

## Relationships, Sex and Health Education

### POLICY STATEMENT

- At Oakwood Specialist College we recognise the importance of encouraging and developing Learners understanding of healthy relationships, sexual relationships and how to make informed choices. All Learners have the right to develop personal relationships. We recognise that sexuality is part of adult life and that Learners must have their sexuality recognised and respected in accordance with their individual cultural and/or religious beliefs. This policy details the approach that the college takes to delivering relationships and sex education, its content, and how we work with partners to deliver it.

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# 1. Scope

## 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 All Learners have the right to develop personal relationships. We recognise that sexuality is part of adult life and that Learners must have their sexuality recognised and respected in accordance with their individual cultural and/or religious beliefs.
- 1.1.2 The Human Rights Act 1998 legally recognises that people who are able to consent to sex in accordance with UK domestic law have the right to have sex and sexual relationships. In addition, the Act makes explicit:
- Freedom of thought
  - Freedom of expression
  - Freedom of assembly and association
  - The right to have respect for private and family life.
  - The right to marry.
- 1.1.3 All Learners at Oakwood Specialist College are supported to make informed choices and to exercise their rights to healthy sexual and personal relationships. Relationships and sex education is delivered as part of the College's Personal Growth Programme (PGP) curriculum and focuses on supporting Learners to understand and respect themselves and others and to form and sustain healthy relationships.
- 1.1.4 We recognise that young people with SEND may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. All our curriculum programmes are designed to maximise opportunities for our Learners:
- To learn how to be and keep safe.
  - To communicate and be understood using whichever means of communication is most effective for them.
  - To build healthy and enriching relationships.
  - To maximise their potential and achieve ambitious goals within their local communities.
- 1.1.5 Clear, relevant, and inclusive RSE is key to enhancing the self-worth and self-confidence of each individual and encouraging mutually respectful relationships and empathy for others. As such, it plays a crucial part in safeguarding children and young people, especially those with special educational needs and disabilities. The RSE curriculum supports and complements the College's Safeguarding and child protection policy and procedure, and other key strands of delivery, including e-safety, anti-bullying and equality and diversity.
- 1.1.6 Informed consent is critical in any healthy adult relationship and as such this policy should be read in conjunction with the Mental Capacity and Consent Policy.

## 1.2 Aims

1.2.1 Relationships and sex education is lifelong learning about sex, sexuality, emotions, relationships, and sexual health. It involves acquiring information, developing skills, being supported to learn from experience and forming your own beliefs, values, and attitudes.

1.2.2 Sexuality is a term used to describe the aspects of a person that are associated with sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. It can be considered in terms of:

- Physical expression
- Self-image
- Emotional development
- Social circumstances
- Sensuality
- Spirituality
- Personal identity

1.2.3 Adults with learning difficulties/disabilities may be regarded within our society as non-sexual adults and denied this fundamental human right. All people have sexuality. For those with profound disabilities and complex needs it may not be possible to express their sexuality through sexual activity with others or even by themselves. This means that Learners should be:

- Given the opportunity to develop and enjoy healthy relationships.
- Supported to express and understand themselves and their feelings.
- Supported to take informed risks.
- Supported to access the appropriate services and information to have safe relationships and sex should they choose to do so.

1.2.4 We are committed to preparing all Learners for adulthood and to ensuring that they go on to live full lives as members of their communities. Feeling valued, understanding what makes a good relationship or friendship, knowing who to talk to (whether verbally and non-verbally, face to face or online) are all crucial to our Learners in achieving that aim.

## 1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

1.3.1 The responsibility for the RSE policy lies with the College Principal with delegated responsibility to the Head of Personal Development.

1.3.2 The College has a designated Governor responsible for RSE. They are responsible for ensuring that the college is delivering against the policy, and that the policy remains up to date and line with legislation.

1.3.3 The Head of Personal Development is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the College’s approach to delivering the RSE curriculum adheres to the appropriate guidance and legislative frameworks.
- Implementing a broad and well-planned curriculum that is inclusive and delivered at the appropriate level for each Learner.
- Providing or sourcing training for teachers delivering the RSE curriculum.
- Assuring the quality of curriculum delivery through lesson visits, work scrutiny and through gathering feedback from stakeholders such as Learners, teachers, and parents/ carers.
- Ensuring that parents and carers are informed about the RSE curriculum and what their child/ person they care for is learning.

#### 1.3.4 Teachers are responsible for:

- Conducting initial assessment to determine what Learners already know and can do, and where further learning is required.
- Completing relevant training as required
- Implementing the RSE curriculum through high quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- Participating in quality assurance activities and regular review of the curriculum.
- Providing formative and summative assessment information that demonstrates the progress that Learners are making towards the curriculum aims and using this effectively to inform planning.

### 1.4 **Legislation (statutory regulations and guidance)**

1.4.1 We are required to teach Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) which informs our PGP curriculum (see PGP policy), as well as linking with other areas that make up our wider curriculum at college, such as Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) and Preparing for Work (PFW). Our RSE curriculum is therapeutically informed, and teachers use therapeutic strategies and programmes, such as the Zones of Regulation and Interoceptive Awareness, as well as trauma-informed approaches, such as Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (PACE), to create and deliver individualised lessons that reflect the needs of their Learners.

- 1.4.2 Current regulations and guidance from the Department for Education state that the PSHE curriculum should cover a range of topics, including families, respectful relationships, online and media, being safe, intimate, and sexual relationships (including sexual health) and the law. These topics should equip Learners with the knowledge and skills to; be healthy, safe and prepared for modern life; develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds; identify what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships, and when relationships are not right, understand how such situations can be managed; how to keep themselves safe online and know how to manage situations which make them feel worried/uncomfortable; be aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, such as age of consent, sexual harassment, hate crime, and online behaviours. Secretary of State's Guidance: Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2025).
- 1.4.3 The RSE policy supports/complements the following policies:
- Personal Growth Programme (PGP) policy
  - Therapeutic Approach (Education) policy
  - Mental Capacity and Consent policy
  - Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
  - Anti-Bullying policy
  - Sexual Exploitation policy
  - Challenging Discrimination policy
  - First Aid policy
  - Learner; Smoking policy
  - Learner; Drug & Substance Misuse policy
  - Work Experience; Safeguarding policy
  - Learner; Mobile Phone Use policy
- 1.4.4 Documents that inform the school's PGP policy include:
- Education Act (1996)
  - Learning and Skills Act (2000)
  - Education and Inspections Act (2006)
  - Equality Act (2010)
  - Keeping children safe in education DFE 2025
  - Children and Social Work Act (2017)
  - Secretary of State's Guidance: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) (2020)

- PSHE Association: PSHE Planning Framework for Pupils with SEND – Key Stages 1-4 (2020)
- PSHE Association: Programme of Study for PSHE Education (Key Stages 1-5) (2020)
- Secretary of State’s Guidance: Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2025)
- Mental Capacity and Consent Policy (Oakwood Specialist College)

## 2. Curriculum Design

2.1.1 Relationships and Sex Education is delivered as part of the College's Personal Growth Programme (PGP) curriculum.

2.1.2 The RSE strand of the PGP curriculum was devised by college leaders because of extensive research into a range of existing programmes. It has been created using the outcomes from the PSHE Association and adapted into a framework that provides a differentiated curriculum based on cognitive level rather than chronological age. This enables Learners to learn stage appropriate content and deepen their understanding over time if appropriate by moving through the levels. The learning areas in the PGP programme are:

- Relationships and sex
- Self-awareness
- Managing feelings
- Self-Care, support, and safety
- Healthy lifestyle
- The world I live in

2.1.3 These learning areas are then further broken down into competencies that Learners should know and be able to do relative to their level. These levels are broken down as follows:

1. Foundation
2. Core
3. Development

2.1.4 All Learners are assessed initially at Core level. If a Learner does not yet have the understanding or language skills required for this level, they will be assessed at Foundation. Those that demonstrate achievement at core level build upon this understanding at development level. In this way all Learners develop their knowledge and skill at a level that is appropriate to them.

2.1.5 Some Learners may not yet have the language or understanding required to learn at foundation level. Where this is the case, they will follow an individualised programme that focuses on equipping them with the skills they need to stay safe, whilst developing their understanding of themselves and their bodies.

### 2.2 The Content of Each Stage of the RSE Curriculum

2.2.1 Foundation:

- Identify some of the different ways we have changed as we have grown older.
- Describe what having or being a friend means.
- Identify different kinds of friendship and ways in which friendship is important.

- Identify some key features of positive friendships/relationships, and how they can make us feel.
- Identify times when we might feel angry or sad because of someone's behaviour towards us.
- Identify instances in or out of college when we might need to seek permission or receive consent.
- Demonstrate how to ask for permission (get consent) before we borrow or take something from someone.
- Demonstrate ways to indicate to others that we are happy/willing or not happy/unwilling to do something (giving and not giving permission/ consent).
- Identify the similarities and differences between friendships and romantic/intimate relationships.
- Identify whom we can talk to about relationships.
- Give examples of different types and features of committed long-term relationships.
- Identify adults we know who are in a long-term relationship (e.g., married, in a civil partnership, living together, engaged).
- Identify what being in a family means.

#### 2.2.2 Core:

- Describe some of the new opportunities and responsibilities we have experienced as we have grown older.
- Identify some of the different stages of change as people progress from birth to adulthood (physical, emotional, social).
- Explain why puberty happens.
- Identify occasions when we might need the support of friends.
- Give examples of how we can show support to our friends.
- Describe how we can let friends know that we need their help and support.
- Identify our expectations of friendships/relationships (e.g., spending time together, sharing interests)
- Describe the positive qualities people bring to relationships (e.g., kindness, support, being able to compromise, listening, sharing feelings or worries.
- Identify different types of intimate relationships including same-sex relationships.

- Describe how strong emotions (including sexual attraction) might make people feel.
- Explain what seeking and giving/ not giving consent means in relationships, that we have the right to say ‘no’ or ‘please stop’ to anything we feel uncomfortable about and demonstrate how we might do this.
- Recognise what sex means, what happens during sexual activity and that consequences of sex might include pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Recognise that contraception, including condoms, can help prevent pregnancy and some STIs.
- Explain the difference between appropriate and inappropriate relationship behaviours in public places.
- Explain that marriage, (including same-sex marriage) civil partnerships and living together are choices that couples might make as part of their commitment to each other.
- Recognise what ‘adopted’, ‘fostered’, or ‘looked after’ mean in terms of families. Recognise that some relationships will end— meaning that a couple don’t go out together, or live together anymore.
- Identify whom we can talk to if we’re worried about relationships changing/ ending.

### 2.2.3 Development:

- Describe the specific physical and emotional changes that happen during puberty, including menstruation, wet dreams, skin and voice changes, body hair, mood swings.
- Explain aspects of personal hygiene that we can take responsibility for, and why this is important during puberty.
- Identify occasions when our friends might need our support.
- Explain that we might disagree with someone and still be friends.
- Demonstrate ways to manage friendship disagreements restoratively.
- Recognise that friends do not always know what is best for each other.
- Explain how we expect people to behave towards us in friendships and relationships.
- Identify the differences between positive/healthy and negative/unhealthy relationships.
- Identify people we can talk to about relationships.

- Define what intimacy means.
- Identify readiness (emotional, physical, and social) for a relationship that may include sex.
- Identify expectations we may have of being in a romantic/intimate/physical relationship, which may include sex.
- Recognise that although it may seem (in the media etc.) that everyone is having a sexual relationship, in reality this is not the case.
- Describe simple ways to check if consent is being given and ways of assertively giving, not giving, and withdrawing consent.
- Explain that there are laws about the legal age of consent for sexual activity.
- Identify how others may manipulate/persuade us to do things we do not want to do or do not like.
- Describe ways we can take care of our own sexual health and that of others e.g., using condoms to help prevent STIs).
- Identify where and how to obtain condoms and describe how to use them safely.
- Identify sources of support with relationships and sex.
- Identify what the differences might be between feeling ready for a relationship, feeling ready for a sexual relationship and being ready to be a parent.
- Identify some of the responsibilities of being a parent.
- Recognise different ways a person can become pregnant, including assisted conception, donor conception.
- Identify possible reasons why people might choose to adopt or foster children or young people.
- Explain that no-one can be forced to marry someone; that this is always wrong; that the person trying to force someone to marry is committing a very serious crime no matter who they are or what they say.
- Identify what we can do and whom we could tell if we think someone is being forced to marry someone.

- 2.2.4 Most Learners will have developed some understanding of relationships and sex education prior to coming to Oakwood. Teachers will use initial assessments to ascertain what Learners already know and can do and build a profile of the knowledge that is secure and where further learning is needed. This is recorded on the baseline assessment. This may mean that the content that a Learner learns moves across the foundation, core, and development areas. For example, a Learner may have a sound understanding of their bodies and are learning about this at core level, but their understanding of relationships is less developed, so they are learning about this at foundation level.
- 2.2.5 The curriculum content is designed to enable Learners to understand a range of sexual relationships. When discussing relationships teachers and LSAs will ensure that they do not refer exclusively to same sex relationships but also discuss LGBTQ+ relationships as a balanced part of each area of the curriculum.
- 2.2.6 Each learning area of PGP is split into different themes each term, however, RSE will be taught for the full 38 weeks of the curriculum for a minimum of 1 session per week.
- 2.2.7 The Head of Personal Development provides central resources and specific training for teachers on how to teach the content at different levels.

### **3. Safe and Effective Practice**

- 3.1.1 To ensure that all Learners gain the knowledge and skills they need as individuals, all Learners will be assessed to ascertain both the learning level and specific content they need to learn. Teachers will use the baseline assessment to do this and will identify the competencies that Learners are working towards in their study programme overview (SPO) and in their planning documentation.
- 3.1.2 Teachers will establish a safe learning environment by creating ground rules that enable Learners to feel supported, able to ask questions and learn in an environment of mutual respect.
- 3.1.3 Teachers will ensure that learning support assistants (LSAs) receive adequate training and information about what will be taught, how and why prior to the learning sessions. They will receive specific guidance about the level of support they should offer and the language they must use.
- 3.1.4 Teachers will ensure that sensitive topics are distanced from the Learners and avoid asking Learners personal questions or to reflect on their experiences unless they offer to do so. Specific discussions with Learners on sensitive topics must take place on a 1:1 basis and records of such discussion held.
- 3.1.5 Teachers will use a range of strategies that are appropriate for the communication levels of the Learners to enable them to ask anonymous questions for example, a question box or an online survey.
- 3.1.6 All Team Members teaching RSE will have a minimum of 1 supervision per academic year with the Head of Personal Development to ensure that they are supported with delivering this content. Additional requests for supervisions can be made directly with the Head of Personal Development.

### **3.2 Safeguarding**

- 3.2.1 Teachers and LSAs will be made aware that that effective RSE, which brings an understanding of what is and what is not appropriate in a relationship, may lead to a disclosure of a safeguarding and/or child protection issue. If a disclosure is made, team members will follow the College's safeguarding and child protection procedure.
- 3.2.2 Some Learners may have experienced known adverse relationships or sexual experiences in childhood or more recently that can make the teaching of the RSE topics more sensitive. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Head of Personal Development will support teachers where this is known in designing an appropriate curriculum. They will seek support from other professionals such as psychological therapists and local authority colleagues such as social workers to help them to do this.
- 3.2.3 The college may arrange for visiting speakers and/or external agencies to support the delivery of the RSE curriculum. Where this is the case, they must follow the visiting speaker policy.

### **3.3 Engaging Stakeholders**

- 3.3.1 The college will share this policy on its website and a copy will be issued to the parents and/or carers of all Learners when they start at the college.

- 3.3.2 The Head of Personal Development will deliver a curriculum event for parents to attend (either in person or virtually) that explains the RSE curriculum during the first term of the academic year.
- 3.3.3 The Head of Personal Development will signpost parents/carers to additional further support and resources in an accompanying letter when issuing the RSE policy.
- 3.3.4 There is no right for parents/carers to withdraw their child/person they care for from relationships and sex education once they turn 16 years of age. The college will work with parents and carers to share the curriculum content with them and aim to work in partnership in its delivery.
- 3.3.5 In teaching relationships and sex education the religious background of each Learner must be taken into account when planning teaching so that topics can be appropriately handled. Teachers will seek the support of the Head of Personal Development where this is the case, who may engage with faith organisations for further information.