Cheshire Academies Trust

Inspiring hearts and minds

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

Next review date: Autumn 2027 (or sooner should statutory guidance change)

Introduction
All members of the Cheshire Academies Trust (CAT) community are treated with the respect and sensitivity implicit within the practice of a code of equal opportunities and inclusion. Equality of treatment and opportunity operate regardless of background, ability, gender, religion, disability or ethnicity.

"To embrace the challenges of creating a happy and successful adult life, pupils need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships to build their self-efficacy." Relationships, Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSHE) and Health Education 2019

Aims and Objectives
The aim of Relationships and Sex Education is to provide children with age appropriate information, explore attitudes and values and develop skills in order to empower them to make positive decisions about their health-related behaviours. This should take place with consideration for the qualities of relationships within families.

The aims of Relationship and Sex Education (RSHE) are:

- To provide the knowledge and information to which all pupils are entitled;
- To clarify/reinforce existing knowledge;
- To raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence, especially in their relationships with others;
- To help pupils understand changes associated with growing up, develop healthy attitudes towards relationships and understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy
- To help pupils develop skills (language, decision making, choice, assertiveness) and make the most of their abilities;
- To provide the confidence to be participating members of society and to value themselves and others;
- To help gain access to information and support;
- To develop skills for a healthier safer lifestyle;
- To develop and use communication skills and assertiveness skills to cope with the influences of their peers and the media;
- To respect and care for their bodies;
- To be prepared for puberty and adulthood.

Statutory Requirements
As primary academies within Cheshire Academies Trust (CAT), our schools must provide relationships education to all pupils as per section 34 of the Children and Social work act 2017. CAT schools do not have to follow the National Curriculum but are expected to offer all pupils a curriculum that is similar to the National Curriculum including requirements to teach science which would include the elements of sex education contained in the science curriculum. In teaching RSHE, CAT schools are required by their funding agreements to have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996. The Department for Education published updated statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSHE) and Health Education in July 2025, replacing the 2019 guidance. Schools must reflect this updated guidance in their curriculum and policy from 1 September 2026, and may choose to adopt it earlier. Health Education is compulsory for all pupils in CAT schools under the same 2019 Regulations, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, and this policy sets out how CAT schools meet that duty alongside Relationships and Sex Education.

Definition
RSHE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity.
RSHE involves a combination of sharing information, and exploring issues and values.
RSHE is not about the promotion of sexual activity. At primary school level we teach about respectful, positive relationships, the importance of self-respect and key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body.
Health Education is about giving pupils the knowledge they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing. This includes physical health and fitness, mental wellbeing, healthy eating, drugs, alcohol and tobacco, health and prevention, basic first aid, the changing adolescent body, and personal safety, including recognising and reducing risk both online and offline.

Equality
CAT schools comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149), when teaching RSHE. Topics are taught in a way that does not discriminate against pupils or amount to harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic, and pupils are taught to treat people with respect regardless of difference. In line with the July 2025 statutory guidance, CAT schools address misogyny, gender stereotypes and violence against women and girls (VAWG) from the earliest appropriate point in Relationships Education, building the foundations for healthy, respectful relationships between boys and girls.

Safeguarding

RSHE forms an important part of the school's safeguarding curriculum. Through age-appropriate teaching, pupils learn how to recognise abuse, exploitation, grooming, coercive behaviour, unhealthy relationships and unsafe situations, and how to seek help from trusted adults and support services. This complements the Trust's safeguarding curriculum under the current edition of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), and staff must refer any safeguarding concerns arising from RSHE lessons to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead in line with that guidance.

Planning the Curriculum
Every child is entitled to receive RSHE regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, age, culture, disability, sexuality, language specials needs, disadvantage or if they are Looked After Children. It is our intention all children have the opportunity to experience a programme of RSHE at a level which is appropriate for their age and physical development, with differentiated provision if required.

Each CAT school is responsible for developing and maintaining its own age-appropriate Scheme of Work for RSHE, ensuring that it reflects the needs of its pupils, complies with current statutory guidance and is consistent with this Trust policy.

Where a CAT primary school chooses to teach sex education beyond the science curriculum, in line with Department for Education recommendations this is delivered in Year 5 and/or Year 6, tailored to the age and physical and emotional maturity of pupils.

In CAT schools, Relationships and Sex Education reflects the values of the RSHE framework. RSHE is taught by class, RSHE is not taught in isolation but is embedded across the curriculum , particularly through PHSE and Science. RSHE is delivered through a carefully sequenced curriculum that builds knowledge, skills and understanding progressively throughout a pupil's time in school. Learning is planned to be age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate, enabling pupils to revisit key themes at increasing levels of complexity as they mature. Teachers use their professional judgement to adapt learning to the needs, maturity and prior knowledge of pupils while maintaining the intended learning outcomes for each year group.
Where external providers contribute to RSHE delivery, teachers remain responsible for planning, quality assurance, safeguarding and ensuring lessons reflect the school's policy and statutory guidance

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Parents' right to withdraw

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from relationships and health education. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the sex education classes. The school will always write to parents before this content is delivered. Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the Headteacher. Alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education. There is no right to withdraw a child from Relationships Education or from Health Education; the right to request withdrawal applies only to sex education taught beyond the science curriculum.
Before granting a request for withdrawal, it is good practice for the Headteacher to discuss the request with the parent, and the child where appropriate, in order to understand the reasons for the request and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum; a record of this discussion and its outcome will be kept.

Access to Curriculum Materials
Parents are entitled to see all curriculum materials used to teach RSHE, on request. A representative sample of resources will be made available to parents in advance of teaching, and the school will not enter into any arrangement with an external provider that restricts parents' ability to view materials used in lessons. This policy is published on the school website and a free copy will be provided to anyone who requests one.

Pupils
Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSHE and, when discussing issues related to RSHE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

Managing Difficult Questions
Where a pupil asks a question that goes beyond the content covered by the school, or that relates to sex education content from which they have been withdrawn, staff will respond in a way that supports the child. This may include signposting the pupil to a parent or another trusted adult, or to relevant support services, and staff will seek guidance from the Designated Safeguarding Lead where appropriate.

Assessment and Recording
Monitoring is the responsibility of the curriculum lead for Relationships and Sex Education and the Safeguarding Local Governor. Each academy will assess the effectiveness of the aims, content and methods in promoting students' learning through lesson observation, the sampling of teachers' planning, questionnaires to teachers and children and feedback from parents. The effectiveness of the RSHE programme will be evaluated by assessing children's learning and implementing change if required. The same monitoring and evaluation arrangements apply to the Health Education elements of this policy.

Special Educational Needs and Inclusion

The school will ensure pupils with SEND receive Relationships Education and RSHE that is accessible, age-appropriate and tailored where necessary to meet individual needs while maintaining high expectations.

Training
Staff are trained on the delivery of RSHE as part of their induction and it is included in our continuing professional development calendar. The Headteacher will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nuRSHEs or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSHE. Training also covers the Health Education elements of this policy, including mental wellbeing, personal safety and drugs, alcohol and tobacco (including vaping), so that staff are confident delivering the full RSHE curriculum.

Roles and Responsibilities
The role of the RSHE Subject Leader in each academy is undertaken in line with school policy. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing the school's RSHE policy and ensuring that performance management reviews take place.

Role of the Curriculum Leader
The role of the RSHE subject leader includes:

- highlight areas for the development of RSHE within the School Development Plan and be aware of the annual budget available for this;
- co-ordinate the purchase and maintenance of equipment;
- keep up to date with developments;
- ensure that this policy is successfully implemented throughout the school;
- review and update this policy periodically.

Role of the Trust Board

The Trust Board is responsible for the approval of the RSHE policy.

Role of the Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness and impact of the policy in practice. In fulfilling this role, the Trust Board and Local Governing Body will ensure that: curriculum content and teaching materials remain aligned with current statutory guidance; teaching is accessible to all pupils with SEND; all pupils are supported to make progress against the intended learning outcomes; and clear information is provided to parents on subject content, teaching materials, external providers, and the right to request withdrawal from sex education.

Scheme of work

Families and people who care for me
Pupils should know:

- that families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability
- the characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives
- that others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care
- that stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up
- that marriage and civil partnerships represent a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong
- how to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed
- that civil partnerships carry similar legal recognition and protections to marriage
- Marriage in England and Wales is available to both opposite sex and same sex couples. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 extended marriage to same sex couples in England and Wales. The ceremony through which a couple get married may be civil or religious.

Caring friendships
Pupils should know:

- how important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends
- the characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties
- that healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded
- that most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right
- how to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed

Respectful relationships
Pupils should know:

- the importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs
- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships
- the conventions of courtesy and manners
- the importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness

- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority
- 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
- what a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive
- the importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults
- how to communicate effectively and manage conflict with kindness and respect, including how to be assertive and express their own needs and boundaries
- the difference between being assertive and being controlling, and the difference between being kind to other people and neglecting their own needs

Online relationships

Pupils should know:

- 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
- that there is a minimum age for joining social media sites (currently 13), which is intended to protect children from inappropriate content and unsafe contact with older users
- that any picture, video or message shared online may be circulated further, and that once this has happened there is no way of controlling or deleting it everywhere
- about online financial harms, including gaming and video-game monetisation, scams and fraud, and the reasons for age restrictions on gambling websites
- about privacy, consent and personal data online, including the importance of location settings
- strategies for resisting pressure to share information or images online

Being safe

Pupils should know:

- 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, for example family, school or other sources

Personal Safety

Pupils should know:

- how to recognise and reduce risk in everyday environments, including around roads, water, railways and fire
- basic rules for staying safe when travelling, including on the way to and from school
- who to tell and how to get help quickly in an emergency

Mental Wellbeing

Pupils should know:

- that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health
- how to recognise and talk about a normal range of emotions, and that everyone experiences change and loss, including bereavement, differently
- where and how to seek support, including who to speak to in school if they are worried about their own or someone else's wellbeing

Physical Health and Fitness
Pupils should know:
- the characteristics and benefits of an active lifestyle, including regular exercise
- the risks associated with an inactive lifestyle
- how and when to seek support if they are worried about their health

Healthy Eating
Pupils should know:
- what constitutes a healthy, balanced diet
- the characteristics of a poor diet and the associated risks

Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco
Pupils should know:
- the facts about legal and illegal harmful substances, including smoking, alcohol and vaping, and the risks of nicotine addiction

Health and Prevention
Pupils should know:
- how to recognise early signs of illness and the importance of good personal hygiene, including handwashing
- the importance of sufficient sleep, dental health and safe exposure to the sun
- the facts about immunisation and vaccination

Basic First Aid
Pupils should know:
- how to make a clear and efficient call to emergency services when necessary
- basic first aid for common injuries

Changing Adolescent Body
Pupils should know:
- key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, including menstrual wellbeing
- the correct names for the main external body parts

Policy Review

This policy was updated to reflect the Department for Education's statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSHE) and Health Education (July 2025), which schools are required to implement from 1 September 2026.
Each school within Cheshire Academies Trust is responsible for maintaining an appropriate RSHE Scheme of Work in line with this policy and current statutory requirements.

Where significant changes to curriculum content, resources or delivery are proposed, the Headteacher will consult parents, governors, staff and pupils as appropriate.
This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Trust's policy review schedule or sooner should statutory guidance change.