

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Approved by:	Curriculum and Standards Committee
Date:	June 2026
Review by:	June 2028

Canonbury Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy

Informed by [DfE guidance on Relationships education, RSE and health education \(2025\)](#)

Canonbury Primary School

Date of Review: June 2026

Lead Responsibility: Patrick Mildren (Head Teacher), Juliet Harvey (Subject Lead)

Approved by: Henry Jones chair of school governors

Introduction - school values, purpose of RSE and development of this policy

RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) is taught in the context of the school's values <https://canonburyprimaryschool.co.uk/our-school/about-canonbury/school-vision/> - and slogan, 'Create, Discover, Succeed Together' which underpin the curriculum.

RSE is an essential part of children's education at Canonbury Primary School, helping them to develop the knowledge, skills and values to make informed and responsible choices about relationships, health, and wellbeing.

The purpose of this policy is to be a central reference point to inform school staff, parents, carers, health professionals and visiting speakers of the school's approach to RSE within PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) education. It has been developed involving and considering the needs of staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers.

The policy is to be read in conjunction with the following school policies: Teaching and Learning, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Staff Code of Conduct, Science, Equal Opportunities and Healthy Schools.

<https://canonburyprimaryschool.co.uk/our-school/school-policy/documents-and-policies/>

The policy is on our school website (see link above); copies are also available from the school office. It is in line with current guidance (see below).

Legislation - statutory requirements

Under the Education Act 2002 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017, all schools must provide:

- Primary Schools: Relationships Education and Health Education – 'All schools must have an up-to-date written policy for relationships education or, where they teach sex education, for RSE' (DfE guidance, page 4, para 12). Islington schools are advised to teach age-appropriate sex education alongside science, and to have an RSE policy. Sex Education is not mandatory but recommended – at Canonbury we teach RSE in Year 6. DfE guidance states, 'Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools, but we recommend that primaries teach sex education in years 5 and 6, in line with content about conception and birth, which forms part of the national curriculum for science' (DfE guidance, page 11, para 30).

Primary and secondary schools are required to teach health education – at Canonbury we teach this in Years 2 and 4 – however physical and mental wellbeing are important themes that run through every year group.

This policy ensures compliance with:

[The Equality Act 2010](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2025\)](#)

[DfE guidance on Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education \(2025\)](#)

Aims and content of RSE Curriculum

Definition of RSE

RSE is taught as part of planned, age-appropriate PSHE education and is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up. Relationships education is developmental and provides a foundation for life transitions and future careers. Sex education includes some biology, beginning to understand feelings/intimate relationships (primary). RSE aims to give children and young people essential knowledge and skills for building positive, enjoyable and respectful relationships, understanding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and staying safe both off and online. RSE enables pupils to explore their own and others' attitudes and values and can help build self-esteem and confidence.

In primary school, 'Developing bodies', is taught as part of statutory health education. This includes human life cycle, the correct names of body parts and the menstrual cycle – 'whilst the average age of the onset of menstruation is twelve, periods can start at eight, so covering this topic before girls' periods start will help them understand what to expect and avoid distress' (DfE guidance, page 25).

Our RSE curriculum aims to:

- Prevent harm (including sexual violence and harassment)
Provide accurate, age-appropriate knowledge
- Support children to develop respectful and healthy relationships
- Teach pupils about consent, boundaries, and online safety
- Promote self-respect, empathy, and understanding of different families
- Equip pupils with the skills to recognise and report abuse, exploitation, or unhealthy relationships
- Challenge stereotypes and promote equality, diversity, and inclusion.

New guiding principles of the DfE guidance (page 5)

We have taken the following principles into account:

1. Engagement with pupils (well-sequenced, relevant and engaging content based on the needs of our pupils)
2. Engagement and transparency with parents (openness about materials, which are available to parents)
3. Positivity (attitudes and skills; avoiding language that normalises harmful behaviour)
4. Careful sequencing (preparing children for real-life experiences before they happen, to build skills and prevent harms)
5. Relevance and responsiveness (age-appropriate, linked to local context)
6. Skilled delivery (delivered by trained staff in a safe, supportive environment with accurate content)
7. Whole-school approach (integrated with other policies - e.g., behaviour and safeguarding) and committed to positive relationships.

Summary of primary school RSE content

The [government guidance](#) [DfE guidance](#) on relationship and health education, and the science national curriculum, detail what must be taught in primary schools.

Sex and Health education (statutory) taught within primary PSHE lessons (based Islington's scheme of work, 'You, Me, PSHE').

Learning intentions and outcomes

Year 2 Health Education:

Pupils learn the biological differences between male and female children

Pupils:

- identify and name biological terms for male and female sexual organs
- label the male and female organs with confidence
- understand that the male and female parts are related to reproduction

Year 4 Health Education:

Growing up and changing

Pupils learn:

- about the way we grow and change throughout the human lifecycle
- about the physical changes associated with puberty
- about menstruation and wet dreams
- about the impact of puberty in physical hygiene and strategies for managing this
- how puberty affects emotions and behaviour and strategies for dealing with this
- to answer each other's questions about puberty with confidence, to seek support and advice when they need it

Year 6 RSE:

Pupils learn about human reproduction in the context of the human lifecycle:

- know that sexual intercourse may be one part of a sexual relationship
- can describe how babies are made and explain how sexual intercourse is related to conception

Pupils learn how a baby is made and grows (conception and pregnancy):

- can define conception and understand the importance of implantation in the womb
- know what pregnancy is, where it occurs and how long it takes

and additionally:

Pupils learn some myths and misconceptions about HIV, who it affects and how it can and cannot be transmitted:

- know that HIV can affect anyone, not a specific group or type of person
- can identify how HIV can and cannot be passed on
- know that the risk of HIV being passed on through sexual intercourse can be reduced if a condom is used

Pupils learn that contraception can be used to stop a baby from being conceived:

- know that a condom stops sperm from meeting an egg and therefore stops fertilisation
- know that women can take a pill to stop an egg being released, preventing conception
- understand contraception is both partners' responsibility.
- strategies for resisting coercion and identifying unsafe situations.

Further teaching materials are available through Islington's PSHE SharePoint for staff reference - see [Islington PSHE page](#)

Teaching and learning in RSE

RSE is delivered as part of PSHE education, alongside Science and Computing (online safety). It is taught in a safe, supportive, and non-judgmental environment using a variety of teaching methods. It is developmental and well planned, intending for all pupils to feel comfortable to engage in open discussion and confident to ask for help.

Inclusion, faith culture and safeguarding children

RSE is inclusive of all pupils, respecting different backgrounds, cultures, faiths, and family situations.

Our curriculum is in line with the Equality Act 2010. All children and young people, whatever their experience, background or identity, are entitled to good quality RSE that helps them build a positive sense of self. The RSE programme and approach is inclusive of difference: faith or belief, culture, LGBTQ+ and gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, disability, ethnicity, age or any other life experience. RSE lessons help pupils to explore discrimination, prejudice, bullying, aggressive behaviour and other unhealthy relationships.

RSE lessons follow safeguarding protocols:

- Pupils are encouraged to ask questions in a safe and anonymous way.
- Teachers provide factual, unbiased information.
- If a safeguarding concern arises, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed.

RSE enables pupils to:

- understand what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is
- know their rights to be protected and kept safe
- understand potential dangers they could face
- be encouraged to adopt safe and responsible practices and deal sensibly with risk
- develop personal skills to protect themselves and others from unsafe influences and physical and emotional harm
- know when, how and who to ask for help

Effective RSE aims to prevent sexual abuse and harassment, ensuring pupils understand what respectful behaviour looks like, understand and communicate about consent and that sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong. At Canonbury we want our children to know how to keep themselves safe and how to approach safe adults for help.

Staff approach RSE sensitively, knowing that pupils are individual and will have different family groupings. Teachers' personal beliefs, values and attitudes should not affect their teaching of RSE.

Disclosures

Follow the school's policy -

https://canonburyprimaryschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/CPS-Safeguarding-and-Child-Protection-Policy-2024_25.pdf

Working with parents and carers – rights and engagement

Consultation and requests to withdraw

- Parents are the primary educators of their children about RSE and values, and RSE should complement their roles. Parents/carers are consulted on the RSE policy and curriculum and we work in partnership. Parents are informed about RSE lessons in advance and provided with resources and terminology used on request. Children may disclose information about themselves in RSE and teachers are trained to handle disclosures and questions sensitively and appropriately. This can include speaking to parents and the designated safeguarding lead.
- In primary school, parents may withdraw their child from sex education (but not relationships or science topics).

How the school informs and works with parents

- Teachers tell parents that RSE will be taught at the Year Group welcome meeting and discuss parental questions – individually if required
- Before RSE lessons, a letter is sent to parents and carers describing the RSE their children will cover. In this way, parents and carers can be prepared to have conversations at home
- Sharing information with parents on the school's principles and values and how these inform policies and the curriculum
- Information in newsletters and on the school website.

Working with external visitors and PSHE contributors

Clarify how the visit or session fits with school values and the context of the PSHE curriculum and provide guidance on safeguarding in PSHE

Make time to discuss the session (including objectives, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, including pupil voice)

View the plan/materials/video resources in advance to check they are appropriate.

Liaise with the SENCO/DSL/SLT/pastoral team to check if the content could be triggering or bring up feelings for any children due to their circumstances and experiences

Share the classroom expectations (e.g., protocols around disclosures and PSHE working agreements/ground rules including children not revealing information that may incriminate themselves or others or that they wish to remain confidential)

Check DBS (if a visitor is to be alone in charge of a pupil or pupils – we recommend that the teacher always present)

Share relevant policies on handling sensitive issues and confidentiality, health and safety, behaviour and subject content (e.g., Drugs, tobacco and vaping/RSE/Safeguarding)

Parents and children notified of the upcoming session (depending on the topic and school policy)

Consider an additional room/space for any children who may need to step out of the session for a while.

Signpost to other support - before, during and after the session

Make it clear to children how this session fits into their curriculum and the next steps

Monitoring and review

The RSE policy is reviewed every 1 – 3 years in consultation with staff, pupils, and parents. The effectiveness of RSE lessons is evaluated through pupil feedback, staff reflection, and curriculum assessments.

Further information and contact

For more information or to discuss concerns, please contact:

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