

Bridge School Malvern



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Relationships & Sex Education (RSE) Policy

Context

Helping pupils build and maintain positive relationships is central to the pastoral care role. The social, moral and cultural development of pupils is ongoing through all aspects of school life. RSE is embedded in the school's aim to cultivate children's individual resilience and character. The development of traits such as honesty, integrity, courage, humility, kindness, generosity, trustworthiness, tolerance and a sense of justice, is underpinned by an understanding of the importance of self-respect and self-worth. These values are central to the school ethos and are embedded in every aspect of school life.

The aim of RSE at the Bridge

The aim of RSE at the school is to enable pupils to be safe, happy and prepared for life beyond school. The RSE curriculum complements and is supported by, the school's wider policies on behaviour, equality and diversity, bullying and safeguarding. This is also the case for teaching about health and mental health, which reflects the school's wider education on healthy lifestyles.

The aim is to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. In particular:

- It will enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship.
- It will also cover contraception, developing intimate relationships and resisting pressure to have sex and not applying pressure.

- It will teach what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships. This will help pupils understand the positive effects that good relationships have on their mental wellbeing, identify when relationships are not right and understand how such situations can be managed.

The Bridge does not encourage early sexual experimentation. It will teach young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. It enables young people to mature, build their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity. Effective RSE supports people, throughout life, to develop safe, fulfilling and healthy sexual relationships, at the appropriate time.

Knowledge about safer sex and sexual health remains important to ensure that young people are equipped to make safe, informed and healthy choices as they progress through adult life. The LA Sexual Health Team makes regular visits to the school and their visits form part of the delivery of this aspect of RSE. Parents will be informed of opportunities for their child to see the Sexual Health Nurse.

Material will be delivered in a non-judgemental, factual way and will allow scope for young people to ask questions in a safe environment. Coaches will use distancing techniques, set ground rules to help manage sensitive discussion and use question boxes to allow pupils to raise issues anonymously.

Alongside being taught about intimate relationships, pupils will also be taught about family relationships, friendships and other kinds of relationships that are an equally important part of becoming a successful and happy adult. This teaching will build upon the RSE curriculum from primary schools.

The aim is for pupils to understand the benefits of healthy relationships to their mental wellbeing and self-respect. Through gaining the knowledge of what a healthy relationship is like, they can be empowered to identify when relationships are unhealthy. They will be taught that unhealthy relationships can have a lasting, negative impact on mental wellbeing.

Pupils will be taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way. All pupils should feel that the content is relevant to them and their developing sexuality. Sexual orientation and gender identity will be explored in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner. When teaching about these topics, it is recognised that young people may be discovering or understanding their sexual orientation or gender identity.

It is recognised that there will be a range of opinions regarding RSE. The basic principle must be that the applicable law will be taught in a factual way so that pupils are clear on their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Faith and culture

The school also provides opportunities for pupils to explore faith, or other perspectives, on some of these issues in other subjects such as social or religious studies. Pupils will be well informed about the full range of perspectives, supported to form their own opinions and beliefs, and to recognise the importance of respecting the right of others to make their own decisions and hold their own beliefs.

As appropriate for the age and development of pupils, the physical and emotional damage caused by female genital mutilation (FGM) will also be raised. Pupils will be

taught where to find support for themselves or for peers, and that it is a criminal offence to perform or assist in the performance of FGM or fail to protect a person for whom you are responsible from FGM. As well as addressing this in the context of the law, pupils may also need support to recognise when relationships (including family relationships) are unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of neglect, emotional, sexual and physical abuse and violence, including honour-based violence and forced marriage) and strategies to manage this or access support for oneself or others at risk.

The law

Key aspects of the law relating to sex which will be taught include the age of consent, what consent is and is not, the definitions and recognition of rape, sexual assault and harassment, and choices permitted by the law around pregnancy.

Grooming, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour, also be addressed sensitively and clearly.

Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

The RSE curriculum is made available to all students. Given the SEND profile of students at the Bridge, and the wide range of needs presented, the delivery of the RSE curriculum will be delivered sensitively.

The RSE curriculum at the Bridge is divided into three levels (KS2/KS3/KS4). However, the delivery of material is not age-based. In consultation with parents, delivery is based on maturity and need. Pupils will be individually assessed for their ability to access material and a personalised approach adopted as required.

The prevalence of children at the school with social, emotional and mental health needs, and moderate learning difficulties, is taken into account when designing and delivering RSE material. These children are significantly more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

LAC and children with trauma

In delivering this aspect of RSE, it is especially important to be mindful that some pupils may have experienced unhealthy or unsafe relationships at home or socially. Staff have an important role to manage disclosures professionally and sensitively and provide appropriate support for pupils who may be dealing with the ongoing trauma of experiences and events. The Bridge aims at all times to be a place of consistency and safety where pupils can easily speak to trusted adults.

Children who are LAC require extra support and an individual approach to issues around family and relationships.

Online safety

Pupils will be taught the rules and principles for keeping safe online. This includes how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how and to whom to report issues.

Pupils will be informed of how data is generated, collected, shared and used online, for example, how personal data is captured on social media or understanding the way that businesses may exploit the data available to them.

Some pupils are also exposed to harmful behaviours online, and via other forms of media, which may normalise violent sexual behaviours. Focus on healthy relationships and broader Relationships Education can help young people understand acceptable behaviours in relationships.

Safeguarding, reports of abuse and confidentiality

Children are made aware of how to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This will include processes when they have a concern about a friend or peer.

This means only involving those who need to be involved, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Sue Hornby, Headteacher) or Deputy DSL (Kath Barclay, Deputy Headteacher) and children's social care. Staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.

Sexist, racist and homophobic talk will be addressed immediately and lessons suspended if necessary. Such issues will be openly discussed and the message that sexist, racist and homophobic talk and attitudes are not acceptable at the Bridge and are against the law. Such incidents are recorded as cause for concerns and parents informed so that the same message can be reinforced at home.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ+)

Core values of the school are equality and respect. Intolerance of sexual orientation and transgender is never acceptable. The RSE curriculum, and the culture of the school, stresses the importance of everyone being of equal worth and value and that respect is an essential part of all relationships. Furthermore, sexual orientation and gender reassignment are protected characteristics and intolerance is a breach of the Equality act 2010.

At the point where it is considered appropriate to teach pupils about LGBTQ+, this content be fully integrated into the RSE curriculum and not delivered as a standalone unit or lesson.

There will be an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same sex relationships. This will be integrated appropriately into the RSE programme, rather than addressed separately or in only one lesson.

Working with parents

Parents are the first teachers of their children. They have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships. The school will ensure parents are aware of what will be taught and when. Parents are made aware of the content so that they can support their children at home to recall, process and understand the content in relation to themselves and their family.

Communication with parents on the subject of RSE is essential and parents will be invited to discuss the purpose and content of RSE at the Bridge. This will enable them to develop confidence in the curriculum and help them to support the learning at home.

Working with external agencies

As with any visitor, the school will ensure that their credentials are fully checked. There will be checks done to ensure material fits with the curriculum and school policies; that it is age-appropriate and accessible to pupils and that it meets the full range of pupils' needs. Confidentiality and safeguarding procedures will also be discussed.

Right to be excused from sex education (commonly referred to as the right to withdraw)

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. Before granting any such request, the Headteacher 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.

Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, the school will respect the parents' request to withdraw the child with reference to government guidelines.

Requests to withdraw a child from sex education must be made in writing.

There is no right to withdraw from relationships education or health education.

Footnote

Where the term 'parent' is used in this policy, it refers equally to carer or guardian.

Where the term 'school' is used in this policy, it refers to the Bridge.