



Vernon Park Primary School: Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) policy



This policy sets out our school's approach to statutory Relationships and Health Education and non-statutory Sex Education. It was produced by the PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic education) subject leader working with the Head teacher, Senior Leadership Team and governors.

We have based our school's Relationships, Sex and Health Education policy on the statutory guidance document "Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education" (DfE, 2025) and the PSHE Association's supplementary guidance "Writing your school's relationships and sex education (RSE) policy" (PSHE Association), Stockport's Model Policy Guidance, Equality Act 2010, Children and Social work Act 2017, DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and the DfE 'National Curriculum Science Programmes of Study'.

From September 2020, it was compulsory for all primary schools to teach Relationships and Health Education. There has been an updated review of the guidance to be implemented in September 2026. The teaching of Sex Education in primary schools remains non-statutory, with the exception of the elements of sex education contained in the science national curriculum (including the main external body parts, the human life cycle, understanding the changes experienced during puberty, menstrual wellbeing and reproduction in some plants and animals).

Within the statutory guidance document for RSE and Health Education, the DfE also encourages schools to deliver age-appropriate sex education if they feel their pupils need this information:

"It will be for primary schools to determine whether they need to cover any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of their pupils. Many primary schools already choose to teach some aspects of sex education and will continue to do so, although it is not a requirement..."

"It is important that the transition phase before moving to secondary school supports pupils' ongoing emotional and physical development effectively. The Department continues to recommend therefore that all primary schools should have a sex education programme tailored to the age and the physical and emotional maturity of the pupils. It should ensure that both boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings and – drawing on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the national curriculum for science - how a baby is conceived and born."

Defining Relationship Education and Sex Education

Within this policy, as in the DfE guidance, Relationships Education is defined as teaching about the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and adults.

Sex Education is defined as teaching children how human reproduction occurs, including how a baby is conceived. This draws on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the national curriculum for science. For the purposes of this policy, we have identified specifically any non-statutory Sex Education that falls outside of Science and those related elements (the physical changes associated with puberty) within statutory Health Education.

Rationale and Ethos

RSHE is lifelong learning about personal, physical, moral and emotional development set within the context of clear values about the understanding of the importance of healthy, respectful and loving relationships.



UN Rights Respecting Article 2 (non-discrimination)

At Vernon Park, RSHE is underpinned by the ethos and values of our school. Our vision is to create a safe, caring, kind, aspirational and stimulating environment in which all members of the school community learn and grow in confidence, knowledge and skills. Today's children and young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives seamlessly both on, and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. We believe the curriculum is relevant and appropriate for the challenges and contexts of 21st century life.

Roles and Responsibilities

RSHE forms part of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education curriculum in our school. The RSHE programme is led by the PSHE subject lead with the support of the Senior Leadership Team and governors and delivered by teachers across the school. Teaching staff receive training in the delivery of the RSE curriculum through dedicated staff meetings led by the PSHE lead.

As a school we are aware that the primary responsibility for providing children's RSHE lies with parents and carers. We recognise the need to work with parents and carers to ensure a shared understanding of RSHE and to deliver an effective programme that safeguards our pupils. The learning we deliver in school is designed to complement learning at home – not replace.

All children at Vernon Park receive a broad and balanced RSHE curriculum, regardless of their gender, ability or cultural origin. Teaching is adapted to consider all individual children's differing abilities and learning styles. All elements of our RSHE programme will be delivered in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner as part of our regular weekly timetabled PSHE education programme. Teachers will plan and deliver work in a variety of ways, in order to meet the needs of individual pupils with SEN or learning differences. We will focus on activities that increase a pupil's assertiveness, communication and relationship skills, their self-esteem and understanding.

Some classes at Vernon Park are structured in mixed year-group classes. Leaders and teachers will ensure that children continue to follow the PSHE Association RSHE content for their age (i.e. Year 5 pupils will not learn Y6 content until they reach that year group). There is however, some overlap in curriculum content. Where this occurs, teachers will deliver lessons to mixed age classes, not single year groups i.e. when exploring managing friendships and emotions.

RSHE is delivered predominantly by class teachers in mixed gender groups, other than when it is deemed more appropriate for topics to be covered in single sex groups. This will be decided by the class teacher after discussion with the subject lead. Occasionally, appropriate and suitably experienced and/or knowledgeable visitors from outside school may be invited to contribute to the delivery of RSHE in school, for example the school nurse. All visitors will be familiar with and understand the school's RSHE policy and be expected to work within it.

An overview of our Health and Relationships Education programme of study is included within Appendix B of this policy for reference.

The RSHE Curriculum

Creating a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment Article 28: Right to Education /Article 29: Goals of Education

At Vernon Park, we use resources from the PSHE Association supported by their recommended resources from a number of sources. We have selected these schemes in consultation with our Local Authority advisor,



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staff and governors, as we feel they fulfil the needs of our pupils as well as meeting our obligations to provide statutory Relationships and Health Education.

As is required by the new statutory guidance, parents have also been consulted on the relevant content within the policy and were provided with an opportunity to view the resources and meet with staff and the Local Authority advisor. We believe that this process ensures that the curriculum we provide for our pupils is reflective of the requirements placed upon us and also of the needs of our school community.

Statutory Relationships Education

A fundamental part of our PSHE/Relationships Education programme of study is to learn the characteristics of positive relationships. Considering the age, maturity and needs of pupils, children will be taught:

- the different types of relationships they might have e.g. with family members, friends, and other adults
- the importance of healthy and respectful relationships to wellbeing
- to understand what constitutes a healthy relationship, in person and online
- how to set and observe appropriate boundaries in relationships
- how to recognise when a situation is unsafe
- strategies for dealing with situations that they find uncomfortable or that are unsafe such as experiencing peer pressure
- where children can access sources of help and advice.
- to value themselves and others
- to feel confident when talking, listening, and thinking about feelings and relationships
- to be able to name parts of the body and describe how their bodies work
- to be prepared for puberty
- to understand the consequences of their actions and behave responsibly within relationships
- about different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help.
- to understand the role the media plays in forming stereotypes and attitudes

Families of many forms provide a nurturing environment for children. (Families can include for example, single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures.) Care will always be taken to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances and needs, to reflect sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them; e.g. looked after children or young carers.



Online relationships

- That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not.
- That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous.
- The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them.
- How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met.
- How information and data is shared and used online.

Being safe

- What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context).
- About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.
- That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact.
- How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know.
- How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult.
- How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard.
- How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so.
- Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources.

The link to the Revised Statutory guidance is below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6970e7e67e827090d02d42e0/Relationships_education_relationships_and_sex_education_RSE_and_health_education_for_intro_1_September_2026_.pdf



Non-Statutory Sex Education

At Vernon Park, we believe children should understand the facts about human reproduction in the context of healthy, respectful and loving relationships before they leave primary school so that we are safeguarding our pupils. We therefore provide some non-statutory sex education beyond what is required of the science curriculum, covering how human reproduction and conception occurs.

Following consultation with staff, governors and representatives from the PSHE Association, we have identified non-statutory lessons in the Year 6 PSHE Association scheme of work we will deliver in the Spring term.

The Role of Parents and Carers

We recognise that parents and carers are the primary providers of RSHE for their children. Our RSHE curriculum is designed to support and complement this. We aim to build a positive and supportive relationship with parents and carers through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this we will:

- Inform parents about the school's RSHE policy and practice
- Provide opportunities to view lesson plans and resources used in the RSHE programme
- Answer any questions that parents may have about RSE for their child;
- Take seriously any issues or concerns that parents raise
- Maintain a 'lending library' containing age-appropriate books for families and children to support talk in this curriculum area

The Parental Right of Withdrawal

We believe that all of the content within our school's PSHE curriculum, including RSHE, is of the utmost importance and relevance to all pupils. However, parents have the legal right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all non-statutory sex education other than that which is part of the National Curriculum for Science.

We will inform parents of the right to withdraw by letter in the last part of Autumn Term in advance of non-statutory sex education lessons being taught. Parents and carers who wish to exercise their right to withdraw their child from non-statutory sex education must talk with the class teacher or the head teacher who will explore any concerns and discuss resources being used.

If parents still wish to withdraw their child from non-statutory sex education lessons, this request will be recorded, and suitable alternative arrangements made for pupils during relevant lessons. The issue of withdrawal will be handled as sensitively as possible. Parents and carers should also understand that the decision to remove their child from these lessons means that they themselves will assume responsibility for talking to their children about any related sex education themes covered outside of National Curriculum Science.

There is no parental right of withdrawal from Relationships Education or Health Education content within the school curriculum, or from any statutory sex education that forms part of the National Curriculum for Science. These are statutory requirements which the DfE mandates schools to teach; please see the statutory document if further information is required.



Teaching and Learning Strategies

We aim to provide an environment and atmosphere for RSHE where pupils feel safe, relaxed, unintimidated, and focused; and where they have confidence and trust in the knowledge, ability and skills of staff in school. This ensures that both pupils and staff feel fully confident in engaging in discussions around potentially sensitive topics and themes. To provide clarity and create a safe learning environment, at the beginning of each session, a set of ground rules will be agreed by the class alongside their teacher.

As a minimum, ground rules /are likely to include the following basic guidelines:

- Listen politely to each other
- Everyone gets a turn - if they want one
- Respect everybody's contribution
- No personal information - no names
- No personal questions
- No making fun
- Using 'distancing' techniques such as role play, case studies, videos etc. to depersonalise sensitive issues
- Emphasising to children that any voluntary sharing of information should be anonymous (for example, "someone I know..." rather than "I" or naming names)

In each year group, lessons will recap on the content of previous years as a reminder and to allow for children to "catch up" if they were not present for the previous year's lessons.

Managing Difficult Questions

During both formal and informal PSHE/RSHE sessions, pupils are encouraged to ask questions. Any questions from pupils are answered according to the age and maturity of the pupil concerned, and if the teacher delivering the session deems it appropriate to answer. We recognise that children in younger year groups may ask questions that cannot be answered without reference to content from older year groups. Should this occur, we will respond by telling them that they will learn about that when they are older.

Should personal questions be asked of either children or staff, children will be reminded that the ground rules for RSHE prohibit personal questions. Although staff may draw on their personal experiences to answer certain questions, for example around menstruation, this should always be depersonalised and discussed in third person rather than first person.

Teaching staff will endeavour to answer all questions as openly as possible but if faced with a question they do not feel comfortable answering within the classroom, or that is not age-appropriate (or within the school's RSHE policy), provision may be made to address the individual child/young person's requirements. The school believes that individual teachers must use their professional skill and discretion in this area and refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they are concerned about any question from a safeguarding perspective.



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If a teacher does not know the answer to a question or if a question is felt to be inappropriate, this should be acknowledged and, if considered necessary, this may be followed up outside of the classroom environment with individual pupils.

We will inform parents about difficult questions children have asked who have ultimate responsibility in talking to their children about sensitive matters. We will also encourage parents to talk with school if they have any questions or queries, and if they would like advice on how to better support their child and continue learning outside of the classroom.

Recording and Assessment

Children will have the opportunity to reflect on their learning within lessons and at the end of each unit. In addition to the children's self-assessment, teachers will assess through informal methods, such as observations and class or group discussions. Observations may have a particular focus; e.g. children's listening skills, empathy etc. Quizzes may be used before and after a unit of work to aid assessment. Teachers will also assess PSHE / RSHE lessons following the school's assessment policy commenting at the end of a lesson on which children have met, not met or exceeded the learning objectives. Elements of RSHE that occur in the science curriculum will be assessed through recorded work, pupil conversations and subject leader moderation activities.

Resources

The PSHE Association provide comprehensive planning and resources, which is recommended by the Local Authority. Leaders in school have reviewed the resources to ensure they are relevant and engaging to children whilst meeting all statutory requirements of PSHE and RSHE.

Staff will be unable to share and discuss with children any resources not recommended by the agreed curriculum to ensure a consistent approach across year groups in phases at all times.

Vernon Park has a small 'lending library' with books suitable for different age groups support children and families when talking about puberty, identify and growing up.

Safeguarding / Confidentiality

In providing children with an understanding of healthy relationships and appropriate boundaries, we consider RSHE to be a fundamental part of our school's approach to safeguarding.

Teachers are aware that effective RSHE, which brings an understanding of what is and what is not appropriate in a relationship, can lead to a disclosure of a child protection issue. Teachers will take these matters seriously and speak to the child away from the class as a matter of priority. Teachers will draw their concerns to the attention of the headteacher and deputy head, the designated safeguarding leads and child protection officer within the school. The headteacher will then deal with the matter in consultation with health care professionals and families.

We occasionally engage the expertise of other appropriate external partners to work with us to provide advice and support to children with regard to RSHE and Health Education. Such visits should be arranged through the PSHE Lead and with the approval of senior leaders. These sessions are in addition to, and intended to complement, our existing RSHE provision. Where external partners are involved, teachers will have discussed and shared the planning and content of the sessions with visitors in advance. A class teacher will always be present and responsible for classroom management. Visitors supporting the delivery of RSHE will follow the agreed ground rules and the protocols set out above regarding any safeguarding or child protection concerns.



Equality and Diversity

Entitlement and Equality of Opportunity Article 14: Freedom of Thought, Belief and Religion

At Vernon Park, we seek to recognise and embrace the diverse nature of our community. We aim to value and celebrate religious, ethnic and cultural diversity as part of modern Britain. We will:

- ensure freedom from all forms of bullying including homophobic, biphobia and transphobic bullying as is our duty within the Equalities Act (2010) through a zero-tolerance approach within all our policies and practice
- explore different cultural beliefs and values and encourage activities that challenge stereotypes and discrimination and present children with accurate information based on the law
- use a range of teaching materials and resources that reflect the diversity of our community and encourage a sense of inclusiveness. Teachers will support an anti-racist curriculum that demonstrates equality across our school

We do not use RSHE as a means of promoting any form of sexual orientation.

Monitoring and Review

Our aim is to provide RSHE that is relevant and tailored to meet the needs of our pupils, depending on their age and stage of personal development. For this reason, we regularly review the RSHE curriculum to evaluate its effectiveness and will inform parents of any revisions to the school policy or curriculum as required.

Teachers will continually reflect on the effectiveness of our PSHE provision, and the PSHE subject lead will gather staff views through regular Staff Voice feedback. Pupil Voice exercises will also be used to inform reviews and updates to planning, resources and activities.

The governors will monitor our RSHE policy on a regular basis and will report their findings and recommendations to the full governing body, as necessary, if the policy needs modification. The governors will consider any feedback from parents about the RSHE programme and makes a record of all such comments. Governors require the headteacher to keep a written record, giving details of the content and delivery of the RSHE programme that we teach in our school.

Staff Support and Training

Vernon Park believes in the importance of appropriate staff training to enable staff to deliver effective RSHE. The PSHE lead will access courses or INSET opportunities to assist staff involved in the delivery of RSHE in accordance with the School Improvement Plan.

This policy links to the following school policies:

- Safeguarding
- Anti-Bullying
- Behaviour
- SEND



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- Equality and Diversity
- E-Safety
- PSHE
- RE
- Science
- Teaching and Learning

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Summer 2026

To be reviewed September 2027

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Appendix

Teaching Strategies used when delivering RSHE



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Ground Rules – help to create a safe environment for both teacher and pupil. A basic template for ground rules is provided for staff to use as a starting point. These should be discussed, added to if necessary and agreed with each class before RSHE lessons commence.

Distancing techniques – help to avoid embarrassment and protect privacy. Role play, case studies with invented characters, videos etc can help children to discuss issues in a depersonalised, safe environment.

Dealing with questions: Having a set of ground rules provides boundaries over what is appropriate and not appropriate and about how to respond to unexpected, embarrassing questions or comments from pupils in a whole-class situation. Where a topic is sensitive or potentially embarrassing, anonymous question boxes are a useful technique. Children's questions are written anonymously on paper. The following guidelines should be applied when responding to questions:

- clarify that personal questions should not be asked
- clarify that pupils should not give out personal information in class but speak to someone they trust after the lesson, e.g. school nurse, teacher, pastoral staff
- have a class anonymous question box or 'ask-it basket' available in the classroom to allow children to ask questions about potentially sensitive or embarrassing topics
- The teacher should consider whether a question is appropriate before reading it out
- If a question is very explicit; seems too old for a pupil; or inappropriate for a whole class session, explain that the question isn't something that needs to be known at this age and move on
- If a question is of a personal nature, remind the pupil of the ground rule: 'no personal questions'.
- If a teacher or member of staff does not know or is unsure of an answer, they will say so and explain that they will get back to the pupil later (and try to specify when).
- Colleagues or the PSHE lead can always be consulted for support. It may be appropriate to liaise with parents/carers.
- Lengthy or complicated responses are not usually necessary. A simple and concrete piece of information offers clarity and may avoid confusion, for example, "At the moment we are looking at 'X', in secondary school you will look at 'Y' in more detail."
- Place within the context of the school's RSHE curriculum. If the subject matter of a question does not fall within the primary RSHE curriculum it should not be answered.
- If questions cause safeguarding or child protection concerns, follow the school's child protection procedures.

Discussions



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Discussion and reflection should be a part of the RSHE lessons. Active learning ensures opportunities for considering beliefs and attitudes and for developing greater understanding. Watching a video or reading written material is used only to support or to complement wider structured activities.

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