

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL HEALTH POLICY

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The policy owner is:	Acle Academy
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Signed by the Chair of the Local Advisory Board:	Matthew Arrowsmith-Brown
Ratified by the Board of Trustees	
Signed by the Chair of Trustee Board	

Acle Academy Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

Rationale and Ethos

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) aims to inform children and young people about relationships, emotions, sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It supports the development of personal and social skills and fosters a positive attitude towards sexual health and well-being.

At Acle Academy, we believe that high-quality RSE provides knowledge and skills that will remain with pupils for life. RSE does not aim to encourage sexual activity nor promote any particular lifestyle or relationship choice. Instead, it equips pupils with the confidence and understanding to make safe, healthy, and informed decisions about relationships as young people and in adulthood.

RSE at Acle Academy is embedded within an innovative curriculum relevant to the world our pupils are living in. We empower pupils to understand their bodies and emotions, reflect on their relationship values, and discuss relationships and sex openly. This approach aims to reduce the risk of unhealthy and abusive relationships.

We are committed to the important role RSE plays in pupils' holistic education and aim to build on programmes delivered in primary school. Themes of consent and staying safe underpin all workshops and modules, introduced from Year 7 and revisited each year in an age-appropriate manner.

Effective RSE supports pupils' physical, emotional, mental, social, and moral development. It fosters respect for self and others and aids pupils in transitioning confidently from childhood through adolescence to adulthood.

Our RSE curriculum is age-appropriate and follows Department for Education guidelines.

RSE Curriculum for SEND Pupils

Where possible, all pupils remain in their class for RSE lessons. Pupils with SEND or those identified as likely to need social, emotional, and mental health support will receive additional support from the class teacher or a teaching assistant.

If a pupil is identified by the school or by parents and guardians as potentially finding RSE lessons challenging, their needs will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. These pupils may complete the material in smaller, supported sessions with the Head of Character and Culture, who holds a NASENCO qualification and delivers lessons tailored to the needs of the pupils in the small group.

Objectives

The RSE programme at Acle Academy is designed to:

- Provide age-appropriate learning differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEN, autism, visual impairments, and other disabilities requiring a bespoke

curriculum.

- Present information objectively, sensitively, and in a balanced manner.
- Support pupils in developing social skills and strategies to reduce the risk of exploitation, misunderstanding, and abuse.
- Be fully inclusive of all genders, backgrounds, sexual orientations, and types of families.
- Promote positive self-relationships, including opportunities for self-reflection.
- Ensure pupils understand consent and reinforce the importance of relationships built on mutual respect.
- Explore parenting skills, the law, and personal readiness for parenthood.
- Represent and explore all types of families and methods of starting a family.
- Enable pupils to identify the qualities of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Examine the physical and emotional implications of sexual behaviour and explore the benefits of delaying sexual activity.
- Signpost pupils to sources of advice and support if experiencing unhealthy or abusive relationships.
- Prepare pupils for the transition from adolescence to adulthood.
- Provide a safe environment to learn about sexual orientation and gender identity, addressing misconceptions and discriminatory behaviour.
- Ensure understanding of sexual and reproductive biology, including HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- Teach the risks associated with different sexual activity and methods for safe sexual relationships, including contraception.
- Prioritise online safety and understanding of the risks associated with social media and the internet.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the law and potential dangers of pornography.

The RSE curriculum is reviewed and updated regularly to remain aligned with the latest Department for Education guidance and best practice.

Delivery of RSE

Physical changes related to puberty and human biology are taught in a scientific context during biology lessons. Broader RSE content is delivered through the Character and Culture curriculum by the Head of Character and Culture, who is highly trained, holds specialist qualifications, and ensures that all content is fully aligned with current government guidance.

Legislation

The statutory guidance for Relationships Education, RSE, and Health Education became law in September 2020. An updated version published in July 2025 will take effect from 1 September 2026. Schools are legally required to comply with this guidance when teaching RSE and Health Education.

Additional legislation and guidance informing this policy includes:

- Education Act 1996
- Learning and Skills Act 2000
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Supplementary Guidance: RSE for the 21st Century 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

Relationship to Other Policies

The RSE policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Whole School Policy for Safeguarding Incorporating Child Protection
- Behaviour and Emotion Regulation Policy
- **Drugs and Substance Misuse Education Policy**
- **Teaching and Learning Policy**
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Equalities and Disability

Acle Academy values diversity and ensures that all pupils are equally respected and supported. The ethos of the school reflects a commitment to understanding and celebrating difference, in line with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Parental Engagement

Parents and guardians are integral to the success of our RSE curriculum. While the school has a legal obligation to provide RSE, we respect the primary role of parents in educating their children. The RSE programme and Character and Culture curriculum map are available on the school website.

Parents or guardians who wish to withdraw their child from sex education lessons can find the withdrawal form on the school website. Any concerns should first be discussed with the Head of Character and Culture. If withdrawal is still requested, a written request should be made to the Executive Principal.

Curriculum Design and Core Principles

The RSE curriculum aims to provide pupils with:

- Relationship skills for teenage years and adulthood
- Opportunities to explore values and moral frameworks
- Understanding and acceptance of diversity
- Awareness of their own bodies and personal rights
- Knowledge of where to seek advice and support
- High self-esteem, emotional health, and self-awareness
- Assertiveness and communication skills
- Skills to make informed choices that reduce risk
- Respect for others' opinions
- Responsibility for actions and understanding of consequences
- Knowledge to reduce health risks and understand teenage conception

The curriculum promotes values including self-respect, tolerance, mutual support, honesty, openness, responsibility, and accurate knowledge about sexual health and relationships.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The RSE programme is monitored and evaluated through:

- Student self-assessments at the beginning and end of topics
- Lesson observations
- Departmental reviews

Staff receive ongoing CPD to ensure consistency of delivery.

Importance of RSE in Secondary Schools

Young people receive varying messages about sex from media and peers. Effective RSE provides a safe space to discuss these topics, develop personal attitudes, values, and opinions, and complements parental guidance.

RSE not only covers sex and sexual health but also fosters assertiveness, communication, decision-making, resilience, and self-awareness. It equips young people to make safe, responsible choices.

Good Quality Secondary RSE

High-quality RSE empowers pupils to communicate confidently about relationships and consent. It supports emotional health, self-esteem, and a positive understanding of bodies and sexuality. It challenges prejudice, promotes acceptance of diversity, and equips pupils with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves and seek help when needed. The curriculum builds progressively on prior learning and is tailored to individual needs.

Sensitive or Controversial Topics

Teachers will use professional judgment to determine suitability for class discussion. Pupils will not be asked to disclose personal sexual information. Ground rules are established to maintain respect for all genders, sexualities, and families. Any safeguarding concerns will follow the school's procedures.

Confidentiality

RSE encourages pupils to talk to a trusted adult about sexual relationships. Staff follow safeguarding procedures if underage sexual activity is disclosed. Health professionals may provide confidential support to pupils.

Role of Health Professionals

Health professionals may support RSE delivery, with planned input aligned to the curriculum and school policies.

Core Themes

Key Stage 3

Health and Wellbeing

- Self-confidence, self-esteem, mental and emotional health
- Growth and change, hygiene, sexual health, STIs, contraception
- Media influence on body image and identity
- Risk recognition and accessing help

Relationships and Sex Education

- Positive relationships and teamwork
- Communication and negotiation skills
- Emotional development and sexual attraction
- Features of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Marriage, civil partnerships, and parenting
- Consent and readiness for intimacy
- Law relating to consent

- Safe sex and contraception
- Diversity in sexual orientation, gender identity, and relationships
- Anti-bullying, exploitation awareness, and peer support

Key Stage 4

Health and Wellbeing

- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- Accessing health services, including sexual health
- Personal safety, managing risk, lifestyle impacts
- STIs and infection prevention

Relationships

- Managing strong emotions
- Characteristics of healthy relationships
- Parenting skills and young parenthood
- Recognising unhealthy or abusive relationships
- Consent and sexual ethics
- Impact of drugs and alcohol
- Diversity and faith considerations
- Contraception, unintended pregnancy, fertility, and adoption