, other Christians, different faith perspectives and world-views are taught clearly. In our primary schools this aspect is explored with reference to long-term committed relationships, and friendships and a broader focus on the emotional aspects of sexuality, with positive discussion about the feelings we experience during relationships.

Schools that liaise closely with parents when developing their sex and relationship education policy and programme should be able to reassure parents of the content of the programme and the context in which aspects such as this will be explored.

Sexuality and physical development

The awareness of self and physical changes that occur are important in sex education, including development and puberty (physical/mental and social development) and acceptance of the nature of the sexuality in others together with the pressures imposed by such as peers and the media.

Consent

SRE lays the foundations for developing empathy and understanding between girls and boys, young men and young women. Pupils should be encouraged to consider the importance of equality and respect within friendships and relationships, and to develop positive, non-violent behaviour.

While men and women can be both victims and perpetrators, evidence shows that girls are disproportionately likely to experience pressure, coercion or violence from boys and men. They should learn to recognise physical, sexual and emotional violence and how to get help if they need it. SRE must provide a clear message that violence and exploitation are always wrong, that everyone is responsible for their own behaviour and that no one is ever responsible for the violence or abuse they experience.

Pornography

Teaching should emphasise that pornography is not the best way to learn about sex because it does not reflect real life, and can therefore be worrying, confusing and frightening for young people. Pupil should also

learn that some pornography – child abuse images, for example – is illegal for any age. RSE should enable all young people to understand pornography's influence on gender expectations of sex. It should build on earlier learning about relationships, body image, consent and gender, which emphasises discussions about the importance of loving and respectful relationships.

Online and social media

Children and young people are growing up in a culture where technology and social media are important and have created more opportunity for sharing personal information. RSE should encourage pupils to think about what they want others to know and see about them – whether on or offline. Teachers should address the core issues of safety, privacy, peer influence and personal responsibility. Internet safety is included in the new computing curriculum, but doesn't cover the important relationship aspects, so it is vital to coordinate with colleagues responsible for the computing curriculum to ensure there is no unhelpful duplication or contradictory messages.

'Sexting' and other self-made images and messages of a sexual nature, raise particular issues of safety, privacy, peer influence and personal responsibility. 'Sexting' is a term used by adults, referring to sexual content and images sent by mobile phones. Specific work about 'sexting' should be addressed in RSE as soon as it is identified as a potential issue. Teaching should cover communication skills, attitudes and values, the law, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and how to seek help.

Visiting speakers

Visiting speakers may be used to help enhance the RSE programme. Where they are used, they will be required to conform to this policy statement. Health professionals are bound by their professional codes of conduct in a one-to-one situation with individual pupils but, in a classroom situation, they should follow the Trust's Confidentiality Policy.

Confidentiality Policy

Teachers are required to adhere to ODST's statement on confidentiality as set out in employee contracts of employment.

Pupils should be reassured that their best interests will be maintained. However, teachers cannot offer or guarantee absolute confidentiality. If confidentiality has to be broken, the pupil should be informed first and then supported, as appropriate.

It is only in the most exceptional circumstances that the school should be in the position of having to handle information without parental knowledge. Where younger children are involved this will be grounds for serious concern and child protection issues will need to be addressed.

Pupils should be encouraged to talk to their parents and given support to do so. If there is evidence of abuse, the ODST child protection procedure should be adhered to, ensuring that pupils are informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the school nurse, counsellor, GP or local young person's advice service.