



## **Maple Tree Primary**

Shaping Minds. Building Futures

### Relationship and Sex Education Policy

**Maple Tree Primary School is a KS2 School for pupils who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to be educated within a mainstream school. Our vision is to develop well rounded, confident, and responsible individuals who aspire to achieve their full potential. We will do this by providing a welcoming, happy, safe, and supportive learning environment in which everyone is equal, and all achievements are celebrated.**

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# 1. Introduction

This written statement contains guidelines for teaching RSE within the school and has been constructed to reflect the requirements as outlined within the Statutory Guidance for RSE (2019, updated Sept 2021).

Both the policy and the guidelines should be regularly reviewed and shared between all staff members. The teaching of RSE should fall within the personal, social, and moral standards of the school community and reflect the ethos of the school.

It is important to encourage a whole school approach to the teaching of RSE within the personal, social and health education curriculum.

# 2. Rationale

Sex and Relationships Education (RSE) provides an understanding that positive, caring environments are essential for the development of a good self-image and that individuals are in charge of and responsible for their own bodies. It ought to provide knowledge about the processes of reproduction and the nature of sexuality and relationships. It should encourage the acquisition of skills and attitudes which allow pupils to manage their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner, encourages them to take action to minimise risks and inspires them to build robust self-esteem. Sex and relationship education is lifelong learning about physical, moral, and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of a loving and caring relationship. It is about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. Research demonstrates that good comprehensive sex and relationship education does not make young people more likely to become sexually active at a younger age. This policy establishes a holistic approach to the teaching and learning of RSE.

As of the 2020 academic year the teaching of RSE is a compulsory part of the school curriculum. The Statutory Guidance for RSE (2019, p4) states that 'Relationships Education [is] compulsory in all primary schools in England and Relationships and Sex Education compulsory in all secondary schools, as well as making Health Education compulsory in all state-funded schools.' Additionally, it is further stated that: 'In primary schools, we want the subjects to put in place the key building blocks of healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online. This will sit alongside the essential understanding of how to be healthy.'

At secondary, teaching will build on the knowledge acquired at primary and develop further pupils'

understanding of health, with an increased focus on risk areas such as drugs and alcohol, as well as introducing knowledge about intimate relationships and sex. Teaching about mental wellbeing is central to these subjects.

# 3. Why is RSE important?

Every parent and every school wants to see children grow up safely and be able as an adult to enjoy the positive benefits of loving, rewarding and responsible relationships, to be informed, comfortable with the changes during puberty and emotionally supported. Parents play a vital role in providing the building blocks for healthy and fulfilling social and personal relationships while protecting their children and young people from harm. They should lead on instilling values, but schools have a clear role in giving young people accurate information and helping them to develop the skills they need to make safe and responsible choices.

It is important that children start to build up the vocabulary and confidence to talk openly and positively about emotions, relationships, and their bodies. Learning the words to describe feelings and emotions, the correct terms for parts of the body and developing "health literacy" is vital for children to stay safe and seek help if they feel at risk or are being harmed. When cases of sexual abuse have come to light years after the event parents, teachers and young people have spoken of their regret that RSE was started so late and that they/the child was unable to report it because they did not have the language and did not know that what was happening to them was wrong. There is now anecdotal evidence where parents acknowledge their gratitude to RSE in school because their child had had the confidence and language to tell when they have been approached inappropriately rather than after abuse has taken place.

In the 21st Century, children and young people are also exposed to sexual imagery and content in a wide array of media including adverts, the internet, video games, mobile phones, pop songs, TV, and magazines. These media often present a distorted and inaccurate view of sex and relationships and provide increasingly explicit images of sex and sexuality. In addition, some children and young people will use the new technology to bully and intimidate others or to place themselves in compromising positions e.g., send revealing photos of themselves to girl or boyfriends. Far from "destroying their innocence" RSE equips children and young people with the values, skills, and knowledge to understand and deal appropriately with these social and cultural pressures.

School provides a safe place for children and young people to make sense of the information they have picked

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up from the media and playground myths. Guided by a skilled teacher, children and young people are able to separate facts from fiction and clarify and strengthen their own values.

Some children start puberty as young as eight years old. RSE prepares children for the physical and emotional changes of puberty. Many parents do talk to their children about growing up before puberty starts – but where this is absent some girls describe their fear to see that they were bleeding when their periods started. Boys talk about feeling isolated from discussions which only seem relevant to girls and might turn to other sources of information such as the internet and pornography.

As children approach adolescence so the nature of their relationships with parents, carers and their peers begin to change. They want new experiences and want to form new friendships and relationships. RSE is critical in that it provides accurate information about social norms to correct the myth that “everyone is doing it” and can support young people in resisting pressure. While it is only the minority of young people who first have sex before the age of 16 and, while remaining sensitive to the ethos of the school, it is vital that all young people have information about contraception. Currently approximately half of teenage conceptions end in abortion, indicating that they were unwanted or unintended. Many early sexual encounters are associated with alcohol consumption and coercion and these topics also need to be addressed. Reference should also be made to Kent Safeguarding Children’s Board (KSCB) (2018) procedures for ‘working with sexually active young people’.

In addition, the school curriculum has a role to play in reducing the likelihood of sexist, sexual, homophobic and transphobic bullying occurring in part through addressing some of the underlying attitudes and values that underpin it. RSE within PSHE education is the most obvious location for specific coverage of issues relating to bullying, gender equality and sexuality.

Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND): Across the school it is recognised that RSE must be accessible for all pupils. High quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised ensures accessibility to this curriculum from all our learners. Staff at Maple Tree Primary School are also mindful of the preparing for adulthood outcomes, as set out in the SEND code of practice, when teaching these subjects to those with SEND.

School staff are aware that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND. It is recognised that RSE can also be particularly important subjects for some pupils; for

example, those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs or learning disabilities. Such factors are taken into consideration in designing and teaching these subjects. We tailor content and teaching to meet the specific needs of pupils at different developmental stages. As with all teaching for these subjects, school staff ensure that their teaching is sensitive, age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate and delivered with reference to the law.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT): In teaching RSE all school staff ensure that they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics. Pupils learn about different types of families at an early age and information about LGBT+ is developed on in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner.

RSE within PSHE education is an important part of a whole-school approach to pupil well-being. Pupils who are happy in their relationships with peers and adults at school are likely to be better able to learn. By addressing a range of personal and social issues and providing information about where and how to get help, RSE supports pupils who face difficulties to get help and thus helps them to stay on track with learning.

## 4. What is RSE?

Sex and relationships education (RSE) is learning about our bodies, health, and relationships; with a particular focus on puberty and growing up, sexual health, sexual intimacy, dealing with emotions and managing personal relationships.

RSE is taught gradually, so that learning can be built up year-by-year in a way that is appropriate to the age and maturity of each child; responds to the needs they have and enable them to successfully manage the challenges they face as they grow up.

RSE teaches children and young people to develop values, attitudes, and learn personal and social skills, and increase their knowledge and understanding to enable them to make informed decisions and healthier life choices.

RSE makes an essential and significant contribution to safeguarding children and young people during their school-age years and into the future. RSE should enable young people to develop skills and confidence to access professional advice and appropriate health services. It enables children to understand their physical and emotional development and enables young people to take increasing responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and that of others.

## 5. RSE has three main elements

### Values and attitudes

Because of the personal and social nature of the topics covered in RSE, values and attitudes are a central part of learning and moral development. There are clear values that underpin RSE including:

- mutual respect
- the value of family life, marriage and of loving and stable relationships in bringing up children
- rights and responsibilities, for self and others
- commitment to safety and wellbeing
- gender equality
- acceptance of diversity, and
- that violence and coercion in relationships are unacceptable.

Children and young people should be supported to identify and develop these values as they progress through their school years. For example;

- the importance of fairness, equity and caring for one another is introduced in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- friendships are a central thread of primary RSE
- the importance of respect and consent in intimate relationships is developed at secondary level

The values in RSE are consistent with the values underpinning the National Curriculum, which aims to enable all children and young people to become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress, and achieve
- confident individuals who can live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives, and
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society,

and which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of learners.

Throughout RSE (both in discrete lessons and in other curriculum areas) children and young people benefit from opportunities to identify and reflect on their own values and those of others including their peers. RSE in school provides a safe environment for this exploration and development of positive attitudes. Teachers can facilitate discussion while maintaining the underpinning values listed above as a central reference point.

### Knowledge and Understanding

RSE should also increase pupils' knowledge and understanding at appropriate stages by:

- learning and understanding emotional and physical development
- understanding human sexuality, reproduction, sexual health, emotions, and relationships
- learning how to resist unwelcome pressures to be sexually active
- learning how to avoid unplanned pregnancy and STIs including learning about contraception and infection avoidance
- learning about pregnancy and the choices available
- learning about the range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception and support services available
- understanding the legal aspects of sexual behaviour
- learning about the links between sexual health and alcohol
- understanding the positive benefits of loving, rewarding, and responsible relationships
- learning about the impact of coercion and violence and understanding that consent is critical.

### Personal and Social Skills

As well as knowing facts, it is important that children and young people develop personal and social skills to make informed decisions and life choices, including:

- learning to identify their own emotions and those of others
- managing emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively
- developing self-respect and empathy for others
- communicating openly and respectfully about sex and relationships
- making and carrying out decisions
- developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made
- coping with and resisting unwelcome peer pressure
- managing conflict
- learning how to identify risk
- recognising and avoiding exploitation and abuse, and
- asking for help and accessing advice and services.

## 6. Where and how will RSE be taught?

Maple Tree Primary School specifically delivers Sex and Relationship Education through its PSHE Programme and Science lessons at KS2. Much of the Sex and Relationship Education at Maple Tree School takes place within PSHE lessons. Teaching staff deliver the PSHE Curriculum with support from professionals where appropriate. Teaching staff work closely with their pupils over a number of years, and we believe that they are usually the best people to work with the students on many of the RSE topics as they are aware of each pupil's individual circumstances. RSE lessons are set within the wider context of the PSHE curriculum and focus more on the emotional aspects of development and relationships, although the physical aspects of puberty and reproduction are also included.

In primary schools, subjects such as the risks about online gaming, social media and scams should not be taught before year 3.

Puberty shouldn't be taught before year 4, whilst sex education shouldn't be taught before year 5, in line with what pupils learn about conception and birth as part of the national curriculum for science

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 pupils, the question may be dealt with individually at another time.

As with all teaching and learning across the school due respect to all personal and protected characteristics will be promoted by staff and expected from all parties. This is also an explicit requirement within the RSE Statutory Guidance (2019, p13) which states that: 'In all schools, teaching should reflect the law (including the Equality Act 2010) as it applies to relationships, so that young people clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the wider legal implications of decisions they may make'. This is further clarified within the same guidance (pp.13-14) 'Under the provisions of the Equality Act, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership11, or sexual orientation (collectively known as

the protected characteristics). Schools must also make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage and be mindful of the SEND Code of Practice when planning for these subjects.

RSE is made up of all the experiences from which we acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills. These come from planned or unplanned sources from family, school, peers, community, and the media. Within school pupils will experience sex education from a planned programme but also individual questions and incidents will be dealt with as they arise.

At Maple Tree School we appreciate that pupils are at different developmental levels, even within the same year group, and so their understanding and sex education needs will vary a great deal. A whole school policy towards health and sex education is important, where sex education will be matched to the pupils' developmental stage.

The school's 'hidden curriculum' has an important part to play in sex education for all pupils, reflecting the caring ethos of the school. Its transmission is the responsibility of all staff members.

Sex education will be taught using a wide variety of teaching and learning approaches. These can be divided into two areas:

Firstly, those which emphasise active participation of pupils and use the pupils' own experiences and resources, such as;

- Small and large group work.
- Role play
- Simulations & games
- Projects and research
- Debate
- Peer counselling.

Secondly, those which draw on external sources, such as;

- Films, T.V., video and media
- Worksheets & posters
- Visitors
- Off-site visits
- Courses.

Sex and health education needs to incorporate work that extends knowledge, explores attitudes, and develops skills related to the relevant issues.

## 7. Issues relating to Sex Education

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Issues often arise unplanned and spontaneous, which must be dealt with straight away by the member of staff on hand. When dealing with these incidents staff need to give support through a consistent message based on the following principles.

- To challenge inappropriate behaviour and views between peers and to ensure that there is no gender bias.
- To assert the rights and responsibilities of individuals.
- To work within a restorative framework.
- To work closely with parents and other support agencies.
- To record and monitor inappropriate behaviour.
- To use relevant and appropriate language when communicating with pupils.
- To support other members of staff.
- To counsel, support and advise pupils when and where appropriate, for instance as pupil experience puberty.
- To review curriculum materials

## 8. Working with Parents and Carers

It is very important to work closely with parents in all aspects of sex education both in the taught curriculum and the unplanned questions and incidents. Parents' views, beliefs, and family backgrounds should be considered and the staff, particularly the senior leadership team, should always be prepared to discuss any problems. The Subject Co-Ordinator and/or class teacher will ensure that parents know what will be taught and when, and clearly communicate the fact that parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. The Subject Co-ordinator will notify parents at the prior to the teaching of the RSE topics that will be covered that term so that parents can support the learning or discuss any concerns or issues that arise.

Additionally, the RSE Statutory Guidance (2019, p12) asserts that schools should also adopt 'A good understanding of pupils' faith backgrounds and positive relationships between the school and local faith communities help to create a constructive context for the teaching of these subjects.

### The Parents Right to withdraw their son or daughter from RSE lessons

Section 241 of the Education Act 1993 gives parents the right to withdraw their children from any or all parts of the school's programme of sex education, other than those

elements which are required by the National Curriculum Science Order. It is accepted that, under exceptional circumstances, a very small number of parents and carers may wish to withdraw their children from this programme. In this case, such parents should contact the PSHE Coordinator, stating their objections. The schemes of work contained within this document will enable parents to estimate the point at which specific aspects of sex education will be delivered to their child. The biological element of reproduction remains within the National Curriculum Science (DfE Draft Guidance 2010) Additionally, the Statutory Guidance for RSE (2019, pp.17-18) asserts the following regarding the right for parents/carers to withdraw their child from RSE:

'Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. Before granting any such request it would be good practice for the head teacher to discuss the request with parents and, as appropriate, with the child to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. Schools will want to document this process to ensure a record is kept.

Good practice is also likely to include the head teacher discussing with parents the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child. This could include any social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly said by the teacher (although the detrimental effects may be mitigated if the parents propose to deliver sex education to their child at home instead).

Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, the school should 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, the school should plan 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 Teacher in Charge may want to take a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision. The approach outlined above should be reflected in the school's policy on RSE.

Teachers in Charge will automatically grant a request to withdraw a pupil from any sex education delivered in primary schools, other than as part of the science curriculum. If a pupil is excused from sex education, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of



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

encourage discussion but make clear what will happen if a child or young person makes a disclosure that causes concern.

If staff have concerns about a specific pupil in relation to self-harm or suicidal ideation or attempts, they must follow safeguarding procedures.

## 9. Confidentiality and Child protection

All staff members and external visitors who work with our pupils will be given a copy of this policy and our School's Child Protection Policy. The School's Designated Safeguarding Lead will have a discussion with any health professional or other adult before they start to work with our children to ensure they are familiar with our policy and expectations regarding correct practice and how to respond to issues, including those that may relate to Child Protection matters. We make clear to pupils what our procedures are regarding confidentiality. All staff work within the guidelines of our Confidentiality Policy.

At the heart of these subjects there is a focus on keeping children safe, and Maple Tree School recognises that it plays an important role in preventative education. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance sets out that all schools and colleges should ensure children are taught about safeguarding, including how to stay safe online, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum. Good practice allows children an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues. However, the school recognises that these discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. Pupils are made aware of how to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This includes processes when they have a concern about a friend or peer.

All staff are aware of what to do if a pupil tells them that they are being abused or neglected or are witnessing abuse. Staff know how to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This means only involving those who need to be involved, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) and children's social care. Staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.

Where Maple Tree School invites external agencies in to support delivery of these subjects, we agree in advance of the session how a safeguarding report should be dealt with by the external visitor. It is important that our pupils understand how confidentiality will be handled in a lesson and what might happen if they choose to make a report. Teachers, school staff and outside visitors who are involved in the delivery of RSE will set out clear boundaries which