Bracken Hill School

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

Author: Miss O'Reilly

Policy dated: September 2026

Approved by the Governing Body on 30th September 2026

Policy Type: Whole School
This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations.
The Governors of the school recognise that all staff play a vital role in the achievement of high standards and in providing our pupils with the best opportunities matched to their needs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This guidance applies to the professional delivery of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) within specified lessons and through spontaneous and unplanned interactions with students.
1.2 Any changes to this guidance will be communicated to staff through the subject co-ordinator or Designated Safeguarding Leads.

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2. PURPOSE, SCOPE AND INTENT

2.1 Purpose

This guidance aims to:

- Provide direction and guidance in the delivery of RSE.
- Encourage consistent and professional practice in delivery of RSE.
- Protect students and staff from inappropriate language or conduct.
- Ensure that all staff and stakeholders understand their responsibilities when delivering RSE.

2.2 Scope

This document applies to:

- All permanent, temporary, and casual staff working at Bracken Hill School.
- Pupils.
- Consultants, agency staff, governors, parents, guardians, and others involved in the school community.

2.3 Intent

Bracken Hill School follows the PSHE Association SEND curriculum and policy resources, tailoring RSE to the specific needs of our pupils. As a special needs school, we provide a personalised and structured RSE curriculum that supports emotional, social, and moral development while preparing students for adulthood.

We ensure that RSE is:

- Developmentally appropriate.
- Sensitive to the cognitive and emotional levels of our students.
- Delivered with appropriate visual, sensory, and interactive support.

RSE is incorporated into daily school life, discreet PSHE lessons, and science curricula. We prioritise teaching the importance of stable, loving relationships based on care, love, and respect.

2.4 Safeguarding Principles

At Bracken Hill School, safeguarding is central to our Relationships and Sex Education provision. We recognise that effective RSE supports pupils to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to stay safe, build healthy relationships and seek support when required.
Our RSE curriculum is informed by statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), and the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Through RSE we support pupils to:

• Understand personal boundaries and bodily autonomy.
• Develop an understanding of consent and personal choice.
• Recognise safe and unsafe situations.
• Identify trusted adults who can help them.
• Recognise harmful, abusive, exploitative or discriminatory behaviour.
• Understand healthy friendships and relationships.
• Stay safe online and within digital environments.
• Develop communication skills that enable them to report concerns and seek support.

We recognise that pupils with SEND may be at increased risk of abuse, exploitation, bullying, coercion and online harm. Learning is therefore personalised to ensure safeguarding messages are accessible, meaningful and relevant to each learner.

Staff understand that RSE discussions can sometimes result in safeguarding disclosures. Any concerns will be managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures and referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where appropriate.

2.5 Related Policies and Guidance

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019
- Department for Education Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance (effective September 2026)
- Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026)

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Online Safety Policy.
- Behaviour Policy.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Equality and Diversity Policy.
- SEND Policy.
- Intimate Care Policy.
- Personal Care Policy.

- Staff Code of Conduct.
- PSHE Policy.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.
- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policies.

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3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 The Three Learning Pathways

At Bracken Hill School, we recognise that students have a diverse range of needs. Our RSE curriculum follows three distinct pathways to ensure accessibility for all:

1. Explorers Pathway

- Focuses on sensory experiences, understanding emotions, personal boundaries, and safe interactions.
- Delivered through interactive storytelling, sensory-based learning, and structured routines.

2. Adventurers Pathway

- Covers friendships, appropriate touch, recognising emotions, and self-care skills.
- Delivered through role-play, visual supports, and real-life scenarios.

3. Pioneers Pathway

- Covers relationships, puberty, consent, reproduction, and sexual health education in an age-appropriate way.
- Emphasis is placed on understanding consent, personal choice, personal boundaries and recognising situations where support from a trusted adult may be required.
- Delivered through discussions, group activities, and structured PSHE lessons.

3.2 Ensuring Inclusivity and Meeting Diverse Needs

To ensure that our RSE and PSHE curriculum meets the needs of all students, including those with additional needs and diverse backgrounds, we take a flexible, inclusive, and person-centred approach. We personalise learning by adapting lessons with visual supports, sensory stories, and multi-modal communication like Makaton and AAC to ensure accessibility for all students, including those who are non-verbal. Cultural sensitivity is at the heart of our curriculum, with materials that reflect the diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds of our students, and we engage with parents to ensure content is respectful and appropriate.

We use a range of communication supports, including visual resources, symbols, social stories, sensory stories, AAC and Makaton, to ensure pupils can communicate effectively about their bodies, health, personal care needs, relationships and safety.

Where appropriate, pupils are taught and encouraged to use correct anatomical vocabulary to support communication, personal safety, self-advocacy and safeguarding.

Sensory stories are used to explain complex situations, such as experiencing a crush or bodily changes during puberty, in a way that is developmentally appropriate and accessible. By incorporating multisensory elements, we help students process emotions and understand key concepts in a structured and supportive manner.

Our whole-school approach means all staff receive training to deliver RSE and PSHE inclusively, with therapists and specialists supporting us in meeting individual needs. We focus on key life skills such as consent, personal safety, and healthy relationships, using clear, structured teaching to develop social understanding. Families play a key role in this process, with open communication and resources to reinforce learning at home. Finally, we assess progress in a way that reflects each student's individual journey, using engagement and real-life application rather than formal testing. By continuously reviewing and adapting our approach, we ensure that all students receive a meaningful, accessible, and inclusive RSE and PSHE education.

3.3 Assessing the Impact of RSE and PSHE

To assess the impact of RSE and PSHE lessons on student well-being and personal development, we take a holistic and personalised approach that focuses on engagement, understanding, and real-life application. We observe changes in behaviour, social interactions, and emotional regulation, tracking whether students apply what they've learned in everyday situations, such as recognising emotions, expressing boundaries, or developing self-care skills.

For non-verbal and preverbal students, we assess engagement through body language, facial expressions, and sensory responses, while also encouraging communication through AAC, PECS, or Makaton. We use tools like the Zones of Regulation and social stories to support emotional awareness and check whether students show increased confidence and self-awareness over time. We also incorporate TACPAC therapy, particularly for students on the Explorers Pathway, to support sensory regulation, emotional connection, and body awareness.

3.4 Student Voice in Curriculum Development

Integrating student voice into the RSE and PSHE curriculum is essential to ensuring that lessons are meaningful, accessible, and responsive to their needs. We use a range of adapted methods to capture student thoughts, feelings, and preferences, including observation, AAC communication, and sensory-based feedback.

For students on the Adventurers and Pioneers Pathway, we actively respond to their questions and misconceptions, ensuring lessons are relevant to real-life challenges. Behavioural insights from our Behaviour Watch system further inform our curriculum, allowing us to proactively address areas where students need support.

Our curriculum is reviewed annually, incorporating feedback from students, families, and staff to ensure it remains inclusive, engaging, and relevant.

3.5 Staff Training and Confidence in Delivering RSE

To ensure staff confidence in delivering RSE and PSHE, we provide regular CPD, covering inclusive teaching methods such as Makaton, PECS, AAC, and sensory regulation strategies. Specialist input from therapists, structured resources, and whole-school Behaviour Watch support ensure lessons are responsive to student needs. We hold training sessions introducing new resources, including multisensory social stories, and ensure staff have access to targeted interventions like ELSA, Draw and Talk, and the Zones of Regulation.

3.6 Safe and Effective Practice

We are committed to creating a safe, respectful and supportive learning environment.

Staff establish clear expectations and age-appropriate ground rules before teaching sensitive topics.

Pupils are encouraged to ask questions and express views respectfully.

Questions are answered honestly and appropriately whilst maintaining professional boundaries and taking account of pupils' age, understanding and communication abilities.

Where questions fall outside the planned curriculum or raise concerns, staff will use professional judgement and seek guidance from the Designated Safeguarding Lead where appropriate.
Teaching about online relationships, digital communication, privacy, consent, image sharing, online exploitation and safe use of technology is embedded throughout the curriculum and supports the school's wider online safety provision.

3.7 Parent Engagement and Addressing Concerns

We proactively communicate with parents by providing clear curriculum overviews, detailed information packs and opportunities for discussion before sensitive topics are taught.

By maintaining open communication and offering transparency, we ensure that RSE and PSHE are delivered in a way that respects both the school's and families' values whilst providing essential life skills to students.

Parents and carers may request to view curriculum plans, teaching materials and resources used to support the delivery of RSE.

The school is committed to openness and transparency and welcomes opportunities to discuss curriculum content with families.

Resources used to support the delivery of RSE are carefully selected to ensure they are:

- Age appropriate.
- Developmentally appropriate.
- Accessible for pupils with SEND.
- Inclusive and representative.
- Factually accurate and evidence informed.

Resources may include:

- PSHE Association materials.
- Social stories.
- Sensory stories.
- AAC resources.
- Makaton-supported materials.
- Visual supports and symbols.
- Videos and interactive activities.

Resources are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain appropriate and relevant.

3.8 Right to Withdraw

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Parents and carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of the sex education elements of RSE that fall outside of the National Curriculum for Science.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education, Health Education or the science curriculum.

Three terms before a young person turns 16, they may choose to receive sex education themselves if previously withdrawn by their parents.

Requests should be made in writing to the Headteacher.

A meeting will be arranged to discuss the request, clarify curriculum content and explore any concerns.

Where a pupil is withdrawn from sex education, appropriate and purposeful alternative learning will be provided during the period of withdrawal.

Bracken Hill School remains committed to delivering a high-quality, inclusive and developmentally appropriate RSE curriculum that promotes respect, safety, wellbeing and positive relationships.

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4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The quality and impact of RSE provision will be monitored through:

- Curriculum reviews.
- Learning walks and lesson visits.
- Student voice activities.
- Parent and carer feedback.
- Staff feedback.
- Review of relevant wellbeing, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding information where appropriate.

The Governing Body will receive updates regarding RSE provision through the school's wider curriculum monitoring arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements or the needs of the school community.