

RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION AND RELATIONSHIPS & SEX EDUCATION

Policy Review										
• Person(s) Responsible for this Policy			• Deputy Head (Pastoral)							
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Staff are reminded that they may view any of the School’s other policies at any time online (https://withamhallschool.sharepoint.com/sites/StaffNonAcademic/Shared Documents/Policies & Handbooks/); a hard copy may be requested from the School Office.										
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Introduction

This policy takes account of the DFE guidance document ‘Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education’ updated September 2026. This statutory guidance plus references and links for its supporting policies, can be found [here](#):

The Department for Education's statutory guidance sets out the purpose of Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) as enabling children and young people to develop the knowledge and skills needed to make informed and ethical decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships. High-quality, evidence-based RSHE helps prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life and supports their moral, social, mental and physical development. Effective teaching promotes positive characteristics such as resilience, self-respect, honesty, kindness and trustworthiness, whilst helping pupils to recognise risks, identify when things are not right and know how to seek help and support.

In primary education, Relationships Education provides the building blocks of positive, respectful and healthy relationships. It focuses on family, friendships, respect for others, personal boundaries and safety, both online and offline. Alongside Health Education, it equips children with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to keep themselves safe, develop positive wellbeing and build confidence as they grow.

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education. At Witham Hall, these subjects are delivered through our Learning for Life programme and are regularly reviewed to ensure that the curriculum remains age-appropriate, relevant and responsive to the needs, experiences and development of our pupils.

Consistent with current DfE guidance, Witham Hall recognises that children and young people increasingly experience relationships, communication and social interaction across both online and offline environments. Our curriculum therefore supports pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and judgement needed to build positive relationships, make safe and responsible decisions, and critically evaluate information and influences in a digital world. Pupils learn about respectful behaviour, personal boundaries, consent, online safety, privacy, and how to recognise and respond to harmful situations, including those that may arise through technology and social media.

The school further recognises the importance of helping pupils understand online risks, including inappropriate content, harmful contact, misinformation and emerging technologies. Through both the

Learning for Life and Computing curricula, pupils are taught how to stay safe online, protect their personal information, seek support when needed and act responsibly and respectfully in all forms of communication and relationships

Definitions

Relationship Education (taught up to Year 6) provides the foundations for positive, respectful and safe relationships. Through age-appropriate learning, pupils develop an understanding of family life, friendships, respect for others, personal boundaries and staying safe, both online and offline. Children learn the importance of kindness, honesty, respect and consideration for others, alongside the skills needed to recognise healthy relationships, manage conflict, seek help when needed and keep themselves and others safe

Relationship and Sex Education (taught from Year 7 up) builds on the knowledge and skills developed through primary Relationships Education. It aims to equip young people with the understanding they need to develop healthy, respectful and nurturing relationships of all kinds. Pupils learn about the characteristics of positive relationships, including trust, mutual respect, kindness, boundaries, consent and effective communication. They are also taught how to recognise unhealthy, harmful or abusive behaviours and where to seek support. For pupils of an older age group (more commonly above that taught at Witham), the curriculum includes age-appropriate teaching about intimate and sexual relationships, sexual health and reproductive health, enabling them to make informed, responsible and ethical decisions, understand their rights and responsibilities, and develop the knowledge and confidence to stay safe and healthy throughout their lives.

Rationale & Aims of Relationships and Relationships and Sex Education

The School teaches Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education with the following aims:

- To recognise that parents are the key people in teaching their children about sex, relationships and growing up. We aim to work in partnership with parents and pupils.
- To develop an understanding by all pupils of the characteristics of healthy relationships, acceptable behaviours and the right of everyone to equal treatment. These will provide the building blocks of developing pupils that treat each other well and go on to be respectful and kind adults.
- To recognise that Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education are a part of a wider social, personal, spiritual and moral education process and should be taught in a way that proactively fosters values, attitudes and behaviours in line with the Equalities Act 2010.
- To encourage pupils and teachers to share and respect each other's views.

- To recognise that the wider community has much to offer and we aim to work in partnership with health professionals or other professional advisers.
- To contribute to pupils' personal development and wider education by helping them consider and understand the physical and emotional changes that take place during adolescence in a caring and supportive manner.
- To place sexual relationships within the contexts of age of consent and of loving relationships.
- To enable the pupils to build self-esteem so that they can have the confidence to sustain relationships and also resist inappropriate advances.
- To address our pastoral care responsibility as a boarding school in terms of sympathetically dealing with children's adolescent physical and emotional changes.
- To create a progressive programme containing knowledge (*e.g.* of reproduction as part of the CE Science syllabus), understanding of values and communication skills. This is incorporated into the curriculum for all years within the School. Relationships and Sex Education falls under the umbrella of Science and Learning for Life.
- To teach pupils to have respect for their own bodies, to learn about their responsibilities to others, and be aware of the consequences of sexual activity.

Relationships Education and Relationship and Sex Education in Learning for Life Lessons

Introduction:

From Early Years to Year 8 the School uses schemes and resources from the Cambridgeshire Personal Development Programme, EC Resources, and The PSHE Association, along with professional visiting speakers from 'The Conversation Stamford' who lead workshops for Years 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 to enhance the Learning for Life curriculum further.

Conversation Stamford Workshops:

Term	Year Group	Content
Michaelmas	Year 7	Cyberwisdom
Trinity	Year 4	Growing up & Puberty
Trinity	Year 5	Mental Health
Trinity	Year 6	Relationships & Sex Education
Trinity	Year 8	Healthy Relationships

Lessons will be underpinned by a wider, deliberate cultivation and practice of resilience and character, such as the development of belief in achieving goals and persevering with tasks, as well as development of positive personal attributes. There are many ways in which Witham supports the development of personal attributes in the wider curriculum, co-curriculum and school ethos.

From the EYFS up until the end of Year 8 Relationships Education creates a time for pupils to be taught about positive emotional and mental health, including how friendships can support mental wellbeing.

At Witham, we are committed to continual reflection on the needs of our pupils. The published government guidance into 'The Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges' (June 2021) highlighted the need for schools, parents and other institutions to ensure pupils understood what behaviours and language is acceptable or unacceptable (both online and offline), and where they can go for help and support if needed. The recommendations from this review are interwoven into the Learning for Life curriculum, into the Computing curriculum, as well as into other avenues such as the Pastoral Hub, assemblies and church services. In addition, these changes are reflected in the School's *Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy*, *Anti-Bullying Policy*, and *Behaviour Policy*.

Pre-Prep

A Full curriculum overview can be found in the School's *Learning for Life Policy* and Academic Handbook.

Early Years to Year 3:

- In this part of the School the focus is very much on understanding the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships and relationships. Teachers talk explicitly about the features of healthy friendships, family relationships and other relationships which young children are likely to encounter. An appreciation of these in a range of contexts enable pupils to form a strong early understanding of the features of relationships that are likely to lead to happiness and security. This helps them recognise less positive relationships when they encounter them.
- Pupils are taught about what a relationship is, what friendship is, what family means and who the people are who can support them.
- From the outset pupils are taught how to take turns, how to treat each other with kindness, consideration and respect, the importance of honesty and truthfulness, permission seeking and giving, and the concept of personal privacy.
- Establishing personal space and boundaries, showing respect and understanding the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact – these are the forerunners of teaching about consent, which takes place at secondary.
- Respect for others should be taught in an age-appropriate way, such as in terms of understanding one's own and others' boundaries in play, in negotiations about space, toys, books, resources and so on.

Prep

Years 4-6

- In this part of the School teaching builds on the building blocks set up in the Pre-Prep.
- The principles of positive relationships are discussed in regards to an increasing number of contexts, particularly online, especially as many children will already be using the internet. Online safety and appropriate behaviour is addressed in a relevant way.
- Teaching about different kinds of families requires sensitivity and an appreciation that 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 is taken to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances. Sensitivity is shown towards children that may have a different structure of support around them than that which is considered 'typical'.

- Relationships Education also creates an opportunity to enable pupils to be taught about positive emotional and mental wellbeing, including how friendships can support mental wellbeing.
- There is an encouragement of the development and practice of resilience and other attributes, including self-belief, perseverance, working towards long-term rewards and continuing despite setbacks. Alongside understanding the importance of self-respect and self-worth, pupils develop personal attributes including honesty, integrity, courage, humility, kindness, generosity, trustworthiness and a sense of justice.
- How our bodies grow and change (puberty, including periods and wet dreams) will be taught as part of the Health Education strand to Learning for Life in Year 4. Further information on puberty and reproduction will be taught in Year 6 in conjunction with the Science curriculum.

Years 7&8

- At the top end of the School, pupils continue to focus on developing a growing ability to form strong and positive relationships with others. Cultivating character traits and positive personal attributes in pupils remains at the forefront.
- Pupils should be taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way, so that the pupils understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens.
- Pupils should be taught to recognise the possible dangers presented by the use of social media and understand that sexting is illegal for young people under the age of consent.
- All pupils should feel that the content of lessons is relevant to them and their developing sexuality. An introduction to sexual orientation and gender identity should be explored at a timely point and in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner. There should be an equal opportunity to acknowledge the features of stable and healthy same sex relationships. This will be integrated appropriately into the Relationships and Sex Education programme, rather than addressed separately or in only one lesson.
- To recognise the importance of being in a stable, meaningful relationship before intercourse.
- To develop moral values that will guide their judgements, decisions and behaviour. To explore the role of faith in relationships.
- Discuss the arguments for delaying sexual activity. Problem solving scenarios prompting discussion and decision-making about likely real life situations.
- The topic of developing intimate relationships and resisting pressure to have sex (and not applying pressure) is explored through a 'Healthy Relationships' workshop at the end of Year 8 and supplemented by work in Learning for Life lessons.

Delivery

In the Pre-Prep, Relationship Education is delivered as part of the Learning for Life curriculum by Class Teachers, and can also be addressed in 'circle time' and assemblies depending on the needs of pupils.

In the Prep department, Learning for Life Lessons, including Relationship Education and Relationships and Sex Education are delivered by the Head of Learning for Life/Deputy Head Pastoral (Years 4-6) and appropriately trained Form Tutors/Pastoral Staff (Years 7-8), in conjunction with Science Teachers, Head of Computing, Form Tutors and outside agencies as appropriate.

General Guidance for Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff

- Teachers must always remember that children will respond to the subject of Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education in varying ways. Teaching methods need to take account of the developmental differences of pupils.
- Teachers and all those contributing to Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education will work to the framework set out in this policy.
- In Years 7&8, Relationships and Sex Education will often address aspects of relationships and sex education in an integrated way within a single topic.
- A set of ground rules will help teachers create a safe environment in which neither they themselves nor the pupils feel embarrassed or anxious. For example:
 - no-one will have to answer a personal question;
 - no-one will be forced to take part in a discussion; and
 - only the scientific names for body parts will be used.
- Meanings of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way.
- Questions should be answered simply but frankly having set clear parameters of what is appropriate and inappropriate in a whole class setting. By suitable questioning, it is possible to discover just how much information pupils are ready to understand or absorb.
- If a question is too explicit, is inappropriate, or raises concerns about sexual abuse, the teacher should acknowledge it and attend to it later under the direction of the DSL.
- Teaching will reflect the law (including the Equality Act 2010) as it applies to relationships, so that young people clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the wider legal implications of decisions they may make.
- Under the provisions of the Equality Act, teachers will not discriminate against pupils because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment or sexual orientation (known as “protected characteristics”).
- Staff will be mindful to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage and also of the SEND Code of Practice when planning. This may include smaller group sessions or additional support within the Learning Support Department.
- Staff are alert to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled. Staff have an important role to play in modelling positive behaviours and School policies support all pupils.
- School is aware and makes clear, as appropriate, that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable and will never be tolerated. Any report is taken very seriously.

Boarding & Pastoral

Boarding and pastoral staff encourage and promote the appropriate nature of interaction with, and respect for, pupils of both genders. While being respectful of the needs of young developing adolescent individuals, who may begin to interact more and nurture feelings for other pupils, members of staff are mindful of their responsibilities of care, and will intervene if it is deemed necessary to ensure interactions are appropriate.

Matrons and Senior Boarding Staff

Matrons and Senior Boarding Staff have an additional role in terms of addressing matters of personal and feminine hygiene, plus being aware of normal changes for both boys and girls relating

to puberty. Personal hygiene is a general issue, particularly pertinent to adolescents, which is actively promoted as part of the boarding routine. Feminine hygiene and wet dreams are dealt with on a more private one-to-one basis, relying on the good relationships Matrons and Senior Boarding Staff establish with the boarders, and resultant knowledge of them, to allow timely advice and support.

In the course of carrying out their normal duties, Matrons and Senior Boarding Staff may also be questioned by pupils on matters of Sex Education. Where these questions are perceived as genuine, Matrons and Senior Boarding Staff have adopted an open response to these questions, at a level deemed commensurate to the age of the individual. Any matters of great concern are referred to the Heads of Boarding or Deputy Head Pastoral. If there is a possible safeguarding concern, the School's normal procedures should be followed and the matter referred to the DSL.

PE & Games Staff

With girls frequently involved in away fixtures and tours, Games and PE staff are aware that they may need to deal with the event of a girl experiencing a period away from School (perhaps even her first period) and may need to make adjustments and maintain the confidentiality of that pupil.

Confidentiality

Staff will behave professionally, thoughtfully, sensitively and responsibly when conducting Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education lessons. They will exercise due confidentiality towards personal matters that are either discussed or overheard and will instruct class members to do likewise. It is important that the children are confident that they can learn the facts and receive confidential one-to-one support while learning about Relationships and Sex Education with their peer group. During discussion of sensitive subject matter, pupils will have the opportunity to ask questions anonymously if they wish and they will be signposted to other opportunities to ask questions beyond the normal lesson time.

However, staff are not in a position to guarantee absolute confidentiality and must have a good working knowledge of the School's *Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy* and ensure that pupils understand what might happen to some personal information they might disclose in the classroom if it is a safeguarding concern. The School has a legal duty to safeguard the welfare of children and young people. If a child makes a reference to being involved in, or likely to be involved in, sexual activity then the teacher will take the matter seriously and deal with it as a matter of Child Protection and inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Teachers will respond in a similar way if a child indicates that they may have been a victim of abuse. In these circumstances the teacher will talk to the child as a matter of urgency. Teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality to pupils. If the teacher has concerns, he/she will draw their concerns to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will then deal with the matter in accordance with the School's *Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy*.

The Role of Parents and Guardians

The School is aware that the primary role in children's Relationship and Sex Education lies with their parents. The School wishes to build a positive and supporting relationship with the parents through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective the School:

- informs parents about the school's Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education policy and practice;
- answers any questions that parents may have about the Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education of their child;
- takes seriously any issue that parents raise about this policy or the arrangements for Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education in the School;
- informs parents by letter when the topics on the main stages of the life cycle are being covered in depth;
- gives parents the option 'to opt out' (*i.e.* their child would be withdrawn from attending Sex Education lessons in the school environment should they so wish); and
- provides parents with a forum for discussion and information on teaching in this area

The Right to Withdraw

Relationship and Health Education is compulsory for all primary and secondary age pupils so parents cannot withdraw or 'opt out' because it is important that all children receive this content, covering topics such as friendships and staying safe. In addition, the Science curriculum includes content on human development, including reproduction, from which there is no right to withdraw.

Sex Education for primary age children (at Witham this occurs in Year 6) – parents do have the right to withdraw their child from some or all of the Sex Education lessons, but we recommend that they speak to the Head of Learning for Life/Deputy Head Pastoral and the Headmaster before deciding to help them understand what will be taught and when. At primary level (Reception-year 6), the Headmaster must grant permission for a pupil to opt out of Sex Education lesson.

Sex Education for secondary age children (Year 7 up) – whilst this is compulsory for all secondary age children, parents do still have the right to withdraw their child from some or all lessons on Sex Education. We recommend that they follow the same procedure as above so that we can discuss the best way to support their child in gaining reliable knowledge on the matter.

Role of the Heads of Science/Learning for Life

It is the responsibility of the Head of Science and of the Deputy Head Pastoral/Head of Learning for Life to ensure that parents are notified in advance of any teaching of Relationships and Sex Education (Years 7&8) and Relationships Education (when this also includes teaching about puberty – Years 4-6).

It is also their responsibility to ensure that members undertaking the teaching Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education are given sufficient training.

Full details of the Science curriculum can be found in the Academic Handbook.

Monitoring and Assessment:

A governor with specific responsibilities for Relationship and Sex Education was appointed in Michaelmas 2021.

- assessment will be used to identify where pupils need additional support or intervention
- learning will not be assessed formally but instead by observation of pupils' responses using "I can...." or "I understand....." phrases, key question tasks, and self-evaluation quizzes
- outcomes can be assessed through written or presentation style assignments
- for younger pupils, assessment can be in a multitude of more kinaesthetic style tasks or role play
- decisions regarding exactly the right time to introduce topics will be made based on knowledge of specific year groups and individuals and their needs and maturity, as well as in consultation with pupils and parents as appropriate
- when required, SMT may conduct a whole-school RSE audit to assess modifications that may be beneficial

The SMT will review this policy every two years, or if there are significant changes more often. Any significant changes will be presented to the Governing Body for approval.