HEATHCOTE
Preparatory School & Nursery

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

Approved: September 2026

Approved by: Management Board

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Introduction and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education supports our school ethos and fulfils our school aims, which are defined as:

- We seek to ensure that excellence is at the heart of all we do, whether academic, creative or sporting.
- We enable pupils to receive an excellent academic foundation as the first steps of their educational journey.
- We ensure that we work effectively as a team, fostering a love of lifelong learning.
- We encourage our school community to be curious, appreciative and respectful towards the world around us.
- We ensure our school community showcases a warm, progressive approach and individualised learning for all pupils.
- We aim that every pupil recognises their own self-worth through their school journey and build character, confidence and compassion.
- We enable pupils to learn determination, resilience and endurance.

Heathcote Preparatory School's PSHRE provision provides pupils with the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and skills they need in order to reach their potential as individuals and within the community. Pupils are encouraged to take part in a wide range of activities and experiences across and beyond the curriculum, contributing fully to the life of their school and communities. In doing so, they learn to recognise their own worth, work well with others and become increasingly responsible for their own learning. They reflect on their experiences and understand how they are developing personally and socially, tackling many of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues that are part of growing up. Pupils learn to understand and respect our common humanity; diversity and differences so that they can go on to form the effective, fulfilling relationships that are an essential part of life and learning.

Teaching about mental wellbeing is central to all subjects and a priority of both the school and parents is our children's happiness. Children are increasingly experiencing challenges and are at risk of feeling lonely as well as other negative mental emotions. The new subject knowledge outlined in this policy works towards giving children the knowledge and capability that they need to take care of themselves and receive support if problems arise.

The aims of RSE at our school are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place.
- Prepare students for puberty, give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene.
- Help students develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy.
- Create a positive culture around sexuality and relationships.
- Teach students the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies.

- Help students understand that healthy relationships are an important part of wellbeing.

Our RSE provision also prepares pupils for the realities of growing up in a digital world. This includes understanding online relationships, recognising misleading or harmful online content (including AI-generated or manipulated material), and developing the critical thinking skills needed to stay safe and make informed choices.

We promote respectful behaviour and challenge harmful gender stereotypes, including attitudes that may lead to misogyny, inequality or disrespect. Pupils are supported to develop healthy emotional expression, empathy and respect for others.

In line with KCSIE (2026), we ensure that staff understand how to support pupils who may be questioning their gender. Support is delivered sensitively, factually and within a safeguarding framework, with parental involvement unless this would place a child at risk.

Definition of Relationship and Sex Education (RSE):

RSE is a lifelong learning process of acquiring information, developing skills and forming positive beliefs and attitudes about sex, sexuality, relationships and feelings. RSE focuses on exploring the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, having relationships, engaging in sex, and learning about human sexuality and sexual health. Effective RSE can make a significant contribution to the development of the personal skills needed by pupils if they are to establish and maintain positive relationships. It also enables children and young people to make responsible and informed decisions about their personal physical and mental health and well-being. RSE involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values. RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity, sexual orientation, or a specific sexual identity. We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, students and staff, taking into account the age, needs and feelings of students.

RSE includes learning about healthy relationships both offline and online. Pupils are taught how digital communication, social media and online influences can shape attitudes, behaviour and self-esteem. This includes recognising misinformation, disinformation and AI-generated content, and understanding how to seek help if they encounter harmful or inappropriate material.

Statutory requirements

Our RSE policy follows statutory guidance from the Department for Education and meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards. As a Preparatory School, we must ensure that every pupil receiving primary education is provided with Relationships Education, in accordance with Section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. We also deliver Health Education and wider PSHRE in line with national expectations for independent schools.

RSE at Heathcote is delivered within a broad and balanced curriculum and is embedded across school life through weekly PSHRE lessons, assemblies, pastoral provision and wider learning opportunities. Teaching is age-appropriate, clearly sequenced and responsive to pupils' developmental needs.

Our curriculum reflects the statutory content set out in the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education Regulations (2019), and is aligned with the most recent safeguarding expectations outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) and the updated RSHE guidance for 2026. This includes strengthened requirements relating to online safety, harmful sexual behaviour, child-on-child abuse, misogyny, digital misinformation, AI-enabled risks and the support of gender-questioning pupils within a safeguarding framework.

At Heathcote Preparatory School, we teach RSE as set out in this policy, ensuring that pupils develop the knowledge, skills and values needed to build healthy, respectful relationships, understand the changes associated with growing up, and stay safe both offline and online.

Policy Development

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, students and parents. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

• Review – The Headteacher, Key Stage Leads/SLT, PSHRE Lead reviewed all relevant information, including but not limited to, relevant national and local guidance.
• The policy was drafted in accordance with statutory guidance and aligned with the Independent School Regulations. The school curriculum plans were amended accordingly.
• Staff consultation – school staff were given the opportunity to review the policy and make recommendations.
• Parent/stakeholder consultation – parents of Upper Prep School pupils are invited to view the materials as part of the RSE lessons and content for the older pupils at the school.
• Student consultation – students were consulted with about their RSE lessons in form lessons.
• Ratification – once amendments were made, the policy was shared with the School Management Board and subsequently published on our school website: www.heathcoteschool.co.uk
• Policy review – this policy will be reviewed in Autumn term 2027.

Definition

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) at Heathcote Preparatory School is a developmental programme of learning that supports pupils' emotional, social, moral and physical development. It provides children with the knowledge, skills and values they need to build healthy, respectful relationships, understand the changes associated with growing up, and make informed, safe decisions both offline and online.

RSE at Heathcote is rooted in our school values of equality, compassion, tolerance and respect. It helps pupils recognise their own self-worth, develop empathy for others and understand the importance of kindness, responsibility and personal boundaries. Through open, age-appropriate discussion, pupils learn to express their feelings confidently, listen to others and develop the emotional literacy needed to navigate friendships and challenges as they grow.

Our RSE curriculum teaches pupils about families, friendships, personal identity, body changes, consent, and the importance of respecting differences and protected characteristics. It also prepares pupils for the digital world by helping them understand online behaviour, social media influences, harmful or misleading content (including AI-generated material), and the risks associated with inappropriate image sharing.
RSE at Heathcote is delivered through our whole-school PSHRE programme, weekly lessons, assemblies and wider pastoral provision, using the Twinkl PSHRE Scheme of Work to ensure a clear, progressive and age-appropriate sequence of learning. Teaching is factual, inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all pupils, and is delivered in line with statutory guidance, the Independent School Standards, KCSIE 2026 and the Gender Questioning Children guidance.

RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity, sexual orientation or any specific identity. Instead, it equips pupils with the knowledge, confidence and critical thinking skills they need to stay safe, develop healthy relationships, respect themselves and others, and seek help when they feel unsure or unsafe.

Curriculum & Delivery of RSE

Relationships Education is compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education, as set out in the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019. These subjects ensure that children learn the foundations of healthy, respectful relationships, understand the changes associated with growing up, and develop the knowledge and skills needed to stay safe both offline and online. Health Education is also compulsory in state-funded schools, and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) remains a requirement for all independent schools.
Children today grow up in a world where their lives are lived seamlessly on and offline. This brings many opportunities but also increasing risks. Effective RSE helps pupils understand how to be safe, confident and responsible as they navigate friendships, emotions, online interactions and the physical and emotional changes of puberty. The knowledge and attributes gained through RSE support pupils' wellbeing, resilience and academic success, helping them grow into confident, respectful young people who contribute positively to society.

Schools are free to determine how best to deliver RSE within a broad and balanced curriculum. At Heathcote Preparatory School, RSE is taught through our whole-school PSHRE programme, weekly PSHRE lessons, assemblies, values teaching and wider pastoral provision. We use the Twinkl PSHRE Scheme of Work, which provides a clear, progressive and age-appropriate curriculum from EYFS to Year 6. Content is sequenced to build knowledge gradually and sensitively as pupils mature.
RSE lessons for Years 5 and 6 are delivered in mixed groups during the summer term each year. These sessions are designed to develop confidence in talking, listening and thinking about feelings, relationships and the changes experienced during puberty. They foster positive attitudes and values, prepare pupils for the physical and emotional changes of adolescence, and encourage respect for differences and diversity

Content of Year 5 and 6 RSE Sessions

Pupils learn about:

- Physical changes during puberty, including body development and hygiene
- The menstrual cycle and understanding periods
- Emotional changes during puberty
- The biological process of conception
- Pregnancy and the development of a baby

To support these lessons, we use carefully selected resources aligned with our PSHRE and RSE curriculum. This includes the BBC's *Operation Ouch! – "How Are Babies Made?"* video, which provides a modern, accurate and child-friendly explanation of conception, pregnancy and birth. Parents are encouraged to view this resource to understand the tone and level of information presented.

Relationships Education (Including Protected Characteristics, E-Safety and Social Media)
Alongside the biological aspects of RSE, pupils also learn about:

- Online safety, peer pressure and protecting personal information
- The impact of social media on body image, self-esteem and relationships
- How online content can be misleading, harmful or inappropriate for children, including content created or altered using AI
- Understanding the risks of inappropriate image sharing
- Challenging gender stereotypes and how these can lead to harmful attitudes or behaviours
- Recognising and challenging messages—online and offline—that promote disrespect, dominance or inequality
- Developing healthy, respectful ways of expressing emotions
- Understanding that sexual harassment, sexist language and unwanted touching are never acceptable
- How to seek help from trusted adults if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable

Heathcote's Values in RSE
Our RSE curriculum promotes the values of equality, compassion, tolerance and respect for all protected characteristics. Pupils explore themes such as consent, personal boundaries, self-confidence, body image, mental health and diversity. Through this, they develop empathy, emotional awareness and thoughtful, respectful decision-making.

Safeguarding and Inclusivity
RSE is delivered in line with KCSIE 2026 and statutory Gender Questioning Children guidance. Staff are trained to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns, including harmful sexual behaviour, online risks, misogyny, child-on-child abuse and issues relating to gender questioning. Support for gender-questioning pupils is provided sensitively, factually and within a safeguarding framework, with parental involvement unless this would place a child at risk. The school maintains single-sex spaces and sports as required by law.

In line with the wider safeguarding updates in KCSIE 2026, our RSE curriculum also supports early identification of need by helping staff recognise when pupils may benefit from Early Help or Family Help pathways. Staff are trained to identify additional vulnerabilities such as child-to-parent/caregiver abuse, young carers, children with medical conditions and pupils experiencing mental health difficulties, acknowledging that mental health concerns can be safeguarding issues. RSE contributes to the prevention of misogyny, incel-related online harms and serious violence by teaching pupils to critically evaluate harmful narratives and understand respectful, safe relationships. Pupils learn about AI-enabled risks including deepfakes and image-based abuse tools, in line with strengthened filtering and monitoring expectations. Our approach aligns with KCSIE 2026 expectations for mobile-phone-free

environments and ensures that sensitive RSE discussions take place in safe, supervised spaces. Any safeguarding concerns arising from RSE are shared promptly with the DSL in accordance with updated information-sharing requirements.

Right to Withdraw

Parents have the right to request withdrawal from the sex education elements of RSE (i.e., lessons covering conception, pregnancy and birth). Lessons covering puberty and menstruation form part of the statutory science curriculum and cannot be withdrawn from. Parents wishing to request withdrawal should contact the Headteacher or the Year 5 and 6 form tutors. A written request is required, and alternative arrangements will be made for pupils withdrawn from non-statutory content. Withdrawal requests must be renewed annually. Parents cannot withdraw their child from statutory Relationships Education or from content required by the National Curriculum for Science.