



Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Primary Relationships Sex and Health Education

Policy lead	K Griffiths
Approved by	Local Governing Body
Policy date	September 2026
Next review	September 2027
Programme	Life to the Full
Status	Updated for statutory guidance effective 1 September 2026

Our Mission

"We are proud of our school as a place of learning, prayer and happiness. Hand in hand with God, Our Lady and St. Joseph, we promise to work hard and be kind to one another so that we can grow stronger together in our faith."

1 Policy purpose

This policy explains how St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy provides Relationships Education, primary Sex Education and Health Education. It identifies what is statutory, what the school chooses to teach, how learning is sequenced and safeguarded, how parents are engaged, and the arrangements for withdrawal, inclusion, monitoring and review.

The policy reflects the revised Department for Education statutory guidance that came into effect on 1 September 2026. It should be read alongside the detailed curriculum overview and the school's safeguarding, behaviour, SEND, equality, online safety, science and religious education policies.

2 Catholic vision and rationale

At St Joseph's, relationships education is rooted in the belief that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and has inherent dignity. Our curriculum helps pupils understand that love, friendship, family life, responsibility, respect, forgiveness, service and care for others are central to human flourishing.

We teach relationships, health and age-appropriate sex education within a positive Catholic understanding of the human person. Teaching is faithful to the doctrine and ethos of the Catholic Church while meeting statutory requirements, respecting the legal rights of pupils and families, and preparing children for life in modern Britain.

We recognise parents and carers as the first educators of their children. The school works in partnership with families and provides clear information about the curriculum, resources and any sensitive content before it is taught.

3 Statutory framework

This policy has regard to:

- The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education Regulations 2019.
- Department for Education statutory guidance on Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education, revised July 2025 and effective from 1 September 2026.
- Sections 80A of the Education Act 2002 and 403 of the Education Act 1996.
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- The Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- The national curriculum for science, computing and physical education.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- The SEND Code of Practice and the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework.
- The Catholic Education Service Model Catholic RSE Curriculum and diocesan guidance.

4 Definitions and curriculum status

Relationships Education is compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education. It teaches the knowledge and skills needed for positive relationships, families, friendships, respect, boundaries, safety and seeking help.

Health Education is compulsory in academies and includes mental wellbeing, physical health and fitness, healthy eating, drugs and harmful substances, health and prevention, basic first aid, the changing adolescent body and other age-appropriate health content.

Primary Sex Education is not compulsory beyond content in the national curriculum for science. The Department for Education recommends that primary schools provide age-appropriate sex education in Year 5 and/or Year 6 so pupils are prepared for changes and understand conception and birth before transition to secondary school. St Joseph's provides this limited, carefully sequenced content within its Catholic programme.

Parents may not withdraw a child from Relationships Education, Health Education or national curriculum science, including science content relating to puberty and human reproduction. The right to request withdrawal applies only to sex education taught outside the science curriculum.

5 Aims

The curriculum aims to help pupils:

- recognise their dignity and the dignity of every other person;
- form healthy, respectful and caring relationships with family, friends, peers and adults;
- understand that families take different forms and that children must never be stigmatised because of their family circumstances;
- develop self-respect, empathy, kindness, honesty, resilience and responsibility;
- understand appropriate boundaries, privacy, permission and that their body belongs to them;
- recognise unsafe or harmful behaviour, including bullying, abuse and online harm, and know how to seek help;
- use correct, age-appropriate vocabulary for parts of the body and changes during puberty;
- understand physical and emotional development and prepare confidently for puberty;
- make informed, safe and responsible choices, including online; and
- understand relationships and human life within the school's Catholic ethos and the legal context of modern Britain.

6 Curriculum organisation

The school uses Life to the Full as its principal programme. This is informed by the Catholic Education Service Model Catholic RSE Curriculum. Leaders map the programme against the statutory Relationships and Health Education outcomes and relevant national curriculum science content to ensure full, coherent coverage.

Teaching is integrated appropriately through:

- Religious Education and Catholic life;
- Life to the Full and PSHE lessons;
- national curriculum science;
- computing and online safety;
- physical education and health education; and
- the wider pastoral, safeguarding and behaviour curriculum.

Class teachers normally teach the programme because they know their pupils and can provide continuity. Specialist visitors or external agencies may contribute where this adds clear value, but the school remains responsible for all content and delivery.

7 Content and progression

7.1 Relationships Education

By the end of primary education, pupils will have been taught age-appropriate knowledge and skills relating to:

- families and people who care for them, including the features of safe and supportive family life;
- caring friendships, including trust, honesty, loyalty, kindness, boundaries and managing conflict;
- respectful relationships, courtesy, self-respect, difference, stereotypes, bullying and bystander responsibility;
- online safety and awareness, including privacy, harmful content or contact, pressure to share information or images, and how to report concerns;
- being safe, including personal boundaries, appropriate and inappropriate contact, secrets, recognising risk or abuse, and seeking help repeatedly until heard; and
- correct vocabulary and confidence to communicate concerns to trusted adults.

7.2 Health Education

Health Education is taught progressively and includes:

- mental wellbeing, emotions, resilience, self-worth and seeking support;
- internet safety and the effects of online content and excessive screen time;
- physical health, fitness, sleep, healthy eating and personal hygiene;
- the safe use of medicines and age-appropriate awareness of tobacco, vaping, alcohol and other harmful substances;
- health prevention, sun safety, dental health, immunisation and when to seek medical help;
- basic first aid appropriate to primary pupils; and
- the changing adolescent body, including physical and emotional changes during puberty and menstrual wellbeing.

7.3 Primary Sex Education

In upper Key Stage 2, the school provides a limited programme of sex education beyond national curriculum science. Content is taught factually, sensitively and within the Catholic understanding of loving, committed family relationships. It focuses on how a baby is conceived and develops, pregnancy and birth, using age-appropriate language and without unnecessary detail.

Parents will be told in advance when this content will be taught, will be able to view the teaching materials and may request withdrawal from those lessons that are not part of statutory Relationships Education, Health Education or national curriculum science.

7.4 Online safety and emerging risks

Online safety is woven through the curriculum. Pupils learn that the same standards of respect apply online and offline; that people may misrepresent themselves; that personal information and location settings require care; that content may be copied or circulated; and how to report harmful content, contact or pressure. Teaching is responsive to emerging risks and is carefully adapted to pupils' age, maturity and lived experience without alarming children or normalising harmful behaviour.

8 Teaching principles

Teaching will be:

- positive, factual and rooted in dignity, respect and safety;
- carefully sequenced so that knowledge and protective skills are taught before pupils are likely to need them;
- age and stage appropriate, taking account of the needs of the cohort and the local context;
- participative, using agreed ground rules and opportunities for safe discussion;
- clear about the distinction between facts, law, faith teaching and matters on which people hold different views;
- free from stereotypes, discrimination, harassment and language that could normalise harmful behaviour; and
- delivered by staff who are trained, confident and alert to safeguarding concerns and possible disclosures.

9 Safe learning environment and questions

Teachers establish ground rules that protect privacy and respectful discussion. Pupils are not asked to share personal experiences publicly. Staff must not promise absolute confidentiality and will explain that concerns about safety must be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Pupils may ask questions verbally or through an anonymous question box. Teachers will answer genuine questions honestly and in an age-appropriate way when they fall within the planned curriculum. A teacher may defer a question, speak to the pupil privately, consult a senior leader or invite parents to continue the conversation where the question is beyond the planned primary curriculum or requires individual support.

Questions will never be used to invite explicit discussion or personal disclosure. Where a question suggests that a pupil may be at risk, safeguarding procedures will be followed immediately.

10 Safeguarding and disclosures

RSE is an important part of safeguarding because it gives pupils language, knowledge and confidence to recognise unsafe behaviour and seek help. Teaching will make clear that abuse is never the fault of the child and that pupils should keep asking for help until they are heard.

Any disclosure or concern will be managed in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the school's safeguarding and child protection policy. Staff will record and report concerns promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Visitors must understand the school's safeguarding and confidentiality arrangements before working with pupils.

11 Equality and respect for difference

The school complies with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. RSE will not discriminate against pupils or amount to harassment. Teaching will promote respect for every person and challenge prejudice, discriminatory language, stereotypes and bullying.

Pupils learn that families may include married parents, single parents, adoptive parents, foster carers, kinship carers, grandparents and same-sex parents. These family structures are presented positively and sensitively so that no child is stigmatised because of their home circumstances.

Teaching about protected characteristics is factual, age appropriate and consistent with the law and the Catholic character of the school. The relevant legal term is gender reassignment. Where issues relating to biological sex or gender reassignment arise, staff will distinguish facts and law from contested views, avoid reinforcing stereotypes, and treat every pupil with dignity and respect.

12 Inclusion and adaptive teaching

The curriculum is ambitious and accessible for every pupil, including pupils with SEND, pupils with English as an Additional Language, disadvantaged pupils, looked-after and previously looked-after children and pupils with differing levels of maturity or prior knowledge.

Adaptive approaches may include:

- pre-teaching and revisiting key vocabulary;
- visual prompts, social stories, concrete examples and clear routines;
- shorter steps, additional processing time and opportunities for repetition;
- carefully chosen groupings and targeted adult support;
- alternative ways to communicate understanding;
- advance preparation for content that may cause anxiety or relate to a pupil's lived experience; and
- additional depth and challenge where appropriate.

Where a pupil has an EHCP or SEND Support Plan, teaching will take account of relevant outcomes, reasonable adjustments and professional advice. Adaptation will not remove essential safeguarding knowledge. Leaders will consider how pupils who are vulnerable, have experienced trauma or have communication needs can learn protective content safely and effectively.

13 Parents carers and access to materials

Parents and carers are the primary educators of their children. The school will engage them proactively when developing or reviewing this policy and will explain the importance of effective RSE for children's wellbeing and safety.

The school will:

- publish this policy on the school website and provide a free copy on request;
- provide clear information about what is taught and when;
- notify parents before sensitive or primary sex education content is taught;
- make all curriculum materials available to parents to view on request, subject only to lawful copyright arrangements that may require viewing in school;
- explain the purpose and context of resources rather than presenting materials without guidance;
- offer opportunities for questions, workshops or consultation where appropriate; and
- inform parents in advance if emerging needs require a significant departure from the published curriculum.

Parents with a concern should contact the class teacher or RSE Lead in the first instance. The school will listen respectfully, explain the statutory and faith context, and seek constructive partnership while retaining responsibility for a safe, lawful and balanced curriculum.

14 Right to request withdrawal from sex education

Parents have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all primary sex education taught outside the national curriculum for science. They do not have a right to withdraw their child from Relationships Education, Health Education or science content, including science topics relating to puberty or human reproduction.

A request should be made in writing to the Headteacher. Before withdrawal, the Headteacher will offer to discuss the request, clarify which lessons are and are not subject to withdrawal, explain the purpose of the teaching and consider any concerns. A written record will be kept. In a primary school, a request to withdraw from non-science sex education will be granted automatically.

The school will notify relevant staff discreetly and provide appropriate, purposeful education during the withdrawn lesson. Teachers will handle later questions sensitively and will not provide the withdrawn content directly to the pupil without parental agreement, unless a safeguarding duty requires action.

15 Resources and external visitors

Leaders will check teaching materials for accuracy, age and stage suitability, accessibility, safeguarding value, balance and consistency with this policy and the Catholic ethos. Staff will not use resources that promote harmful products, stereotype pupils, present contested views as facts or expose children to unsuitable content.

Any external visitor or organisation must be approved in advance. The school will check credentials, proposed content, lesson plans and materials. A member of school staff will remain present, normal safeguarding procedures will apply and parents will be able to view the materials. External providers support, but do not replace, the school's responsibility for the curriculum.

16 Assessment monitoring and evaluation

Assessment in RSE is formative and focuses on pupils' knowledge, understanding, vocabulary, decision-making and protective skills. It does not assess personal beliefs, family circumstances or private experiences. Teachers use discussion, observation, age-appropriate tasks and pupil reflection to identify secure learning and misconceptions.

The RSE Lead will monitor:

- curriculum plans and statutory coverage;
- the quality and sequencing of teaching;
- samples of learning and pupil voice;
- access and adaptation for pupils with SEND;
- staff confidence and training needs;
- feedback from parents, pupils and staff; and
- whether safeguarding, behaviour or local issues indicate a need to adjust the curriculum.

Findings will be reported to the Headteacher and governing body. Evaluation will inform curriculum development, staff training and the annual review of this policy.

17 Roles and responsibilities

17.1 Local Governing Body

- approves the policy following appropriate parental engagement and consultation;
- ensures statutory content is provided and the Catholic character of the school is maintained;
- ensures the policy is published and parents can access curriculum information and materials;
- monitors implementation, inclusion, safeguarding and staff training; and
- ensures withdrawal arrangements comply with the law and statutory guidance.

17.2 Headteacher

- has overall responsibility for implementation and compliance;
- ensures a suitable curriculum, staffing, training and safeguarding arrangements;
- responds to requests for withdrawal and ensures appropriate alternative education;
- liaises with the governing body, academy trust, diocese, parents and relevant agencies; and
- ensures concerns and complaints are handled appropriately.

17.3 RSE Lead

- maps statutory coverage and coordinates Life to the Full across the school;
- supports staff with planning, resources, subject knowledge and sensitive questions;
- works with the DSL, SENCO, Science Lead, RE Lead and PSHE Lead;
- checks external visitors and materials with senior leaders;

- monitors teaching and pupil learning; and
- leads engagement with parents and recommends policy or curriculum updates.

17.4 All staff

All staff model respectful relationships and contribute to pupils' safety and wellbeing. Staff teaching RSE must follow the agreed curriculum and this policy, use approved resources, make reasonable adjustments, maintain appropriate boundaries and report safeguarding concerns immediately. A member of staff who has a professional concern about teaching particular content should discuss this promptly with the Headteacher; pupils' entitlement to the curriculum must still be secured.

18 Consultation complaints and review

The school will invite views from parents and carers when this policy is developed or materially revised and will take account of pupil voice, staff expertise, governor scrutiny and diocesan guidance. The Local Governing Body approves the final policy.

Concerns should be raised with the class teacher, RSE Lead or Headteacher. Formal complaints will be considered under the school's complaints procedure. Safeguarding concerns should be reported immediately through the school's safeguarding arrangements.

The policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if statutory guidance, safeguarding risks, diocesan expectations or the needs of pupils change.

19 Linked policies

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; SEND Policy and SEN Information Report; Equality Information and Objectives; Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policies; Online Safety and Computing Policies; Science Policy; Religious Education Policy; PSHE Policy; Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy; and Complaints Procedure.

20 Current references

Department for Education: Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education statutory guidance, effective 1 September 2026

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

Department for Education: Keeping Children Safe in Education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Department for Education: National curriculum in England science programmes of study

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-science-programmes-of-study>