Orion Education

# POLICY

## RELATIONSHIP & SEX EDUCATION - SECONDARY

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| Approval Date | **2025/26 - Summer Term** |
| Review Date | **2028/29 - Summer Term** |
| Owner | Principal |

| Policy Type | | |
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| | | Trust Policy to be adopted in full |
| | ■ | Trust Policy adapted by the Academy |
| | | Academy Policy |

| Approval Body | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Executive |
| | ■ | Trust Board |
| | | Local Advisory Body (LAB) |

## Our Four Critical Questions

**Rationale**

In Orion Education we understand that pupils must be provided with an education that prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life. A key part of this relates to relationships and health education, which must be delivered to every student.

Relationships education focuses on giving pupils the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships, and to build their self-efficacy. Health education focuses on equipping pupils with the knowledge they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing.

We understand our responsibility to deliver a high-quality, age-appropriate and evidence-based relationships, sex and health curriculum for all our pupils. This policy sets out the framework for our relationships, sex and health curriculum, providing clarity on how it is informed, organised and delivered.

Our academies seek to ensure that the Relationships, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum protects, informs and nurtures all pupils. Teaching combines accurate, age-appropriate factual information about relationships, health, and the law with opportunities to explore attitudes and values in a respectful and inclusive environment. This approach enables pupils to develop understanding, build confidence, and make informed, safe, and responsible decisions about relationships, health, and wellbeing.

**Aims**

This policy supports a whole academy approach to RSE within the curriculum, and throughout the life of the Trust and its community. It is consistent with current legislative frameworks and statutory guidance.

The aims of relationships and sex education (RSE) in Orion Education are to:

- Provide a safe framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- Prepare pupils for puberty and support understanding of sexual development and health
- Promote dignity, respect and positive relationships.
- Develop accurate use of vocabulary related to bodies, relationships and health
- Create a culture of openness, respect and responsibility around relationships and sexuality
- Develop pupils' communication skills, confidence, and ability to express needs, boundaries and seek support when required.

**Definition of terms**

For the purpose of this document:

- Members, Trustees and Governors are referred to as Trustees;
- Orion Education is referred to as The Trust and refers to all academies within the Trust;
- Academy refers to any one of the academies within the Trust;
- Staff refers to all staff working at any one of the academies within the Trust;
- Pupils/children refers to all those being educated or on site at any one of the academies within the Trust.

**Statutory Requirements**

As a Multi Academy Trust our secondary academies must provide relationships education to all pupils as per section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum, but we 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 RSE, we are required by our funding agreements to have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

Academies will have regard to the most recent statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education issued by the Department for Education published in 2025 for implementation from September 2026 and have ensured the provision is reviewed and adapted accordingly.

As well as statutory guidance, academies draw upon a wide range of advisory guidance from the Department for Education and other professional bodies such as the PSHE Association and the Programme of Study (KS1-5)

In our Trust, we teach RSE as set out in this policy. This policy is associated with the PSHE Policy.

The policy must also be applied within the framework of other relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010.

**Policy Development**
Our academy policies have all been developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

- Review – a member of staff or working group pulled together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance
- Staff consultation – all academy staff were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations
- Parent/stakeholder consultation – parents and any interested parties were invited to attend a meeting about the policy
- Pupil consultation – we investigated what exactly pupils want from RSE
- Ratification – once amendments were made, the policy was shared with Trustees and ratified

**Principles and Values**
The Trust believes:

- RSE should be an integral part of the lifelong learning process, beginning in early childhood and continuing into adult life.

- RSE is an entitlement for all young people.
- RSE should support and promote family commitment, love, respect and openness.
- RSE should equip pupils with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to develop healthy relationships.
- Pupils should be supported to make informed, safe and responsible decisions in relation to relationships, health and wellbeing.
- RSE should actively promote equality and challenge harmful attitudes, including misogyny, to support healthy and respectful relationships.
- Learning should be age-appropriate and build progressively over time.
- RSE should support the development of communication skills, confidence and the ability to express needs and boundaries.
- RSE should be delivered within a safe, inclusive and respectful environment where pupils feel confident to ask questions, explore issues and engage in discussion.

**What is Relationships and Sex Education?**
As a Trust we value diversity and foster mutual respect, modelling and inspiring attributes in pupils such as respect, courtesy and honesty. These underpin and inform the relationships we have between pupils and between pupils and adults.

- RSE 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.
- RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

RSE is taught within the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum and some content may also be delivered through the Religious Education (Beliefs and Values), Physical Education (PE) and Computing and IT curriculums.

In the secondary phase RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds including:

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online relationships and media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

This learning is developed in increasing depth to include age-appropriate content such as consent, personal safety, online harms and emerging risks, including the influence of harmful online content and digital behaviours, equality in relationships, and the development of positive attitudes and behaviours. Pupils are also taught how to access appropriate support, advice and health services when needed.

These areas of learning are also taught within the context of family life taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures) along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example: looked after children or young carers).

Physical health and mental wellbeing education forms part of the wider RSHE curriculum. This is primarily delivered through the PSHE curriculum, with support from subjects such as Physical Education and Science. Content includes mental wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, online safety, substance misuse, health and prevention, and the changing adolescent body. Further details can be found in the Trust PSHE Policy and curriculum maps on the academy websites.

**Curriculum**

Our RSHE curriculum is developed in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, taking into account the age, needs and feelings of our pupils. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner, so they are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

For a full breakdown of the RSE curriculum across KS3-5 please see the academy website.

**Delivery of RSE**

The RSE curriculum is implemented through a variety of mechanisms:

- Assemblies
- Timetabled lessons (KS3)
- Drop down Days (KS4)
- Delivery via external agencies such as Brook, Breck Foundation.
- School Nurse visits
- Cross-curricular coverage through the taught curriculum, including Science and ICT.

Delivery of the RSHE content will be made accessible to all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Teachers will liaise with staff, SENDCo and parents when necessary to adapt the content and resources to a level suitable for individual SEND pupils.
RSE is delivered by a range of staff, including tutors, teachers and where appropriate, external specialists. Academies ensure that staff are appropriately trained and supported to respond to pupils' needs, including managing sensitive questions and safeguarding concerns, and that delivery is consistent with the Trust's expectations and statutory guidance.

**Inclusion**

- **Ethnic and Cultural Groups** - We intend our policy to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic groups.
- **Pupils with Special Needs** - We will ensure that all young people receive relationships and sex education, and we will offer provision appropriate to the particular needs of all our students, taking specialist advice where necessary.

- **Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation** - We aim to deal sensitively and honestly with issues of sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support. Young people, whatever their developing sexuality need to feel that relationships and sex education is relevant to them.

**Roles and responsibilities**

- **Trustees** - will approve the RSE policy and hold the Principals to account for its implementation.
- **Staff** - are responsible for:
    1. Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
    2. Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
    3. Monitoring progress
    4. Responding to the needs of individual pupils
    5. Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the [non-statutory/non-science] components of RSE

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSE are encouraged to discuss this with the Principal.

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

**Parents' right to withdraw**

In the secondary phase, parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex education within RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the academy will arrange this. There is no right of opt out from the statutory relationship's education components.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in **Appendix 1** of this policy and be addressed to the PSHE lead office@orionspires.org.uk Before granting any such request the member of the SLT and PSHE lead with responsibility for RSE will discuss the request with parents and, as appropriate, with the child to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. The Academy will document this process to ensure a record is kept.

Alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education and they will be supervised but alternative teacher supervision, one to one teaching and/or admission to another teaching group may not be practical, possible or feasible.

**Confidentiality, Controversial and Sensitive Issues**

Teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality and are required to report all disclosures. In a case where a teacher learns from an under 16-year-old that they are having or contemplating sexual intercourse:

- This matter will be reported immediately to the academy's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) via the online reporting system (CPOMS).
- The young person will be strongly encouraged wherever possible, to talk to parent/carer and if necessary to seek medical advice.

- The young person will be properly advised about contraception, including precise information about where young people can access contraception and advice services.
- The DSL will give due regard to satisfying themselves that no young person of any age is involved in a relationship that is potentially coercive or exploitative. Where this is thought to be the case, child protection measures will be taken.

In any case where child protection procedures are followed, the teacher will ensure that the young person understands that they cannot ever promise confidentiality.

Health professionals in academies are bound by their codes of conduct in a one-to-one situation with an individual student, but in a classroom situation they must follow the academy's confidentiality policy.

**Training**

Staff who teach RSE are trained in the delivery of RSE as part of their professional qualification training and/or induction and it is included in our continuing professional development calendar.

- The Principal and PSHE lead will also invite visitors from outside the academy.
- The Principals are responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently and for supporting with requests to withdraw pupils from RSE.
- The PSHE Lead is responsible for monitoring the delivery of RSE, organising and delivering staff training, ensuring the needs of all pupils are met and monitoring progress for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory sex education.
- Nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE.

**Impact**

The impact of RSE is reflected in pupils' knowledge, understanding and ability to apply learning in real-life contexts, including making informed, safe and responsible decisions about relationships, health and wellbeing.

Assessment in RSE focuses on pupils' learning and understanding, measured against lesson objectives and curriculum outcomes, and does not assess personal choices or behaviours. Teachers use a range of formative strategies, including questioning, discussion, reflection activities and knowledge checks, to assess understanding and identify next steps. Where appropriate, summative assessment may take place at the end of units, and opportunities for pupil self-assessment are provided to support reflection on learning.

The delivery of RSE is monitored by members of the Senior Leadership Team, the PSHE lead and those responsible for quality of education. This includes lesson observations, learning walks, work scrutiny and pupil voice activities to ensure that provision is consistent, effective and in line with

Trust expectations. Findings from monitoring activities are used to inform ongoing improvement and ensure that RSE provision remains responsive to pupils' needs.

**Policy Circulation**

- This Policy will be published on the Trust's website and Orion Secondary academy websites.
- This Policy will be circulated to every Member, Trustee, Governor and Senior Employee by sending an email to the link on the Trust's website on an annual basis and when each new Member, Trustee, Governor and Senior Employee joins the Trust.
- The Trustees, in consultation with the Local Advisory Bodies, are responsible for overseeing, reviewing and organising the revision of the Relationships and Sex Education Policy

**Appendix 1: Parent form: withdrawal from the non-statutory components of sex education within RSHE**

| **TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Name of child | | Class/Form | |
| Name of parent | | Date | |
| Reason for withdrawing from the non-statutory components of sex education within RSE | | | |

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| Any other information you would like the academy to consider |
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| Parent signature | |

| **TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ACADEMY** | |
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| Agreed actions from discussion with parents | |