

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education Policy

Policy Code:	SW7
Policy Start Date:	September 2026
Policy Review Date:	September 2027

Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- HR8B Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy for Students and Parents/Carers
- ICT3 Online Safety (Students) Policy
- SW4 Student Behaviour & Discipline Policy
- SW5 Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- SW6 Anti-Bullying Policy
- SW9 Parental Communications & Complaints Policy
- SW17 Safeguarding Adults Policy
- TL3 Curriculum, Teaching & Assessment Policy
- TL6 Special Educational Needs & Disability Policy

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1 Policy Statement

1.1 The Priory Federation of Academies Trust (The Trust) believes that Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education should:

- be an integral part of the lifelong learning process, beginning in early childhood and continuing into adult life;
- be an entitlement for all young people;
- be set within a context that supports family commitment and love, respect and affection, knowledge and openness;
- encourage pupils and teachers to share and respect each other's views;
- generate an atmosphere where questions and discussion on sexual matters can take place without any stigma or embarrassment;
- recognise that parents/carers are the key people in teaching their children about sex, relationships and growing up, and that staff should work in partnership with parents/carers and pupils, consulting them about the content of programmes; and
- recognise the contribution made by health professionals, social workers, peer educators and other mentors or advisers.

1.2 Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE), and health education, is lifelong learning about physical, sexual, moral and emotional development. It applies to all young people in school, irrespective of their sex, ethnicity or ability. It is about understanding the importance of stable and loving relationships that define family life, whether through marriage, or civil or other partnerships. It is about respect, love and care. It involves acquiring information, forming positive beliefs, values and attitudes, and developing skills.

1.3 RSE is also about the teaching of sexual matters and sexual health. This does not mean any encouragement of sexual activity or adoption of a particular stance towards sexuality. The RSE curriculum is designed to enable pupils to make their own informed and appropriate choices as they become young adults, and to develop responsible attitudes to sexual activity and the development of their own stable, loving relationships.

1.4 The Trust is aware of the need to be mindful of, and respectful to a wide variety of faith and cultural beliefs across its academies and will make every attempt to be appropriately sensitive. Equally, it is essential that children and young people still have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy, and understand their rights as individuals. The Trust believes that its pupils deserve the right to honest, clear, and impartial

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scientific and factual information to help better form their own beliefs and values, free from bias, judgement, or subjective personal beliefs of those who teach them.

- 1.5 All teaching will be sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content.
- 1.6 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all nursery, primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, as well as Priory Apprenticeships and Lincolnshire ITT.
- 1.7 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
- 1.8 For the purpose of this policy, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education will be referred to collectively as RSHE throughout, unless specified otherwise.

2 Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation

- 2.1 The Education & Standards Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Director of Safeguarding.
- 2.2 This policy is approved by the Education & Standards Committee before being ratified at the next available Trust Board meeting. Approval and ratification is minuted, with records kept by the Clerk to Trustees.
- 2.3 Leaders and Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and ensuring RSHE is provided effectively in each setting. All staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.
- 2.4 Teaching staff are consulted in respect of their training needs and training opportunities will be considered on a regular basis.
- 2.5 Relevant teachers will have training and support to use training strategies for RSHE and health education. These include:
 - establishing ground rules with their pupils;
 - using distancing techniques;
 - knowing how to deal with unexpected questions or comments from pupils;

- using discussion and flexible learning methods and appropriate materials; and
- encouraging reflection.

2.6 Teachers will not:

- give personal advice or counselling on sexual matters (including contraception) to a pupil (either individually or within a group) if a parent/carer has withdrawn that pupil from sex education; or
- give personal contraceptive advice to pupils under 16 for whom sexual intercourse is illegal. In these cases individuals will be referred to the setting's Designated Safeguarding Team for further guidance/support.

3 Aims

- 3.1** To ensure effective provision of RSHE within each academy which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of all pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.
- 3.2** To ensure all stakeholders have the opportunity for consultation on each setting's RSHE programme.
- 3.3** To create a positive culture of open discussion around issues of sexuality and relationships.
- 3.4** Help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy.
- 3.5** The RSHE curriculum will be developed with the following key principles in mind:
- engagement with pupils - an inclusive and well-sequenced RSHE curriculum should be informed by meaningful engagement with pupils to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and engaging;
 - engagement and transparency with parents – academies will engage with parents on the content of RSHE and be transparent with parents about all materials used in RSHE. Parents have a right to request that their children are withdrawn from sex education (please see Section 12 for further information) and academies should ensure parents are aware of sex education content within lessons in advance;
 - positivity - academies should focus on building positive attitudes and skills, promoting healthy norms about relationships, including sexual relationships where relevant, and about health, including mental

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health. Academies should avoid language which might normalise harmful behaviour among young people – for example gendered language which might normalise male violence or stigmatise boys;

- careful sequencing - academies should cover all statutory topics, recognising that young people can start developing healthy behaviour and relationship skills as soon as they start school. Academies should sequence teaching so that pupils are supported and equipped with the knowledge to navigate different experiences in a positive way before they occur, and to prevent harms;
- relevant and responsive - academies should develop the curriculum to be relevant, age and stage appropriate and accessible to pupils in their area, where appropriate working with local partners and other bodies to understand specific local issues and ensure needs are met;
- skilled delivery of participative education - the curriculum should be delivered by staff or, where academies choose to use them, external providers who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to create a safe and supportive environment and to facilitate participative and interactive education which aims to support and not to alarm pupils. Staff should be trained in safeguarding and offering support, recognising the increased possibility of disclosures; and
- whole school approach - the curriculum is best delivered as part of a whole school approach to wellbeing and positive relationships, supported by other Trust policies, including SW4 Student Behaviour and Discipline Policy and SW5 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

4 Definitions

- 4.1 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. It involves a combination of sharing information, and exploring issues and values. RSHE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.
- 4.2 Relationships Education – learning about the physical, social, legal and emotional aspects of human relationships including friendships, intimate, sexual and committed relationships and family life.
- 4.3 Sex Education – learning about the physical, social, legal and emotional aspects of human sexuality and behaviour, including human reproduction. This includes conception and contraception, safer sex, sexually transmitted infections and sexual health.
- 4.4 Health Education – enables pupils to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, to understand the links between physical and

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mental health, to recognise when things are not right in their own health or the health of others, and seek support when needed.

- 4.5 Effective RSHE should equip children and young people with the information, skills and values to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.

5 Statutory Requirements

- 5.1 As a Multi-Academy Trust encompassing Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special academies we must work to the statutory guidance from the Department for Education issued under Section 80A of the Education Act 2002 and section 403 of the Education Act 1996. Relationships Education is compulsory for all primary age pupils, Sex and Relationship Education is compulsory for all secondary age pupils. Academies may choose to teach sex education to primary age pupils as part of their curriculum, but this will be after consultation with parents/carers. Health Education is compulsory in all state-funded schools.
- 5.2 This policy has been developed in line with the DfE guidance *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education*.

6 Curriculum Development

- 6.1 Each academy will develop their curriculum in consultation with staff, pupils and parents/carers. The consultation process will involve the following steps:
1. review – staff within the Trust pull together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance in order to write the curriculum;
 2. staff consultation – all academy staff are given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations;
 3. parent/carer/stakeholder consultation – parents/carers and any interested parties are invited to make any recommendations or ask any questions about the policy and the curriculum; and
 4. pupil consultation – pupils are given the opportunity to say what they want from their RSHE curriculum.

7 Curriculum

- 7.1 Each academy will display their RSHE curriculum on their website. The website page will also inform parents/carers how they can request to view curriculum resources and materials.

- 7.2 Each academy will have a nominated individual who is responsible for the RSHE curriculum and its delivery.
- 7.3 The curriculums are developed in consultation with parents/carers, pupils and staff, taking into account the age, needs and feelings of pupils. Each academy will ensure that their teaching is graduated, sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content.
- 7.4 Each academy's curriculum will be written in line with the statutory requirements set out in the DfE's *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education*

8 Approaches to teaching

- 8.1 RSHE will be delivered through each academy's curriculum plan, and this will normally form part of the the Personal Development Programme.
- 8.2 A variety of teaching and learning styles will be used to give pupils relevant information; to enable moral issues to be explored through discussion; and to acquire appropriate skills. It is natural for caring adults to want to protect children and young people from information, attitudes and lifestyles which they themselves find distasteful. However, it is important to recognise the power and confusion of informal learning from, for example, television, magazines, newspapers, gossip, jokes and the wider community. Teachers can do much to dispel myths, reduce fear and anxiety, clarify understanding and counteract prejudice.
- 8.3 Pupils will normally be taught in mixed ability and mixed sex groups but, if appropriate, some topics may be delivered to single sex groups. The teaching of RSHE will be handled sensitively by the teacher and it will be a matter of common practice that:
- neither teacher nor pupil will be expected or required to answer a personal question;
 - no-one will be forced to take part in a discussion;
 - sensitivity will be shown towards those of particular faith backgrounds; and
 - nothing will be said that could be construed as embarrassing or offensive to other pupils.
- 8.4 Where appropriate, external speakers/organisations will be used to deliver aspects of the RSE and health education curriculum. This information will be published on each academy's curriculum page on their website.

8.5 In the event that a pupil asks a question about a topic which goes beyond any sex education covered by the academy or which relates to sex education from which they have been withdrawn, staff will not be expected to answer the question but will be expected to:

- provide children with a safe space to ask questions by supporting the child and not making them feel judged and/or ashamed for asking the question;
- explain to the child that it is a valid question, but not one that can be dealt with in the classroom;
- signpost the child to speak to their parent or a trusted adult; and/or
- signpost the child to appropriate (and trusted) external support services, for example, Childline and Brook.

In this situation, children should never be dismissed by staff, as this can lead to them seeking answers from inappropriate sources of information.

9 Teaching RSHE to Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

9.1 The Trust will teach RSHE to all pupils, regardless of ability. The Trust recognises that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND. RSHE may be particularly important for such pupils. Teachers and Teaching Assistants will discuss a pupil's individual educational needs and to ensure that they can fully access the programme. Teaching will be sensitive, age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate, differentiated and personalised to meet the specific needs of pupils at different developmental stages. The classroom teacher will ensure that any classroom visitor is made aware of any pupil's individual needs.

9.2 Some pupils with SEND will be more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation than their peers, and others may be confused about what is acceptable public behaviour. The Trust recognises that these pupils will need help to develop skills to reduce the risks of being abused and exploited, and to learn what sorts of behaviour are, and are not, acceptable.

9.3 Where necessary, staff will ensure that content is delivered at the appropriate cognitive level for the child.

10 Assessment & Evaluation

10.1 Teachers assess pupil's work in RSHE both by making informal judgments as they observe them during lessons and by doing formal assessments, which are measured against the specific learning

objectives, set out in the programmes of study. Pupils' understanding is assessed and evaluated at the end of a module.

- 10.2 The delivery of the RSHE curriculum will be monitored through the academy's quality assurance processes.
- 10.3 Pupils are actively involved in evaluating the quality and relevance of the education they have received through reflection, assessment and evaluation activities.
- 10.4 Feedback from staff, pupils and parents/carers will be used in evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of the programme.

11 Working with external agencies

- 11.1 Where appropriate, academies may work with external agencies as this can enhance delivery of these subjects, bringing in specialist knowledge and different ways of engaging with young people.
- 11.2 Each academy is responsible for ensuring that they check the visitor or visiting organisation's credentials and carry out the relevant safeguarding checks, as appropriate. The academy is responsible for ensuring the visitor understands the academy's safeguarding procedures and knows what to do in the event that they have a concern about a child, or a disclosure is made to them.
- 11.3 Each academy must ensure that the content delivered by the visitor fits with their planned programme and their published curriculum. The academy is also responsible for ensuring that the content being delivered is age-appropriate and accessible for the intended audience.

12 Right to withdraw

- 12.1 Parents/Carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.
- 12.2 Before granting any such request, the Headteacher (or nominated member of staff) will discuss the request with parents/carers and, as appropriate, with the child to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. The Headteacher will discuss the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child. This could include any social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly said by the teacher. This process will be documented by the academy.

- 12.3 Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the Headteacher.
- 12.4 If a pupil is withdrawn from sex education, the academy will ensure that appropriate, purposeful education is provided during the period of withdrawal.
- 12.5 Parents/Carers do not have the right to withdraw their child from relationships and health education, nor can they be withdrawn from topics taught as part of the science curriculum, including Science topics related to puberty and sexual reproduction.

Primary-aged children

- 12.6 Where primary academies provide sex education, Headteachers will automatically grant a request to withdraw a child from it, other than content that is taught as part of the Science curriculum.

Secondary-aged children

- 12.7 Parents/Carers have the right to withdraw their children from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE up-to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. At this point, a pupil can choose to opt back into sex education even if the parent has requested withdrawal. For example, if the pupil turns 16 during the autumn term, they can opt back into sex education at any time after the start of the previous autumn term.
- 12.8 Headteachers in secondary can refuse a request in exceptional circumstances, for example, because of safeguarding concerns or a pupil's specific vulnerability.

13 Safeguarding

- 13.1 Effective RSHE could lead to disclosure of a safeguarding issue. If a pupil indicates that they are being, has been or is at risk of being abused, teachers will respond by dealing with it as a matter of child protection and will report it in line with academy procedures. This will be dealt with by the academy's Safeguarding Team. Please see SW5 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for further information.

14 Equal Opportunities

- 14.1 The Trust is required to comply with the relevant requirements of *The Equality Act 2010*.

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- 14.2 The Trust has a responsibility under the *Equality Act 2010* to ensure the best for all pupils at its academies, irrespective of disability, educational needs, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender identity, pregnancy, maternity, religion, or sexual orientation. As a result, RSHE will be sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils and may need to adapt and change over time to reflect the needs of the particular cohort. The Trust may also take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate, to deal with particular disadvantages affecting one group because of a protected characteristic.
- 14.3 The Trust is committed to ensuring that no pupil is discriminated against because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, and/or sexual orientation.
- 14.4 Parents/Carers who have concerns in relation to how the programme is delivered should discuss these with staff in the relevant academy so that the issues can be resolved. Resources used will be checked for racial or gender stereotyping, which will be removed if found.

15 Complaints

- 15.1 If parents/carers have any concerns or complaints over the application or implementation of this policy, they are encouraged to contact the academy to try to resolve any problems through communication and working together with appropriate staff at the academy, in line with the process set out in SW9 Parental Communication and Complaints Policy.

16 Policy Change

- 16.1 This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by the Priory Federation of Academies Trust.