Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

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Contents

- 1. Mission and vision
- 2. Policy purpose, scope and principles
- 3. Legal and statutory framework
- 4. Definitions
- 5. Aims and intended outcomes
- 6. Curriculum entitlement and content
- 7. Programme-specific provision: Early Childhood and PYP
- 8. Programme-specific provision: MYP
- 9. Programme-specific provision: DP College
- 10. Delivery, pedagogy and a safe learning environment
- 11. Cultural awareness and sensitive content
- 12. Inclusion, equality and SEND
- 13. Safeguarding, confidentiality and difficult questions
- 14. Parents, transparency and right to request withdrawal
- 15. Roles and responsibilities
- 16. Monitoring, evaluation, complaints and review
- 17. Related policies and references

1. Mission and vision

Mission statement

Since 1972, we have established a welcoming and inclusive community. Our diverse cultures and languages drive all our learning experiences. We nurture creativity and curiosity to stimulate deep thinking. We foster insight, compassion and resilience to enable us to play a meaningful part in a changing world.

Vision statement

To make a positive impact in our shared world, we embrace our stories and recognise our worth.

2. Policy purpose, scope and principles

RSHE sits within ISL's wider Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) provision. This policy applies across Early Childhood, the Primary Years Programme (PYP), the Middle Years Programme (MYP) and the Diploma Programme (DP) College. It explains the curriculum entitlement, delivery arrangements, roles, safeguarding expectations, partnership with parents, withdrawal process, and arrangements for monitoring and review.

ISL's RSHE provision is guided by the following principles:

- pupil engagement and meaningful student voice;
- openness, consultation and transparency with parents and carers;
- positive, factual and evidence-based teaching that promotes healthy relationships and wellbeing;
- careful sequencing so that knowledge and skills develop before pupils are likely to need them;
- relevance to pupils' age, stage, needs and context;
- skilled, participative delivery in a safe and supportive environment; and
- a whole-school approach linked to safeguarding, behaviour, inclusion, digital safety and wellbeing.

3. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has regard to the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, revised in July 2025 and effective from 1 September 2026. The guidance is issued under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 and section 403 of the Education Act 1996. The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make Relationships Education compulsory for pupils receiving primary education and RSE compulsory for pupils receiving secondary education.

As an independent school, ISL must provide PSHE under the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The statutory Health Education duty does not apply to independent schools in the same way as it applies to maintained schools, academies and free schools; however, ISL uses the DfE health education content as an important framework for its planned provision.

In developing and implementing this policy, ISL also has regard, as applicable, to:

- the Equality Act 2010;

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the school's safeguarding procedures;
- the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice and duties to make reasonable adjustments;
- the Prevent duty and relevant safeguarding guidance;
- the statutory Science curriculum content where applicable; and
- the Independent School Standards relating to PSHE and preparation for life in British society.

ISL will maintain an up-to-date written policy, consult parents when developing or reviewing it, publish it on the school website, provide it free of charge on request, and explain how parents can view curriculum materials. Any material change or emerging topic introduced outside the published plan will be communicated appropriately to parents.

4. Definitions

Relationships Education: teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, including respectful friendships, family relationships, relationships with children and adults, and online relationships.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE): secondary provision that builds on Relationships Education and equips pupils with knowledge about healthy, respectful relationships, intimate relationships, consent, safety, sexual health, the law and access to support.

Health and wellbeing education: teaching about physical health and mental wellbeing, the relationship between them, healthy choices, risk, prevention and where to obtain reliable help.

Sex Education: for this policy, teaching about human reproduction and related matters beyond statutory Relationships Education, Health Education and Science content. RSHE is not the promotion of sexual activity.

PSHE: the broader personal, social, health and economic curriculum within which RSHE is located at ISL.

5. Aims and intended outcomes

Through PSHE and RSHE, ISL aims to give pupils the knowledge, skills, confidence and vocabulary needed to make informed and ethical decisions, build positive relationships, lead healthy and safe lives, and seek support. Pupils should progressively be able to:

- understand their emotions, strengths, values, rights and responsibilities;
- develop self-respect, confidence, resilience, empathy and personal agency;
- recognise the features of healthy and unhealthy relationships;
- understand respect, communication, boundaries and consent;
- recognise unsafe, abusive, exploitative or inappropriate behaviour online and offline;
- look after physical and mental health and know how to access reliable support;
- understand equality, diversity, cultural nuance and the importance of treating others fairly;
- make responsible decisions about risk, money, careers, work and increasing independence; and
- use accurate vocabulary and distinguish facts and law from matters on which people may hold different views.

6. Curriculum entitlement and content

The curriculum is broad, balanced, inclusive and progressive. Topics are revisited at increasing depth and carefully sequenced across programmes. Detailed year-group scope and sequence documents and materials are available to parents on request through the relevant section or year leader.

Relationships and safety

- families and people who care for us
- friendships and respectful relationships
- healthy and unhealthy relationships
- boundaries, privacy, personal space and consent
- bullying, prejudice, discrimination and conflict resolution
- recognising abuse, exploitation, coercion and unsafe behaviour
- how to report concerns and continue seeking help until heard

Online and media

- online relationships and behaviour
- privacy, personal information, passwords and location settings
- misrepresentation, harmful contact, grooming and exploitation
- image sharing, digital consent, pressure and coercion
- misinformation, deepfakes, fraud, scams, gambling and financial risk
- online reputation, age restrictions, screen time and healthy use of technology
- how to report harmful content or contact

Physical health and mental wellbeing

- emotional literacy, mental wellbeing and resilience
- healthy eating, physical activity, sleep, hygiene and dental care
- puberty, menstruation and developing bodies
- health prevention, infection, vaccination and sun safety
- medicines, alcohol, smoking, vaping, nicotine and drugs
- personal safety, emergency help and basic first aid
- grief, change, loneliness and sources of support

Living in the wider world

- rights, responsibilities, equality and citizenship
- communities, cultural understanding and British values
- careers, aspirations, employability and decision-making
- money, financial choices, debt and economic wellbeing
- media and digital literacy

7. Programme-specific provision: Early Childhood and PYP

In Early Childhood, learning is play-based and developmentally appropriate, focusing on kindness, cooperation, feelings, communication, bodies and personal boundaries, healthy habits, simple safety concepts and trusted adults.

Across the PYP, RSHE is embedded within PSHE, the Programme of Inquiry, Science, Digital Citizenship, PE, assemblies, stories, discussion, morning meetings and other relevant curriculum experiences. By the end of primary education, pupils will have received age-appropriate teaching on:

- families, caring relationships and respect for different family structures;
- positive friendships, managing disagreements, boundaries, consent and bullying;
- online relationships, privacy, harmful content and safe reporting;
- personal safety, appropriate and inappropriate contact, abuse and trusted support;
- emotions, resilience, healthy lifestyles, substances and first aid; and
- puberty, correct anatomical terminology, menstruation, privacy and bodily autonomy.

Sex education beyond statutory Science and Relationships/Health content is not compulsory in primary. Where ISL provides additional primary sex education, it will be age-appropriate, clearly identified and communicated to parents in advance. A parent's request to withdraw from this additional content will be granted, but withdrawal does not apply to Relationships Education or statutory Science content.

8. Programme-specific provision: MYP

For Grades 6–10, RSHE is delivered through planned tutor or dedicated RSHE sessions and reinforced through Science, PE, assemblies, visiting speakers and the wider pastoral curriculum. This is the single consolidated statement of MYP provision and replaces repeated MYP sections in earlier versions of the policy.

The MYP curriculum develops knowledge and agency across three connected strands:

Choices and influences: substances, vaping and tobacco; diet, exercise and healthy coping; peer pressure; online safety; equality, prejudice and discrimination; age-appropriate learning about contraception and sexual health.

Autonomy and advocacy: assertive communication; healthy relationships; boundaries and consent; safety, gangs and violent crime; committed relationships; forced marriage; extremism and Prevent; rights and responsibilities.

Independence and aspirations: managing change and loss; careers and employability; financial choices, gambling and debt; online reputation; families and parenting; fertility and other age-appropriate reproductive health topics.

Progress is monitored through age-appropriate formative approaches such as discussion, reflection and knowledge checks. RSHE is not a formally graded MYP subject. Student voice informs review of relevance, timing and accessibility.

9. Programme-specific provision: DP College

For Grades 11–12, ISL continues RSHE, careers and finance, health education and wellbeing through the Tutor Time programme, assemblies, workshops, conferences and appropriately checked external specialists. Although the statutory requirements do not apply to sixth-form colleges and comparable 16–19 settings, the DfE encourages these settings to support students by offering the subjects. ISL therefore provides a planned programme and expects students to attend.

The DP provision focuses on relationships, wellbeing, health, safety, careers, finance, independent living, access to support and preparation for adult life. It is not formally graded. Tutors and wellbeing leaders monitor participation and understanding through discussion, reflection and other proportionate formative approaches. This section is the single consolidated statement of DP provision and replaces duplicate DP sections in earlier versions.

10. Delivery, pedagogy and a safe learning environment

RSHE is taught through a planned whole-school programme. Lessons may include discussion, scenarios, stories, role play, anonymous question boxes, group tasks and independent reflection. Pupils will never be required to disclose private experiences. Ground rules include respectful listening, the right to pass, no personal questioning, use of accurate vocabulary, and respect for different experiences and beliefs.

Teaching will be factual, balanced, age and stage appropriate, and delivered by staff or external providers with suitable knowledge, confidence and safeguarding awareness. External resources and speakers will be checked in advance, complement rather than replace the planned curriculum, and remain under the supervision and responsibility of ISL staff. Teachers will distinguish clearly between facts, the law and matters on which people may hold different views.

11. Cultural awareness and sensitive content

The school recognises that aspects of RSHE may address topics that are sensitive in nature and may intersect with pupils' cultural, religious, familial or personal values and experiences. Such topics will always be approached with sensitivity, respect and cultural awareness, within a safe and inclusive learning environment. Where appropriate, and at the professional discretion of teaching staff, alternative safe spaces or suitable arrangements may be provided to enable pupils to receive and engage with sensitive information in a manner that supports their individual needs, dignity and wellbeing. These arrangements will not be used to omit or avoid the teaching of compulsory, age-appropriate content required by the Department for Education, including statutory requirements relating to Relationships and Sex Education. The school will ensure that all pupils receive the required curriculum while seeking, wherever reasonably possible, to deliver sensitive content in a way that respects the diverse backgrounds and beliefs represented within the school community.

12. Inclusion, equality and SEND

RSHE will be inclusive, respectful and accessible. Teaching will comply with the Equality Act 2010, challenge bullying, prejudice, discrimination and stereotypes, and reflect the range of families, cultures, faiths and backgrounds within the school community. Materials will be reviewed for suitability, balance and representation. Staff members' personal beliefs must not influence the factual and lawful teaching of the subject.

For pupils with SEND, EAL or other additional needs, reasonable and appropriate adaptations may include simplified or alternative language, visual support, repetition, pre-teaching, smaller groups, additional adult support, adapted resources and additional processing time. Adaptation must support access and understanding, not remove a pupil's entitlement to essential safeguarding knowledge. Section leaders, Heads of Year, SENDCo, EAL specialists and teachers will work together where additional support is required.

13. Safeguarding, confidentiality and difficult questions

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Any concern or disclosure arising through RSHE will be managed under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and referred promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Teachers cannot promise absolute confidentiality and will explain this to pupils in an age-appropriate way. Mandatory reporting duties, including those relating to female genital mutilation, will be followed.

Questions will be answered honestly, sensitively and at an age-appropriate level. If a question is outside the planned curriculum or a teacher is unsure, the teacher may use distancing, defer the answer, seek advice from a senior or safeguarding colleague, answer the pupil individually, or signpost to parents or reliable services. The approach must not shame the pupil, create unreasonable alarm or conceal a safeguarding concern.

14. Parents, transparency and right to request withdrawal

Partnership and transparency

Parents and carers are their children's first educators. ISL will consult parents when developing or reviewing the policy, communicate significant content and changes, make the policy and curriculum materials available, and provide opportunities for questions and discussion. Parents may request to view materials used in RSHE, subject to lawful copyright or licensing arrangements and safeguarding considerations.

Withdrawal

- Parents may request withdrawal from some or all sex education delivered as part of RSE.
- Parents may not withdraw pupils from Relationships Education, relevant Health Education, or content taught as part of the Science curriculum.
- Before deciding a secondary request, the relevant Principal or Head of Section will discuss the request with the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil; explain the content and purpose; consider educational, social, emotional and safeguarding implications; and keep a written record.
- In primary, a request to withdraw from additional sex education outside Science will be granted.
- In secondary, a request will ordinarily be granted, except in exceptional circumstances, for example where safeguarding concerns or a pupil's specific vulnerability make refusal appropriate.
- From three terms before a pupil turns 16, the pupil may choose to receive sex education despite an earlier parental withdrawal request, and the school will arrange this.
- A pupil who is withdrawn will receive appropriate, purposeful education. The school will determine suitable arrangements rather than guarantee placement in another class.
- Requests must be made in writing to the relevant Head of Section or Principal and remain in effect until withdrawn or superseded by the pupil's lawful choice.

15. Roles and responsibilities

Principals / Heads of Section: ensure consistent and lawful provision; oversee consultation, withdrawal requests, safeguarding alignment, staff capacity and policy approval; and report through the school's governance arrangements.

RSHE and pastoral leaders: maintain the curriculum map and resources; coordinate delivery; support staff; communicate with families; quality assure external provision; and monitor impact.

Teachers and tutors: deliver planned content sensitively and accurately; establish ground rules; make reasonable adaptations; answer questions appropriately; monitor understanding; and follow safeguarding procedures.

All staff: model respectful relationships and language, understand that RSHE is reinforced through school life, and report concerns.

Pupils: engage appropriately, respect others, follow agreed ground rules and seek help when needed.

Parents and carers: engage constructively with consultation and communication, raise questions promptly, and support learning and safety at home.

16. Monitoring, evaluation, complaints and review

Delivery and impact will be monitored through curriculum review, planning scrutiny, learning visits or observations, pupil voice, age-appropriate knowledge checks, staff feedback, parent feedback, safeguarding intelligence and review of accessibility. Monitoring will consider whether provision is

complete, sequenced, inclusive, culturally responsive and effective in helping pupils understand safety, relationships and wellbeing.

Concerns should normally be raised first with the class teacher, tutor or relevant RSHE lead, then the Head of Section or Principal. Formal complaints will be handled under the school's Complaints Policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements, the curriculum or pupils' needs change. The review will include meaningful engagement with pupils and consultation with parents. The approved policy will be published on the school website and made available free of charge on request.

17. Related policies and references

Related ISL policies and documents

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Online Safety / Acceptable Use Policy
- Equality and Inclusion Policy
- Learning Support / SEND Policy
- Complaints Policy
- RSHE scope and sequence and programme curriculum maps

External references

- Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: statutory guidance, revised July 2025, effective 1 September 2026.
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019.
- Children and Social Work Act 2017, sections 34 and 35.
- Education Act 2002, section 80A; Education Act 1996, section 403.
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

At ISL London, 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. To fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.