

THWAITES SCHOOL

Relationships, Sex Education and Health Education Policy

2024/2026

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Introduction

Our children are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. In this environment, our children need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way.

Our guiding principles in developing this policy have been that all of the compulsory subject content must be age appropriate and developmentally appropriate. It must be taught sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of pupils and parents and carers while always with the aim of providing pupils with the knowledge they need of the law. We want the subjects to put in place the key building blocks of healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online. This will sit alongside the essential understanding of how to be healthy.

Teaching about mental wellbeing is central to these subjects, especially as a priority for parents and carers is their children's happiness. We know that children and young people are increasingly experiencing challenges, and that young people are at particular risk of feeling lonely. The subject content will give them the knowledge and capability to take care of themselves and receive support if problems arise.

All of this content should support our work in helping to foster pupil wellbeing and develop resilience and character that we know are fundamental to pupils being happy, successful and productive members of society. Central to this is pupils' ability to believe that they can achieve goals, both academic and personal; to stick to tasks that will help them achieve those goals, even when the reward may be distant or uncertain; and to recover from knocks and challenging periods in their lives.

This should be complemented by the development of personal attributes including our school values of kindness, honesty, inclusivity, empathy, enthusiasm, resilience and aspiration. These attributes are modelled by all staff and are expected of the children in our school.

We teach most of the compulsory content within a wider programme of Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education lessons. These are based around a high-quality programme called, "Heart Smart". The subjects covered represent a huge opportunity to help our children develop. The knowledge and attributes gained will support their own, and others', wellbeing and attainment, both now, and in the next phase of their education at secondary school. Ultimately it will help them to become successful and happy adults who make a meaningful contribution to society

1. Policy development and review

Working with parents and carers, children and teachers The policy will be written by the 'Mind, Body and Spirit' subject lead, who is the DSL and the Headteacher. It will reflect the views of parents and carers, teachers and children. We believe that listening to and responding to the views of our children, parents and carers, and staff will strengthen the policy, ensuring that it meets the needs of all pupils. Parents and carers, teachers and children's views will be sought when developing and reviewing the Relationships, Sex Education and Health Education Policy. As well as consulting parents and carers more generally about the school's overall policy, we will consult parents and carers before the final year of primary school (Year Six) about the detailed content of what will be taught. This might be through a parents and carers' meeting, discussion or questionnaire. A range of approaches might be needed in order to reach out to all parents and

carers. The 'Mind, Body and Spirit' subject lead will collect views and opinions and, with regard to best practice and statutory guidance, will endeavour to incorporate these when developing content and schemes of work. Our Relationships, Sex Education and Health Education Policy will ensure that teaching should reflect the law (including the Equality Act 2010) as it applies to relationships, so that young people clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the wider legal implications of decisions they may make.

2. Accessibility, diversity and inclusion of all pupils, including those with SEND

Relationships, Sex Education and Health Education must be accessible for all our pupils. This is particularly important when planning teaching for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities who represent a large minority of our pupils. High quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised will be the starting point to ensure accessibility. We are also mindful of the preparing for adulthood outcomes, as set out in the SEND code of practice, when teaching those with SEND. Our staff, through their Child Protection and Safeguarding training, are aware that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND. Relationships, Sex Education and Health Education can also be particularly important subjects for some pupils; for example, those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs or learning disabilities. Such factors are taken into consideration by teachers when designing and teaching these subjects. We ensure that our teaching is sensitive, age appropriate, developmentally appropriate and delivered with reference to the law. In teaching Relationships, Sex Education and Health Education, we ensure that the needs of all pupils are appropriately met, and that all pupils understand the importance of equality and respect. We ensure that we comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics. We ensure that all of our teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content. All pupils should receive teaching on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) relationships during their school years, and the government advises that secondary schools should include LGBT content in their teaching. Primary schools, like ours, are strongly encouraged, and enabled, when teaching about different types of family, to include families with same sex parents. Any sex education questions about LGBT content are likely to be met with a blanket statement along the lines of, "We are teaching you about how babies are made by having sex. There are other ways to have sex which are perfectly normal, but we are not teaching you about those. Please ask your parent/carer." We may also direct the child asking any such question to a trusted source of help or advice online.

3. Requirements on our school in law

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education. They also make Health Education compulsory in all schools except independent schools. Reflecting the needs of our children, the concerns of some of our parents and carers, and responding to the diverse nature of the community we serve, we have decided that it is in best interest of our children to provide them with some sex education further than that required by the statutory National Curriculum for science. This is in line with the published statutory guidance: The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019.

We are required to comply with relevant requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public sector equality duty (PSED) (s.149 of the Equality Act). Under the provisions of the Equality Act, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation (collectively known as the protected characteristics).

Provisions within the Equality Act allow schools to 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. We, could, for example, consider taking positive action to support girls if there was evidence that they were being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment. We have considered the makeup of our own student body, including the gender and age range of our pupils, and consider, at this time, that it is not appropriate or necessary to put in place additional support for pupils with particular protected characteristics (which mean that they are potentially at greater risk).

We have considered what we can do to foster healthy and respectful peer-to-peer communication and behaviour between boys and girls, and we provide an environment which challenges perceived limits on pupils based on their gender or any other characteristic as part of a whole-school approach. We are alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled. Staff have an important role to play in modelling positive behaviours. School pastoral and behaviour policies support all our pupils.

We refer to the Department's advice, "Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges". The advice sets out what sexual violence and sexual harassment are, the current evidence on their preponderance in schools and colleges, how to minimise the risk of them occurring and what to do when they do occur or are alleged to have occurred. We are aware of the importance of making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are not an inevitable part of growing up. Any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be taken seriously; staff are aware that statistically it is more likely that females will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment than males, and that it is more likely that it will be perpetrated by males. However, males can also be the victims of sexual violence and it can also happen in same-sex relationships. It is, however, essential that assumptions are not made about the behaviour of boys and young men and that they are not made to feel that this behaviour is an inevitable part of being male; most young men are respectful of young women and each other. An understanding for all pupils of healthy relationships, acceptable behaviour and the right of everyone to equal treatment will help ensure that pupils treat each other well and go on to be respectful and kind adults.

It is important to know what the law says about sex, relationships and young people, as well as broader safeguarding issues. This includes a range of important facts and the rules regarding sharing personal information, pictures, videos and other material using technology. This will help young people to know what is right and wrong in law, but it can also provide a good foundation of knowledge for deeper discussion about all types of relationships. There are also many different legal provisions whose purpose is to protect young people and which ensure young people take responsibility for their actions. Pupils in our school should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being discussed or taught, including for example:

- marriage
- consent, including the age of consent
- violence against women and girls
- online behaviours including image and information sharing (including 'sexting', youth-produced sexual imagery, nudes, etc.)
- pornography
- sexuality
- gender identity (currently the draft government guidance, Gender Questioning December 2023, is used)
- substance misuse
- violence and exploitation by gangs
- extremism/radicalisation
- criminal exploitation (for example, through gang involvement or 'county lines' drugs operations)
- hate crime

4. Delivery of Relationships and Sex Education

There are a lot of excellent resources available, free-of-charge, which we draw on when delivering Relationships and Sex Education. We regularly assess each resource that we propose to use to ensure that it is appropriate for the age and maturity of our pupils, and sensitive to their needs. We will also ensure that, when we consult with parents and carers, we provide examples of the resources that we plan to use, as best practice indicates that this can be reassuring for parents and carers and enables them to continue the conversations started in class at home. Relationships and Sex Education is predominantly delivered by the Year Five and Six teachers during the same phase of children's education as we teach them about puberty and the associated changes to their bodies. This is usually towards the end of the summer term. Where possible, children are taught in single sex groups, in line with best recommended practice. Girls are usually taught by a female teacher, boys by a male teacher. Boys and girls have lessons which cover content appropriate to both sexes. However, boys usually spend proportionally more time on 'boy' issues and girls similarly spend more time on 'girl' issues. This decision reflects, and respects the children's wishes. Very occasionally, specialist external organisations might be brought in to enhance delivery of Relationships and Sex Education. If this happens, school will check the visitor's credentials, teaching plans and proposed methods of delivery before any teaching commences. Visitors will be made aware of how to handle potential safeguarding or child protection reports.

5. Details of content, schemes of work and when each topic is taught

5.1 Relationship Education

The focus in our school is on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults. This starts with pupils being taught about what a relationship is, what friendship is, what family means and who the people are who can support them. From the beginning of our school, building on early education, pupils should be taught how to take turns, how to treat each other with kindness, consideration and respect, the importance of honesty and truthfulness, permission seeking and giving, and the concept of personal privacy. Establishing personal space and boundaries, showing respect

and understanding the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact – these are the forerunners of teaching about consent, which takes place in the next phase of children’s educational journey in secondary school.

Respect for others should be taught in an age-appropriate way, in terms of understanding one’s own and others’ boundaries in play, in negotiations about space, toys, books, resources and so on. From the beginning, teachers should talk explicitly about the features of healthy friendships, family relationships and other relationships which young children are likely to encounter. Drawing attention to these in a range of contexts should enable pupils to form a strong early understanding of the features of relationships that are likely to lead to happiness and security. This will also help them to recognise any less-positive relationships when they encounter them.

The principles of positive relationships also apply online especially as, by the end of primary school, many children will already be using the internet. When teaching relationships content, teachers should address online safety and appropriate behaviour in a way that is relevant to pupils’ lives. Teachers should include content on how information and data is shared and used in all contexts, including online; for example, sharing pictures, understanding that many websites are businesses and how sites may use information provided by users in ways they might not expect.

Teaching about families requires sensitive and well-judged teaching based on knowledge of pupils and their circumstances. Families of many forms provide a nurturing environment for children. (Families can include for example, single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures.) Care needs to be taken to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances and needs, to reflect sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them e.g., looked after children or young carers.

A growing ability to form strong and positive relationships with others depends on the deliberate cultivation of character traits and positive personal attributes, (sometimes referred to as ‘virtues’) in the individual. In a school-wide context which encourages the development and practice of resilience and other attributes, this includes character traits such as helping pupils to believe they can achieve, persevere with tasks, work towards long-term rewards and continue despite setbacks. Alongside understanding the importance of self-respect and self-worth, pupils should develop personal attributes including honesty, integrity, courage, humility, kindness, generosity, trustworthiness and a sense of justice. This can be achieved in a variety of ways including by providing planned opportunities for young people to undertake social action, active citizenship and voluntary service to others locally or more widely.

Relationships Education also creates an opportunity to enable pupils to be taught about positive emotional and mental wellbeing, including how friendships can support mental wellbeing.

Through Relationships and Sex Education, we teach pupils the knowledge they need to recognise and to report abuse, including emotional, physical and sexual abuse. In our school, this can be delivered by focusing on boundaries and privacy, ensuring young people understand that they have rights over their own bodies. This should also include understanding boundaries in friendships with peers and also in families and with others, in all contexts, including online. Pupils should know how to report concerns and seek advice when they suspect or know that something is wrong. At all stages it will be important to balance teaching children about making sensible decisions to stay safe (including online) whilst being clear it is never the fault of a

child who is abused and why victim blaming is always wrong. These subjects complement Health Education and as part of a comprehensive programme and whole-school approach, this knowledge can support safeguarding of children.

5.2 Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing Education

The focus in our school should be on teaching the characteristics of good physical health and mental wellbeing. Teachers should be clear that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health. This starts with pupils being taught about the benefits and importance of daily exercise, good nutrition and sufficient sleep, and giving pupils the language and knowledge to understand the normal range of emotions that everyone experiences. This should enable pupils to articulate how they are feeling, develop the language to talk about their bodies, health and emotions and judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate for the situations that they experience.

Teachers should go on to talk about the steps pupils can take to protect and support their own and others' health and wellbeing, including simple self-care techniques, personal hygiene, prevention of health and wellbeing problems and basic first aid.

Emphasis should be given to the positive two-way relationship between good physical health and good mental wellbeing, and the benefits to mental wellbeing of physical exercise and time spent outdoors.

Pupils should also be taught the benefits of hobbies, interests and participation in their own communities. This teaching should make clear that people are social beings and that spending time with others, taking opportunities to consider the needs of others and practising service to others, including in organised and structured activities and groups (for example the scouts or girl guide movements), are beneficial for health and wellbeing.

Pupils should be taught about the benefits of rationing time spent online and the risks of excessive use of electronic devices. In Years Five and Six, pupils should be taught why social media, computer games and online gaming have age restrictions and should be equipped to manage common difficulties encountered online.

A firm foundation in the benefits and characteristics of good health and wellbeing will enable teachers to talk about isolation, loneliness, unhappiness, bullying and the negative impact of poor health and wellbeing.

The changing adolescent body aspects of physical health and mental wellbeing are usually taught as part of our coverage of National Curriculum science. This usually occurs towards the end of the summer term.

The National Curriculum content which we are required by law to cover is as follows:

Pupils should be taught to:

- describe the differences in the life cycles of a mammal, an amphibian, an insect and a bird
- describe the life process of reproduction in some plants and animals
- describe the changes as humans develop to old age
- recognise that living things produce offspring of the same kind, but normally offspring vary and are not identical to their parents

5.3 Sex Education (which goes beyond the requirements of the National Curriculum for science)

As explained above in Section Three, the Relationships Education, RSE, and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 have made Relationships Education compulsory in all primary schools. Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools.

The content set out in this policy covers everything that we should teach about relationships and health, including puberty. The National Curriculum for science also includes subject content in related areas, such as the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals. We have determined, in consultation with parents and carers, children and staff that we need to cover some additional content on sex education to meet the needs of our pupils.

Along with many other primary schools who already choose to teach some aspects of sex education, we will continue to do so, although it is not a statutory requirement. We believe that it is important that the transition phase in Year Six (before moving to secondary school) supports pupils' ongoing emotional and physical development effectively. The Department for Education continues to recommend that all primary schools should have a sex education programme tailored to the age and the physical and emotional maturity of the pupils, and at our school, we follow their recommendation.

When teaching sex education which goes beyond the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, we ensure that both boys and girls are prepared for the changes that adolescence brings and – drawing on knowledge of the human life cycle set out in the National Curriculum for science - how a baby is conceived by sexual intercourse, and born.

When teaching about the various changes during puberty and adolescence, and also when teaching about sexual intercourse, we use a book called Sex and Relationship Education for ages 9–11 and a website called ClickView. The book is written by Molly Potter and published by Bloomsbury Education, London. The website we use was developed especially for schools and is highly recommended within the county, it is a subscription-only site. As well as animations and videos of children talking about various aspects of puberty, there are a range of worksheets which we download and use. Parents and carers are invited to speak with their child's teacher if they wish to have a look at the book or worksheets in order to understand in more depth exactly what will be covered.

5.4 Managing Difficult Questions

Teaching in these subjects should allow appropriate opportunities for pupils to ask questions to check and test their understanding. Most questions will be relevant to what the teacher has explained, and general questions should be welcomed. Pupils should not feel penalised or censored for asking sensible or relevant questions, even if they are occasionally awkward.

Sometimes, pupils may ask questions which go beyond what the teacher has planned and may stray into sensitive territory. There is no single way to address all such questions – some may be handled straightforwardly for the whole class to hear.

Teachers should be mindful that a question may occasionally raise a possible safeguarding concern, and the school's safeguarding process should be followed in such cases.

Some questions may relate to sex education which the school may not be teaching, or not yet. These should generally not be answered in front of the whole class.

Strategies to handle such questioning could include offering a word outside the lesson, referring to another more senior member of staff or offering a simple 'holding' answer and mentioning the question to parents and carers at the end of the day.

Our pupils will often ask their teachers or other adults questions pertaining to sex or sexuality which go beyond what is set out for Relationships and Sex Education. Our school handles such questions by expecting teachers of Relationships and Sex Education to consider what is appropriate and inappropriate in a whole-class setting. (Teachers may receive support and training from time-to-time in answering questions that are better not dealt with in front of a whole class). Given ease of access to the internet, children whose questions go unanswered by trusted adults may turn to inappropriate sources of information.

Children of the same age may be developmentally at different stages, leading to differing types of questions or behaviours. Teaching methods should take account of these differences (including when they are due to specific special educational needs or disabilities) and the potential for discussion on a one-to-one basis or in small groups might be used. Children are encouraged to speak to their teachers on a one-to-one basis if they have a difficult or embarrassing question. Children are also provided with notepaper on which to write a question for their teacher if they are too embarrassed to speak to the teacher in person. Teachers will endeavour to answer any questions in a sensitive manner.

In our school, where questions are deemed to require too explicit an answer, they are likely to be met with a blanket statement along the lines of, "We are teaching you about how babies are made by having sex. There are other ways to have sex which are perfectly normal, but we are not teaching you about those. Please ask your parent/carer." We may also direct the child asking any such question to a trusted source of help or advice online.

5.5 Menstruation

Menarche and the onset of menstruation can be confusing or even alarming for girls if they are not prepared. Pupils, both boys and girls, in Year Five and Six will be taught key facts about the menstrual cycle including what is an average period, range of menstrual products and the implications for emotional and physical health. In addition to curriculum content, we also make adequate and sensitive arrangements to help girls prepare for and manage menstruation including with requests for menstrual products. We always consider the needs of our cohort of pupils in designing this content.

6 Right for parents and carers to request their child be withdrawn from Sex Education

Some aspects of Sex Education will be covered as part of our school's coverage of the National Curriculum for Science, and are delivered to Year Five and Six children towards the end of the summer term each year. These include lessons about the changes encountered during puberty, including menstruation. Parents and carers have no right to withdraw their children from these lessons.

Other aspects of Sex Education that we teach only to Year Six children go further than the requirements of the National Curriculum for Science. These lessons include in-depth details of changes to the body during puberty and adolescence and how sexual intercourse occurs in order to conceive a baby within a caring and

loving relationship. Shortly before these lessons are scheduled to take place, Year Six parents and carers will receive notification via letter and email that Relationships and Sex Education lessons will be delivered to children in the very near future. This message will clearly communicate the fact that parents and carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all sex education lessons which exceed the statutory content of the National Curriculum. The Headteacher will automatically grant a request from a parent or carer for their child to be withdrawn from some or all of these lessons. School will provide appropriate, purposeful education during the period of the withdrawal.

7 Policy updates

The statutory guidance issued by the government covering Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education has been reviewed every three years since Relationships and Sex Education was first required to be taught in September 2020. Our Relationships and Sex Education policy will be reviewed following these triennial statutory updates. At other times, should there be a failure of our policy to reflect the current needs of pupils, parents and carers, and the wider community we serve, it is very likely that the 'Mind, Body and Spirit' lead will initiate a review of the current policy.

8 Approval of the policy and the role of governors

The policy will be presented for approval at a meeting of the Quality of Curriculum Committee and signed as accepted by a member on behalf of the Quality of Curriculum Committee. If, after discussion, the Quality of Curriculum Committee do not approve the policy, it will be returned, with objections and/or guidance from the governors to the 'Mind, Body and Spirit' lead for alterations. It will be subsequently re-presented for approval at the next available meeting after the completion of any necessary changes. Meetings of the Quality of Curriculum Committee usually take place once each term. The meeting nearest to the date of the completion of the policy review will have its approval as a scheduled agenda item.

As well as approving the policy and fulfilling their legal obligations, the Quality of Curriculum Committee should also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the expected educational outcomes;
- Relationships and Sex Education is well led, effectively managed and well planned;
- the quality of provision is subject to regular and effective self-evaluation;
- teaching is delivered in ways that are accessible to all pupils with SEND;
- clear information is provided for parents and carers on the subject content and the right to request that their child is withdrawn; and,
- Relationships and Sex Education is resourced, staffed and timetabled in a way that ensures that the school can fulfil its legal obligations.