Culford School

Relationships and Sex Education Policy (RSE)

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1. Introduction

Relationships Education (RE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is taught at Culford through our Learning for Life (PSHCE) curriculum and is an opportunity for pupils and boarders to learn about and discuss relationship and sex topics in a safe space and with regular frequency. The curriculum allows for progression and continuity, ensuring that learning is age-appropriate and developmental, building pupils' knowledge, understanding, and confidence over time as they prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life.

To embrace the challenges of creating a happy and successful adult life, pupils need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships and to build their self-efficacy. Pupils can also put this knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts. Everyone faces difficult situations in their lives. These subjects can support young people to develop resilience, to know how and when to ask for help, and to know where to access support.

This policy aims to provide Culford's pupils, parents and staff with details of the Schools responsibilities as set out by the Department for Education's Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education statutory guidance and framework for RE and RSE.

This policy should be read in reference to the following documents:

- Equality Act (2010)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (England) Regulations 2025
- DfE Relationships. Education and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education(July 2025)
- Culford's Anti Bullying Policy
- Culford's Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy
- Culford's Acceptable Use Policies.
- Culford's Online Safety Policy
- Culford's SEND Policy
- Culford's Careers (Future Pathways) Policy

2. Vision Statement

Our vision is to provide a high-quality Relationship Education and Relationships and Sex Education programme that supports pupils' personal development, wellbeing, and readiness for life beyond school. Through our commitment to flexibility, innovation, and resilience, and guided by honesty, courage, and compassion, we equip students with the knowledge, understanding, and confidence to form healthy, respectful relationships, make informed decisions, and contribute positively to a diverse society.

The policy, and curriculum, is in accordance with the DfE's 'Guiding principles for relationships, sex and health education' (2025)

a. **Engagement with pupils.** An inclusive and well-sequenced RSHE curriculum should be informed by meaningful engagement with pupils to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and engaging.
b. **Engagement and transparency with parents.** Schools should engage with parents on the content of RSHE and be transparent with parents about all materials used in RSHE. All materials

should be available to parents, as described in the section on openness with parents on page 33. Parents have a right to request that their children are withdrawn from sex education (pupils can opt back in from three terms before they turn 16) and schools should ensure parents are aware of sex education content within lessons in advance.

c. **Positivity.** Schools should focus on building positive attitudes and skills, promoting healthy norms about relationships, including sexual relationships where relevant, and about health, including mental health. Schools should avoid language which might normalise harmful behaviour among young people – for example gendered language which might normalise male violence or stigmatise boys.
d. **Careful sequencing.** Schools should cover all statutory topics, recognising that young people can start developing healthy behaviour and relationship skills as soon as they start school. Schools should sequence teaching so that pupils are supported and equipped with the knowledge to navigate different experiences in a positive way before they occur, and to prevent harms.
e. **Relevant and responsive.** Schools should develop the curriculum to be relevant, age and stage appropriate and accessible to pupils in their area, where appropriate working with local partners and other bodies to understand specific local issues and ensure needs are met.
f. **Skilled delivery of participative education.** The curriculum should be delivered by school staff or, where schools choose to use them, external providers who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to create a safe and supportive environment and to facilitate participative and interactive education which aims to support and not to alarm pupils. Staff should be trained in safeguarding and offering support, recognising the increased possibility of disclosures.
g. **Whole school approach.** The curriculum is best delivered as part of a whole school approach to wellbeing and positive relationships, supported by other school policies, including behaviour and safeguarding policies.

3. What is Relationships and Sex Education?

The term Relationship Education (RE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is used in policies, guidance and the curriculum, rather than sex education. This is to stress that our approach begins with the importance of healthy relationships and goes beyond provision of biological information to focus on clarifying attitudes and values and developing self-esteem and the skills to manage relationships.

According to the DfE guidance (2025)

High quality, evidence-based teaching of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) can help prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life, and can promote their moral, social, mental and physical development. Effective teaching will support young people to cultivate positive characteristics including resilience, self-worth, self-respect, honesty, integrity, courage, kindness, and trustworthiness. Effective teaching will support prevention of harms by helping young people understand and identify when things are not right.

The DfE guidance identifies the following two key elements:

Relationships and Sex Education

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online and media
- Being safe

- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

Physical health and mental wellbeing

- Mental wellbeing
- Internet safety and harms
- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- Health and prevention
- Basic first aid
- Changing adolescent body

Learning for Life at Culford aims to promote the physical, social, healthy and mental well-being by:

- Enabling pupils to consider attitudes and values
- Enhancing pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence
- Building confidence and awareness of personal safety in today's society
- Developing personal, emotional, social and communicative skills
- Ensuring children become valuable and fully rounded members of society who treat others with respect and tolerance, regardless of background.
- Encouraging pupils to understand the basic British values and the importance of respect so that they leave school fully prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Allow students to examine the physical and emotional implications of sexual behaviour and to appreciate the need for all genders to behave responsibly in sexual matters.
- All pupils should feel that the content is relevant to them and their developing sexuality. Sexual orientation and gender identity should be explored at a timely point and in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner.
- Ensure that students have a clear understanding of sexual and reproductive biology, including knowledge of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Make students aware of the impact of media on their own body image, self-esteem and expectations of relationships.
- Give students accurate and relevant guidance on how to get further support if needed.

Relationship Education and Relationships and Sex Education at Culford School has three main elements:

Attitudes and Values

- learning the importance of values and individual conscience
- learning the value of stable and loving relationships, whether in the context of marriage, civil partnership or other family models, for the nurture of children
- learning about the value of respect, love and care
- exploring, considering and understanding moral dilemmas
- learning to respect and value difference and diversity including diverse family models, genders and sexualities
- learning about the rights and responsibilities to oneself and others
- understanding responsibility for one's own safety and that of others both in the real and digital world
- understanding the importance of equality concerning genders and sexuality
- learning that violence and coercion in relationships is unacceptable
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Skills

- learning to recognise one's own emotions and those of others
- learning to manage emotions and relationships with confidence and sensitivity
- learning to manage change
- developing self-respect
- learning how to use appropriate language in the real and the digital world
- learning to be empathetic to others
- learning to make choices based on an understanding of difference and with an absence of prejudice
- learning how to identify risk in relationships both in the real and digital world
- learning how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse
- learning how to keep oneself safe and how to extricate oneself from an unsafe situation
- developing critical thinking
- learning to make and carry out informed decisions
- developing decision-making skills both in the real and the digital world
- developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices both in the real and digital world
- learning to manage conflict and developing negotiation skills
- learning how to cope with and resisting unwelcome peer pressure
- learning to communicate openly and respectfully about relationships and sex
- learning how to ask for help and accessing advice/services

Knowledge and Understanding

- learning and understanding emotional and physical development at appropriate stages
- learning about the impact of stereotyping and negative language
- learning about and understanding reproduction
- learning about a safe and healthy lifestyle based on accurate information
- understanding the positive benefits of loving, rewarding and responsible relationships
- learning protective behaviours
- understanding the nature of consent
- learning about the impact of coercion and violence
- knowing where to seek appropriate help and advice

3. Delivery of RSE

Culford School specifically delivers Relationship Education and Relationships and Sex Education through the Learning for Life Curriculum in both Prep and Senior School, although some aspects are also delivered in academic lessons such as in PRE lessons and Science lessons in KS3 and KS4. The curriculum is mainly delivered by teaching staff but parts of the programme are delivered by external professionals and members of the Health Centre.

Most of the Relationships and Sex Education takes place within timetabled Learning for Life lessons. In the Prep School, Fourth Form, Lower Fifth and Upper Fifth, pupils have one Learning for Life lesson a week. The Sixth Form have one lesson a week as part of the Culford VI programme. This takes place over four terms from the Lower Sixth into the Upper Sixth. There are also external speakers who provide specialist advice to Sixth Form students.

The rationale is that the programme of RE and RSE at Culford School is designed to support the other forms of relationships and sex education, for which parents/carers are responsible at home. House staff

have a duty of care to support the needs of the boarders, and will do so as the need arises. House staff are closely supported by the health centre and regularly discuss students' social and emotional wellbeing. We aim to provide timely, age appropriate, information that supports our students in their personal development. The order of lessons and the content delivered may be subject to small changes as our teachers adapt their teaching to the responses of their classes, but the level and detail will always remain age and circumstance appropriate. There may also be changes to the order depending on what is happening in the world around us which we feel needs to be raised with our students.

RSE involves consideration of a number of sensitive issues about which different people may hold strong and varying views. In line with the Department for Education guidance, the School's approach is educational, rather than one based on propaganda or personal bias and as such, RSE is balanced, takes account of and is sensitive to, different viewpoints. The DfE guidance makes it clear that we are free to determine how we deliver the content they set out; at present this is a combination of the Learning for Life Programme (PSHE), form time activities and presentations, assemblies and inclusion in the Pastoral Friday sessions.

We are mindful of the fact that young people may have varying needs regarding RSE depending on their circumstances and background. Therefore, the school's approach to RSE takes account of student needs including, but not exclusively: ethnic, religious and cultural diversity; varying home backgrounds; sexual orientation (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans-gender or Questioning, LGBTQ); and Special Educational Needs.

'Schools should be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled. Staff have an important role to play in modelling positive behaviours. 'DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Guidance, September 2021'.

Schools are free to determine where it is best placed in the curriculum and at what age it is appropriate for certain types of approaches and content; we will ensure that it is fully integrated into our teaching and ethos, not treated as a stand-alone unit or single lesson.

Research has shown that young people who feel good about themselves, and are knowledgeable and confident about sex and relationships, are more likely to be discerning in their relationships and sexual behaviours and are more likely to have fulfilling relationships.

There is no evidence to suggest that RSE makes students more likely to enter into sexual activity.
We believe that pupils have an entitlement to age and circumstance appropriate RSE.

The aim of RSE is to provide balanced factual information about human reproduction, together with consideration of the broader emotional, ethical, religious, and moral dimensions of sexual health.

Our RSE programme aims to prepare students for an adult life in which they can:

- develop positive values and a moral framework that will guide their decisions, judgements and behaviour; have the confidence and self-esteem to value themselves and others and respect for individual conscience and the skills to judge what kind of relationship they want.
- understand the consequences of their actions and behave responsibly within sexual and pastoral relationships.
- avoid being exploited or exploiting others or being pressured into unwanted or unprotected sex.
- communicate effectively by developing appropriate terminology for sex and relationship issues.

- develop awareness of their sexuality and understand human sexuality; challenge sexism and prejudice, and promote equality and diversity
- understand the arguments for delaying sexual activity.
- understand the reasons for having protected sex.
- have sufficient information and skills to protect themselves and, where they have one, their partner from uninvited/unwanted conceptions and sexually transmitted infections including HIV.
- be aware of sources of help and acquire the skills and confidence to access confidential health advice, support and treatment if necessary
- know how the law applies to sexual relationships.
- Understand how there may be links to other issues in Learning for Life and to be able to manage the pressures a 'party atmosphere' may bring.

4. Safe and Effective Practice

It is imperative that RSE is conducted in an environment which is open and safe for pupils. As such, teachers, health centre staff and those helping to deliver aspects of RSE are expected to establish clear ground rules and boundaries, being sensitive to the needs of the group and any individual needs.
Particular attention should be given to ensure there is fair treatment of any pupil with SEND, or a protected characteristic, and pupils should be signposted to who they can speak to should they have any concerns about any aspect of RSE.

Any RSE lesson may consider questions or issues that some students will find sensitive. Before embarking on these lessons, ground rules are established which prohibit inappropriate personal information being requested or disclosed by those taking part in the lesson. When students ask questions, we aim to answer them honestly, within the ground rules established at the start of the sessions. When it is felt that answering a specific question would involve information at a level inappropriate to the development of the rest of the students, the question may be dealt with individually at another time. Those delivering RSE sessions should be aware of the importance of making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are not an inevitable part of growing up.

Any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously; staff should be aware that statistically it is more likely that females will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment than males, and that it is more likely that it will be perpetrated by males. However, males can also be the victims of sexual violence and it can also happen in same-sex relationships. It is, however, essential that assumptions are not made about the behaviour of boys and young men and that they are not made to feel that this behaviour is an inevitable part of being male.

In-house sessions which are delivered by a member of the Health Centre are valuable in signposting pupils to the confidential health and wellbeing services available to them. Learning for Life teachers are offered support and guidance about the delivery of sensitive topics.

5. Methodology and Resources

A wide range of teaching methods are used so that pupils can participate actively in their own learning. Quizzes, case studies, scenarios, role plays, guest speakers, group discussion and debate

are all utilised throughout the RSE programme. Culford School uses the Wellio platform for delivery of lessons.

Teaching resources are kept up to date in line with statutory guidance and are selected carefully for their appropriateness to the pupils. If a teacher is uncomfortable with delivering part of the curriculum, support is offered by the Head of Learning for Life. Individual lessons are available to be viewed via a parent account and log in.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The programme is regularly evaluated by the Heads of Learning for Life and Assistant Head: Pastoral and the views of pupils and teachers are used to make changes to the programme on a regular basis. Current issues/news items are also incorporated into the curriculum to make it relevant to pupils. In Senior School pupils are assessed in a variety of ways including RAG ratings at the start and end of the lesson, quiz questions and explanations all recorded electronically. In Prep school pupils are assessed through a range of media including surveys and targeted self-assessment opportunities at the start and end of each unit of teaching. As part of the review of the programme, the Heads of Learning for Life will consider the effectiveness of activities, approaches and materials to ensure learning objectives are met and will be amended where appropriate. Each half term, Prep and Senior school pupils are provided with a Culford Learning Characteristic grade which shows the pupils engagement, participation and attitude towards Learning for Life lessons. Pupils can be awarded Excellent, Very Good, Satisfactory or Below Satisfactory.

7. Inclusion

Ethnic and Cultural Groups

We intend our policy to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic groups.

Students with Special Needs

We will ensure that all young people receive Relationships and Sex Education, and we will offer provision appropriate to the particular needs of all our students, taking specialist advice where necessary. See Appendix

Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation

We aim to deal sensitively and honestly with issues of sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support. Young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that sex and relationship education is relevant to them. LGBTQIA+ content is included throughout our curriculum from the Fourth Form upwards and fully integrated into our lessons and resources. Our pastoral support will also take into account the needs of gay, lesbian, transgender or bi-sexual students. We shall actively tackle any homophobic bullying.

Gender

Both boys and girls have the right to equal RSE and we consider topics and approaches that actively engage both. We shall also be proactive in combating sexism and sexist bullying. By delivering selected parts of the curriculum in mixed sex groups, pupils are able to listen to, and engage with the views of people of differing genders to themselves.

8. Working with Parents/carers and the wider community

Culford School works closely with parents/carers when planning and delivering RSE sessions and aims to inform parents in advance of what will be covered in Learning for Life lessons. Parents are given opportunities to fill in surveys and participate in forums when necessary.

9. Right of Withdrawal of Students from Sex Education within RSE

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. This does not include those parts which are in the wider statutory curriculum (i.e. in the Science curriculum). Parents are encouraged to discuss their decisions with the Assistant Head in Prep School and in Senior School Pastoral in addition to the Head of Learning for Life at the earliest opportunity. Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, Culford School will respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, Culford School will make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms. This process is the same for pupils with SEND. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where the Deputy Head of Prep or the Deputy Head (Pastoral and Boarding) in Senior School may want to take a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision. They will consult with the Head of Learning Development in this circumstance.

If a pupil is excused from sex education, Culford School will ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal. The school recognises that pupils may ask questions about topics covered within the sex education elements of the RSE curriculum, including where they have been withdrawn from specific lessons at the request of their parents or carers. Teachers will answer questions in an age-appropriate, factual, and sensitive manner, taking into account the pupil's maturity and understanding.

Staff will seek to respond honestly while remaining within the boundaries of the school's curriculum, safeguarding responsibilities, and professional standards. Teachers will not provide individual sex education outside the agreed curriculum but may direct pupils to discuss specific matters with their parents or carers where appropriate. Where a question raises a safeguarding concern or indicates that a pupil may be at risk of harm, staff will follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

Pupils will continue to receive teaching on the statutory aspects of Relationships Education, Health Education, safeguarding, and science curriculum content, regardless of any withdrawal from sex education lessons.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education or Health Education.

Parents are welcome to review any RSE resources the school uses. Access to these resources can be requested via the Head of Learning for Life.

10. Safeguarding, Confidentiality, Controversial and Sensitive Issues

Teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.

It is recognised that effective RSE may give rise to disclosure and any safeguarding or child protection concerns arising within, or as a result of RSE should be reported immediately to the DSL or a member of the Safeguarding team.

In a case where a teacher learns from an under 16 year old that they are having or contemplating sexual intercourse:

- the young person will be persuaded, wherever possible, to talk to parent/carer and if necessary to seek medical advice
- child protection issues will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead under the school's procedures.
- the young person will be properly counselled about contraception, including precise information about where young people can access contraception and advice services.

In any case where Child Protection procedures are followed, the teacher will ensure that the young person understands that if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed first.

Health professionals in school are bound by their codes of conduct in a one-to-one situation with an individual student, but in a classroom situation they must follow the School's confidentiality policy.

Support available to pupils

The school takes its role in the promotion of pupil welfare seriously. Staff endeavour to make themselves approachable and provide caring and sensitive pastoral support to pupils.

Staff may be approached through the pastoral system and offer support if appropriate. Health care is provided on site and if necessary, pupils can be referred to internal or external counselling provision. The school will keep up to date with the development of local services and national agencies/helplines.

11. Development of this Policy

Culford has proactively engaged and consulted with parents when developing this policy including ensuring that parents understand the effective RSHE is important for promoting and protecting all children's wellbeing.

By listening and responding to the views of pupils and parents , it helps to ensure that RSHE meets our pupils' needs and that topics are taught at the right time to support children to build positive relationships and avoid harms before they occur.

Culford is aware that we may need to include new content in RSHE to respond to emerging needs or issues in the school. We will be careful to inform parents of any shifts away from the policy and continue to share relevant materials on request.

Appendix 1 Supporting the delivery of RSE for pupils with SEND

The Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) states that the curriculum must be accessible to all children, including disabled pupils and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The government's core advice on making the statutory RSE curriculum accessible for pupils with SEND revolves around several key principles and practical adjustments.

1. High-Quality, Differentiated, and Personalised Teaching

The Starting Point:
The guidance emphasises that high-quality teaching, tailored to the individual child, is the primary vehicle for accessibility.

Reasonable Adjustments:

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, schools must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that pupils with SEND are not disadvantaged. This means breaking down concepts into smaller, more manageable components, slowing down the pace of teaching, or utilising alternative communication methods (such as visual aids, symbols, and simplified text).

Flexible Sequencing:
Schools are expected to use their professional judgment to tailor content and delivery to meet the specific needs of children at their appropriate **developmental stages**, rather than strictly relying on chronological age.

2. Addressing Specific Vulnerabilities

Recognising Risk: The guidance heavily emphasises that pupils with SEND can be significantly more vulnerable to exploitation, grooming, coercion, domestic abuse, bullying, and online safety harms.

Targeted Safeguarding: The RSE curriculum should be used proactively as a safeguarding tool. Lessons must explicitly address boundaries, consent, privacy, and how to report abuse or seeking help, explicitly tailored so that a pupil with SEND understands what constitutes safe and unsafe behaviour.

3. Integrated and Whole-School Approaches

Informal Learning Opportunities: RSE shouldn't just happen during isolated lessons. The DfE supports reinforcing key concepts (like personal space, consent, and respectful boundaries) through everyday school routines—for example, during lunchtime queues or moving around school.

4. Engaging with Parents and Individual Education Plans

Co-Production: Schools are advised to work closely with parents and carers when planning RSE for pupils with SEND. Transparent communication helps align the school's teaching with the family's values and helps parents support this learning at home.

EHC Plans and Annual Reviews: For pupils with more complex needs, specific RSE goals and requirements should ideally be assessed as part of their Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment, and reviewed during their regular annual reviews.

5. Staff Training and Support

The Role of Support Staff: Making the curriculum accessible relies heavily on the staff delivering it. Mainstream and special schools are encouraged to ensure that teachers and Teaching Assistants (TAs) receive specialized training to deliver sensitive topics confidently and appropriately to neurodiverse learners and those with learning disabilities