

RSE Policy

Document title	Relationship and Sex Education policy		
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Version number	V5		
Approved by	Senior Leadership Team		
Date of review	May 2026		
Document history			
Version	Date	Author	Note of revisions
V1	June 2021	Eva Carroll	New Document produced
V2	April 2023	Max Hampton	Updated due to new ownership by Cavendish Education
V3	March 2024	Jax Snipp	Updated due to a change in PSHE leadership
V4	October 2025	Jax Snipp	Updated due to new national guidance
V5	May 2026	Jax Snipp	Updated again due to national guidance

Heathermount School is owned and operated by Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular, it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core value: 'building confidence and preparing students for life.'

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Heathermount School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

In the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the [Education Act 1996](#), which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Department for Education guidance [Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility updated August 2023](#), considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part-time, and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school contracts the services of third-party organisations to ensure regulatory compliance and implement best practices for:

- HR and Employment Law
- Health & Safety Guidance
- DBS Check processing
- Mandatory Safeguarding, Health & Safety, and other relevant training
- Data protection and GDPR guidance
- Specialist insurance cover

Where this policy refers to 'employees', the term refers to any individual who is classified as an employee or a worker, working with and on behalf of the school (including volunteers and contractors).

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, pupils and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and seek to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at Heathermount School.

The policy documents of Heathermount School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasion, a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the republication of a set of policy documents. Care should

therefore be taken to ensure, by consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, that the details of any policy document are still effectively current at a particular moment.

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1. Context of school

Heathermount is an independent special school catering for children and young people aged 5 to 18, with autism. The school is owned by Cavendish Education. We are committed to realising our vision of building confidence and preparing students for life beyond Heathermount and ensuring they are safe and able to build and develop healthy relationships.

2. Introduction

RSE (Relationship and Sex Education) involves a combination of sharing information and exploring knowledge, issues and student's values regarding relationships and sex. RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

At Heathermount, we want all children to grow up healthy, happy, safe, and able to manage the challenges and opportunities of modern Britain. From September 2026, all pupils will be taught an updated curriculum in line with the July 2025 statutory guidance. Primary children will be taught Relationships Education and Health Education, and secondary age children will be taught Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE). These subjects are designed to equip students with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships as well as preparing them for a successful adult life. Health Education aims to give your child the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, to recognise issues in themselves and others, and to seek support as early as possible when issues arise.

The school has the same high expectations of the quality of pupils' work in RSHE as for other curriculum areas, with regular feedback provided on pupil progress.

Explicit Curriculum Differentiation: To ensure absolute clarity for parents and carers, this policy explicitly distinguishes between the components of the curriculum:

- **Relationships Education:** Focuses strictly on developing healthy, safe, and respectful friendships, family structures, boundaries, digital safety, and recognizing emotional or physical abuse. It does *not* involve explaining the mechanical details of sexual activity.
- **Sex Education:** Tailored to secondary levels (and handled factually in upper primary within the National Curriculum for science), this component covers human reproduction, intimacy, and sexual health. Parents possess the right to request withdrawal *only* from the explicit components of Sex Education.

3. Aims of RSE

The aims of RSE at Heathermount School are to provide all our students with quality, evidence-based, and effective RSE which is differentiated to meet age and individual needs. We aim to:

- Provide an objective, non-stigmatizing framework in which sensitive & safe discussion can take place.
- Prepare students for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene.
- Help students to develop feelings of self-respect, morality, confidence and empathy.
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality, identity and relationships, using careful, inclusive language that avoids normalizing harmful behaviors or stereotyping boys.
- Teach students the correct, anatomically safe vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies.

- Enhance student understanding and skills regarding risk taking and keeping themselves safe.
- Give our students the knowledge of where to go to and how to ask for help regarding relationships, wellbeing, and health advice/guidance.

Our key aim of RSE is to ensure student safeguarding. This is through increasing their knowledge, exploring their values as well as developing their skills in order to help keep them safe.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher

- Responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently and appropriately across the school
- Managing requests to withdraw students from components of RSE.

Assistant Headteacher – Secondary

- Responsible for overseeing the RSE/PSHE Lead.

RSE/PSHE lead

- Responsible for ensuring that the programme is reviewed, relevant, up to date and is appropriate for our students, their needs and their ability.
- Responsible for ensuring that all students are able to access the curriculum and develop their knowledge, skills and have a safe environment within which they can explore their own values.
- Responsible for teaching all secondary students RSE lessons within their PSHE lessons.

Teaching staff are responsible for

- Ensuring a safe environment for delivering RSE/PSHE lessons.
- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way; ensuring that all teaching and materials are age-appropriate and take into account the cultural background of the pupils concerned.
- Modeling positive, objective attitudes in RSE; reassuring parents and students that the personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not bias the instruction.
- Monitoring progress.
- Planning lessons to ensure that pupils of differing abilities, including the most able, are challenged.
- Responding to the individual needs of each student.
- Responding appropriately to students whose parents have requested them to be withdrawn from aspects of RSE.

Students are responsible for

- Engaging fully in RSE sessions
- Treating others with respect and sensitivity

Heathermount's Governing body is responsible for

- Reviewing the school's RSE policy and ensuring the Headteacher implements the policy
- Ensuring that the RSE policy is implemented in full.

5. Legislation (statutory regulations and guidance)

RSE plays a vital part in meeting schools' safeguarding obligations. Ofsted is clear that schools must have a preventative programme that enables pupils to learn about safety and risks in relationships (SRE for the 21st Century). Schools maintain a statutory obligation under the Children Act (2004) to promote their pupils' wellbeing, and under the Education Act (1996) to prepare children and young people for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of adult life.

A comprehensive RSE programme can have a positive impact on pupils' health and wellbeing and their

ability to achieve and can play a crucial part in meeting these obligations (SRE for the 21st Century). This policy has been developed and written with regards to the Education Act 1996, the updated "Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education" statutory guidance issued July 2025 , and the foundational 2020 guidelines.

The updated government guidance for Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) published in July 2025 carries a mandatory implementation date of September 1, 2026. Key updates include a significantly greater focus on online safety (including sextortion, deepfakes, misogyny, and incel culture) and mental health (including suicide prevention). The guidance also strongly emphasises proactive parental engagement, legal accuracy, and the importance of teaching practical navigation skills alongside knowledge.

6. In addition, the following documentation (guidance) has also been considered:

- Equality Act 2010
- Preparing for Statutory Relationships and Sex Education (PSHE Association 2018)
- Writing your school's relationships and sex education policy (PSHE Association 2018)
- SRE in the 21st Century (Supplementary guidance Brook, PSHE Association & Sex Education forum)
- Teaching about relationships sex and health (March 2021)
- KCSIE September 2025
- Heathermount Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy September 2025
- E Safety Policy 2025
- Heathermount Behaviour Policy 2025

7. Consultation process

This policy has been developed using the following steps:

- **Consultation with parents:** via a parent coffee morning and a follow-up video emailed to all parents before the end of the academic year. Parents are encouraged to send in any questions or concerns for review by the Assistant Headteacher and SLT team. A parent survey collates the operational views of the parents.
- **Staff consultation:** Scheduled for 9th June with a follow-up video emailed to all staff before the end of the academic year. Staff are encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns with the PSHE lead teacher and Assistant Headteacher.
- **Student consultation:** Following the parent consultation, an assembly on the RSE curriculum is delivered to students before the end of the academic year. A student survey collates the direct views of the students.

8. Withdrawal Framework

RSE is vital in ensuring all young people have the opportunity to explore and learn about healthy relationships. It allows them to fully understand what relationships are, who they have them with, and what the qualities of a healthy relationship look like. We strongly hope that parents realise the value of these lessons and that all secondary parents sign the consent form so that students do not miss out on this very important learning. The formal withdrawal guidance from the Government is outlined below.

9. Withdrawal from RSE – Primary

Parents cannot withdraw their child from Relationships Education because it is statutory and essential that all children receive this content, covering foundational topics such as friendships, boundaries, and how to stay safe. The science curriculum includes mandatory content on human development, including reproduction, which there is no right to withdraw from.

10. Withdrawal from RSE – Secondary

Parents cannot withdraw a child from Health Education or the Relationships Education element of Relationships and Sex Education, because it is crucial that all children receive this content to understand peer relationships and safety.

If a parent does not want their child to take part in some or all of the Sex Education lessons delivered at the Secondary stage, they can request for their child to be withdrawn. The Headteacher will consider any requests for withdrawal and discuss it with parents, and will grant this request in all but exceptional circumstances, up until three school terms before a child turns 16.

- **Absolute Pupil Statutory Right to Opt In:** From three school terms before a child turns 16, the pupil has an absolute, independent statutory right to choose to receive Sex Education if they wish to do so. The school will arrange for any such child to receive this teaching within one of those three terms.
- **Purposeful Alternative Provision:** In the event that a student is withdrawn from Sex Education, Heathermount School assumes full structural responsibility for ensuring that the pupil remains safely supervised and receives appropriate, purposeful alternative education during the exact periods of withdrawal.

11. Curriculum design

The majority of RSE lessons are covered within the structured PSHE curriculum. Key themes and messages are also reinforced across the wider curriculum and are explicitly underpinned within the 'Your independence' section of our autism-specific READY framework. The RSE curriculum is safely reinforced through Catering and PE (Health and wellbeing), along with Science (Reproduction, Health and wellbeing), as well as our Young Enterprise curriculum which is taught to Year 9 - 11 students.

12. Primary

Students in KS1 have a session on their timetable called READY, which covers core PSHE topics. In KS2, students receive a dedicated PSHE lesson once a week delivered by their class teacher. Heathermount utilizes the PSHE Association resources as a structured framework to ensure full coverage of the objectives outlined in Appendix 1.

13. Secondary

Students in the secondary school have 2 lessons a week of PSHE, and a large proportion of these lessons cover statutory Health, Relationship, and Sex Education content. At Heathermount School, RSE is intentionally embedded within the core PSHE lessons (Personal, Social, Health education in KS3 and KS4). All secondary students are taught by a PSHE/RSE specialist.

Biological aspects of RSE are delivered via the science curriculum, and specific social communication nuances are supported in individualized Speech and Language therapy sessions. RSE is made accessible to all students and meticulously adapted to meet their particular Special Educational Needs (SEN). Class sessions are delivered via small groups, or individual sessions are arranged in line with specific student profiles and emotional safety needs. All students are provided with information about the way their bodies function, how to look after their bodies, safety, and relationships. Students are reminded in every session that they must respect the views and beliefs of others at all times, and that discussions or personal disclosures made by peers during the session must not be shared outside the classroom.

Staff recognize that there are instances where students reveal information that triggers safeguarding and child protection mechanisms. These items cannot be kept confidential, and students are transparently informed that such details must be shared with the school's designated safeguarding leads.

14. Teaching of RSE/PSHE

The teaching methods within RSE/PSHE are varied and designed to engage students through multiple learning modalities. These include:

- Small group work
- Class discussion
- Educational activities, games, and trips
- Curated video clips with structured discussions
- Monitored visiting specialists
- Visual work booklets
- Independent research on defined topics
- Structured presentations
- Anonymous boxes ("Ask it basket") – allowing students to submit questions without fear of embarrassment or peer judgment.
- **Answering Difficult and Untaught Questions:** To safely manage unexpected, highly sensitive, or uncurated questions (including questions covering topics from which a specific child has been withdrawn), teachers will employ classroom ground rules and distancing techniques. Questions submitted via the "Ask it basket" will be vetted by the specialist teacher beforehand. If an uncurated question cannot be answered safely in class, the teacher will address it individually or securely coordinate with the student's parents/carers so it can be explored within the home environment.

Where possible, we invite visiting specialists and health professionals if they add distinct value to our students' learning. External visitors are required to follow school safeguarding procedures and policies explicitly while onsite. All visits are pre-arranged and follow an agreed session plan checked to ensure our students' specific learning profiles are accommodated. While there is no formal external examination for RSHE, the school tracks outcomes using diagnostic tests, written assignments, and structured self-evaluations. Teaching is assessed internally, and data is used to identify where individual pupils require extra targeted support or intervention. Progress in understanding concepts is assessed formatively on the Earwig platform.

15. Working with parents

Some parents and carers of children with special educational needs may find it challenging to navigate their children's developing sexuality. We acknowledge that for some families, certain elements of RSE can be sensitive to engage with. We will:

- Treat parents and their queries with extreme sensitivity.
- Respect different cultural beliefs and religious views.
- Proactively advise parents how to confidently discuss RSE elements within the home environment.
- Distribute lesson resources or signpost families to further professional information where individuals require additional home support.
- Invite parents to be part of the curriculum design process by providing feedback via online surveys and attending dedicated consultation meetings.
- Encourage parents to call or email the PSHE/RSE Lead at any time to discuss concerns or seek guidance relating to upcoming topics.
- Openness and Transparency with Materials: In line with statutory guidelines on parental

transparency, **all teaching materials, full curriculum maps, lesson slides, literature, and digital resources used in RSHE lessons are fully open and available for parental review upon request.**
The school will provide clear pathways for parents to inspect materials prior to curriculum delivery.

16.Training

The Headteacher ensures that all staff directly responsible for the implementation of RSE are trained appropriately in its delivery. In addition, Heathermount School frequently invites external RSE professionals and regional agencies to support curriculum delivery and continuous staff professional development.

17.Monitoring

The delivery of RSE is formally monitored by the Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team through the evaluation of individual student progress trackers, structured classroom observations, and routine learning walks. Student development in RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of the internal assessment systems, student self-assessment exercises, and formal student voice reviews.

18.Review of Policy

This policy is reviewed at least annually by the Senior Leadership Team and updated immediately when any significant legislative changes occur.

19.Related policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Learning and Teaching Policy

Appendix 1 – Primary Lesson Content

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum

Our primary curriculum is designed in line with statutory requirements for delivering the updated Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum from September 2026. It follows a spiral model featuring age-appropriate progression and reflects increased emphasis on:

- Online safety and AI literacy
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health foundations
- Respectful, kind relationships
- Safeguarding and exploitation awareness
- Inclusion and understanding protected characteristics
- Body confidence and puberty preparation
- Consent, privacy, and personal boundaries

Relationships Education puts in place the critical building blocks needed for positive and safe relationships, including within the family, peer friendships, and online spaces. Your child will be taught what a relationship is, what friendship is, what family means, and who can support them. In an age-appropriate and sensitive way, children cover how to treat each other with kindness, consideration, and respect.

The primary curriculum is organized into these core strands:

- Relationships & Respect
- Health & Wellbeing
- Online Safety
- Identity & Diversity
- Safety & Safeguarding
- Growing & Changing

Appendix 2 – Secondary lesson content

Our secondary curriculum is designed in line with mainstream and specialist secondary schools in England preparing for the updated statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance from September 2026. It reflects a strengthened statutory focus on advanced safeguarding, digital literacy, misogyny/incel culture, online pornography risks, affirmative consent, mental health, AI literacy, online harms, menstrual/gynaecological health, and accessing external support services.

Across all secondary year groups, pupils will develop:

- Concrete knowledge of healthy, non-coercive relationships.
- Explicit consent and interpersonal communication skills.
- Critical digital, media, and deepfake literacy.
- Emotional literacy, self-regulation, and resilience.
- Robust respect for diversity and all protected characteristics under the law.
- Clear understanding of safeguarding, grooming, and exploitation indicators.
- Confidence accessing confidential support and public healthcare systems.

Key themes threaded across all year groups:

- Relationships & Respect
- Online Safety & Digital Literacy
- Physical Health
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Sex Education & Consent
- Identity, Equality & Inclusion
- Safety, Risk & Exploitation
- Future Preparedness