

The American School in London

Relationships & Sex Education policy

The current version of any policy, procedure, protocol or guideline is the version held on the ASL website. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they are following the most up-to-date version.

Responsible party	Director of Teaching and Learning
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Responsible board committee	Independent School Standards Compliance
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Next review date	February 2025

Introduction

This policy covers the American School in London's (ASL) approach to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE, also referred to in literature as RSHE where the H stands for Health).

The UK Department for Education (DfE) requires all schools to teach RSE to students, at both the primary and secondary levels. Effective RSE is essential for our students to make healthy, responsible and well-informed choices about how they develop and enjoy relationships with others. By intention, RSE is not delivered in isolation at ASL; instead, RSE is an integral part of our curriculum and our K-12 health and well-being education program. The RSE program is rooted in ASL's mission and our core values of respect, responsibility, kindness, integrity and the courage to act. This program is supplemented

by our K-12 Student Support Services, including our fully integrated counseling services, as well as our pastoral Advisory Program and in the High School, our student and academic/university advising team.

Policy Aims

The aim of this RSE policy is to:

- support all students' right to receive RSE
- outline the key goals of RSE within the scope of the health and well-being program
- ensure that appropriate guidance is available for the faculty who teach RSE
- specify the right of parents to withdraw their children from RSE.

Purpose of RSE

All students are entitled to RSE. ASL is committed to providing a coherent, well-balanced program of RSE that reflects the age and developmental stage of the students and meets the particular needs of all gender identities. RSE at ASL provides an introduction to lifelong learning about human sexuality, relationships and sexual health. This learning contributes to the emotional, mental and physical development of students and prepares them for the experiences, rights and responsibilities of adult life.

ASL believes RSE is part of lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. The aim of our RSE program is to positively impact every student's well-being and support students' preparation for adult life in society. RSE is about respect, love and care, and the benefits of healthy relationships. The program seeks to develop students' personal and social skills and provide accurate education about the body, reproduction, sex and sexual health. With due regard to the Equality Act (2010) and the importance of an inclusive classroom, students also learn about different family structures and characteristics of caring friendships and healthy relationships. Through this curriculum, children and young people develop their critical thinking as part of healthy decision making and build essential skills for building positive, enjoyable, mutually respectful and non-exploitative relationships and making safer choices both on- and offline.

RSE policy and curriculum development and review

The RSE policy and curriculum have been developed in line with statutory guidance from the DfE and with recommendations from the PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) Association. The School receives input from experienced staff and from

consultation with both parents/guardians and student groups. We aim to work in collaboration with parents/guardians, building on what students learn at home and to always deliver content in a sensitive, objective and balanced manner to enable students to comprehend the range of social attitudes and behavior in modern society. This will empower them to consider their own attitudes and actions and make informed, reasoned and responsible decisions while they are at school, at home and in adult life.

RSE is not an isolated subject. It is delivered primarily through instruction by our K-10 health teachers and counselors, and the program is supported by our counseling programs and our school nurses, advisory and science curricula. Other courses may explore topics related to RSE.

What will be taught and how?

Core RSE content will be taught by an experienced teacher with the appropriate professional skills and knowledge to deliver the RSE program successfully. Student-centered participatory and interactive approaches, such as, group project work, class dialogue/discussions and engaging class games/activities will be utilized.

The teacher will maintain a safe classroom environment in which students discuss complex issues without embarrassment, and respond to each other sensitively and with a considerate and inclusive mindset. Within each class, there will be a student-centered negotiation of the appropriate 'classroom agreements' that will help generate a brave, respectful and engaging learning space for all. Care will be taken to make explicit the importance of confidentiality and the limits of any such confidentiality.

Importantly, the personal privacy of every student will be respected at all times. Students are invited to engage with various viewpoints, and to share their own, to a level that is comfortable for the individual. All students will be expected to demonstrate mutual respect for each other and tolerance toward different views, faiths and beliefs.

Like all areas of learning at ASL, the RSE curriculum is thoughtfully designed, implemented and assessed. Care is taken to ensure that the program is developmentally appropriate, while seeking to enable students to make positive choices about their emotional and sexual lives. Students will be given regular opportunities to reflect on their learning and to give feedback on the program's content, delivery and assessment.

At an age-appropriate stage, our [K-10 RSE program](#) will include education on the following key topic areas:

- body positivity and building self-esteem, as part of developing a positive and self-respecting self-concept
- the practice of social and emotional skills, such as communication skills (e.g., active listening and negotiation), appropriate decision assertion and healthy empowerment
- building and maintaining healthy and positive relationships throughout life
- appreciating the diversity of all healthy family structures and loving relationships
- human reproductive anatomy, fertility and human reproduction (including assisted conception)
- the human reproductive life cycle, including puberty and menopause
- sexual rights and responsibilities for all
- full understanding of informed consent and the importance of ensuring readiness for intimacy (positive body empowerment and the concept of ‘my body, my choice’)
- the law surrounding consent, personal rights, sexual intercourse, marriage, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behavior, assault and rape
- sexual exploitation and domestic abuse, including coercive, inappropriate and/or controlling behavior, including topics such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)
- different types of contraception, where to get it, how to access sexual healthcare and all the principles of positive sexual health (e.g., personal hygiene, body safety, prevention of sexuality transmitted infections, etc.)
- understanding and respecting sexual orientation and gender identity
- the responsibilities of parenthood
- enhancing healthy and informed decision making, which enables young people to lead safe, fulfilling and healthy lives.

Confidentiality

Teachers cannot offer or guarantee absolute confidentiality in some matters and students will be made aware of this—particularly where there is concern about harm to self or others. ASL is aware that effective RSE can lead to the disclosure of a safeguarding issue and this will be acted on in accordance with the ASL’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Data Protection Policy. Students will be informed of the sources of confidential help available. All students have access to additional one-to-one support from external agencies, where required through referral.

Parents'/guardians' right to non-participation

Lower School

UK statutory guidance directs that parents/guardians may not withdraw their children from relationships education where students learn about essential topics, including family structures, healthy friendships and relationships, consent, and online safety. Parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory components of sex education (biological aspects of human growth and reproduction) within RSE. Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing to the divisional principal.

Middle School/High School

Parents/guardians are informed of the content and curricular goals of a sex education unit prior to its delivery to students. Parents/guardians are encouraged to engage with the classroom teacher, counselor or nurse with questions or concerns.

Parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory components of sex education (biological aspects of human growth and reproduction) within RSE up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. In most cases this will occur in the fall semester of a student's ninth grade year. At this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the School will arrange this. Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing to the divisional principal.

The School believes that relationships and sex education is an integral part of the health curriculum and expects that families will work with the School to clarify any doubts prior to applying to withdraw their child.

Monitoring and evaluation

The office of teaching and learning is responsible for the health and well-being curriculum, of which RSE is an essential component. The office of teaching and learning will liaise annually with the K-12 well-being team, including end-of-year student feedback and parent/guardian input, to ensure that the program is delivered with integrity, is developmentally appropriate and properly coordinated, and will make any necessary changes.