

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy Statement

DRAFT - parent/carer consultation open until 23 October 2026

SMS Changing Lives School



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Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy Statement

Separate statutory written statement of policy

SMS Changing Lives School



DRAFT PENDING PARENT/CARER CONSULTATION

Policy owner	Head Teacher
Status	Draft pending parent/carers consultation
Draft issue date	23 September 2026
Parent/carers consultation	Open - comments invited by 23 October 2026
Formal approval	Following close of consultation and consideration of responses; Head Teacher approval, with proprietor compliance oversight
Next scheduled review	3 years from approval, or earlier if required

This revised statement is published as a draft pending parent/carers consultation. Comments are invited by 23 October 2026. It will not be recorded as finally adopted until the consultation has closed and responses have been considered.

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1. Purpose and statutory status

This is SMS Changing Lives School's separate written policy statement for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). It applies to all pupils receiving secondary education at the school and across all school sites and pathways.

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 require the proprietor to ensure that every registered pupil receiving secondary education is provided with RSE, subject to the statutory arrangements for withdrawal from sex education. The school must have regard to the Department for Education statutory RSE guidance, maintain a separate written policy statement, consult parents before making or revising it, publish it on the school website and provide it free of charge to anyone who asks.

This statement has been revised to reflect the DfE statutory guidance in force from 1 September 2026 and the April 2026 Independent School Standards guidance. It should be read with the school's PSHRE Policy, safeguarding arrangements and curriculum plans.

Consultation status

Parents/carers were consulted when the school's RSE provision was originally introduced. This 2026 document is a substantive revision following updated statutory guidance effective from 1 September 2026. It is published as a draft pending parent/carer consultation. Comments are invited by 23 October 2026. The school will consider all feedback received before the revised statement is formally approved. Until that approval, the school's existing RSE statement remains the current operative statement.

2. Aims

RSE at SMS Changing Lives School aims to give pupils the knowledge, skills and confidence to:

- develop healthy, safe, respectful and nurturing relationships of all kinds;
- understand consent, boundaries, kindness, care, power and responsibility within relationships;
- recognise unhealthy, abusive, exploitative or coercive behaviour and know how to seek help;
- understand the law, rights and responsibilities relevant to relationships, sexual behaviour and online conduct;

- understand sexual and reproductive health, contraception, pregnancy choices and sexually transmitted infections in an accurate and age/stage-appropriate way;
- make informed decisions, resist pressure, evaluate online information and identify misinformation or harmful content;
- respect equality and difference, challenge prejudice and recognise harmful stereotypes;
- know where and how to obtain trusted support, including confidential health advice where appropriate.

3. What we mean by relationships education and sex education

RSE is a single statutory subject at secondary level, but the school distinguishes relationships education from sex education so that pupils and parents/carers are clear about the right to request withdrawal from sex education.

Relationships education within RSE	Sex education within RSE
Families and stable relationships; friendship; respect; equality; boundaries; consent; communication; bullying; prejudice and stereotypes; online relationships and safety; recognising abuse, harassment, coercive control, exploitation and unsafe relationships; reporting concerns and seeking help.	Teaching that directly addresses sexual activity and intimate sexual relationships, contraception, pregnancy choices, sexually transmitted infections/HIV, sexual and reproductive health, and access to relevant health services.
Relationships education may include sensitive safeguarding topics such as sexual harassment, sexual violence, image-based abuse and harmful sexual behaviour without teaching the detail of sexual activity.	The school identifies in advance which planned lesson content is sex education for the purposes of withdrawal. Classification is based on the actual lesson content, not simply the title of a topic or Jigsaw unit.

Parents/carers cannot withdraw pupils from relationships education or from content taught as part of the school's science curriculum. The withdrawal arrangements in section 9 apply only to sex education delivered as part of RSE.

4. Curriculum content and sequencing

RSE is taught through the school's PSHRE curriculum using Jigsaw as the core programme. The Jigsaw spiral curriculum is adapted and supplemented so that all required secondary RSE content is covered by the end of secondary education and is appropriate to pupils' ages, stages of development and individual needs.

Direct RSE content is particularly located within the Relationships and Changing Me units, while important relationships, equality, online safety, consent and safeguarding content is reinforced throughout the year. Teaching is sequenced so that foundational knowledge and safety skills are established before more complex content is introduced. Content is revisited and deepened as pupils mature.

Statutory RSE strand	Content covered through the SMS curriculum
Families	Different committed and stable relationships, including same-sex relationships; marriage and civil partnership; legal status and rights; family change; parenting; forced marriage and marriage under 18 being illegal; recognising unsafe family relationships and seeking help.
Respectful relationships	Characteristics of positive relationships; communication; kindness, care and consent; boundaries; conflict; self-esteem; equality; bullying; prejudice; stereotypes; misogyny; power imbalances; the influence of pornography, online subcultures and influencers.
Online safety and awareness	Privacy and personal data; online behaviour; fake accounts and AI-created content; image-sharing law and risk; AI-generated sexual images; deepfakes; harmful content; harassment, stalking and coercive control; pornography; scams and sextortion; AI chatbots and critical thinking about emerging technology.

Statutory RSE strand	Content covered through the SMS curriculum
Being safe	Consent and boundaries; resisting pressure; judging trust; safety in public spaces; sexual harassment and sexual violence; harmful sexual behaviour; domestic abuse and coercive control; exploitation and grooming; forced marriage; FGM, virginity testing and hymenoplasty; strangulation/suffocation risks and law; reporting and help-seeking.
Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	Age of consent; choices about sexual activity; sexual consent; healthy decision-making; contraception; pregnancy choices including keeping a baby, adoption and abortion; STIs including HIV; safer sex; PrEP/PEP; alcohol/drugs and sexual risk; accurate information and confidential sexual/reproductive health advice.

Where safeguarding, pastoral or local information identifies an emerging risk, the school may revisit or bring forward relevant content. Parents/carers will be informed of material shifts away from the published approach and will be able to see relevant materials on request.

5. How RSE is taught and who teaches it

- RSE is taught principally through planned PSHRE lessons, which pupils receive at least twice each week.
- The PSHRE subject lead coordinates the programme and detailed curriculum map. The Head of Curriculum provides curriculum oversight.
- RSE is taught by appropriate school staff who know the pupils and can adapt teaching to their needs. Other subject or pastoral staff may reinforce related knowledge where relevant.
- Teaching is factual, sensitive, participative and age/stage appropriate. Staff establish ground rules, use distancing techniques and may use anonymous question methods where helpful.
- Lessons focus on knowledge and skills that support safe decision-making. The school does not encourage or normalise early sexual activity.
- Pupils are told in advance when teaching includes sex education content and parents/carers are kept appropriately informed about the planned curriculum.

6. SEND and accessibility

RSE must be accessible to all pupils, including pupils with SEND. This is particularly important at SMS Changing Lives School because pupils with SEND and SEMH needs may be more vulnerable to harmful sexual behaviour, abuse, exploitation, bullying and online harm.

- Staff adapt language, pace, repetition, examples, visual supports and task demands.
- Teaching takes account of EHCP outcomes, communication needs, cognition and learning, sensory needs, emotional regulation and individual vulnerability.
- Important safeguarding concepts are revisited and checked for understanding rather than assumed to have been learned after one lesson.
- Pupils may receive additional small-group or individual reinforcement where needed, while retaining their curriculum entitlement.
- The SENDCO supports curriculum staff to review accessibility and reasonable adjustments.

7. Equality, faith and sensitive or contested topics

RSE is taught in a way that promotes respect for all people and pays particular regard to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. Pupils learn about different families and relationships and about the legal rights and responsibilities relevant to equality.

Staff may explain relevant faith or belief perspectives where appropriate, but they are clear when a view is a belief rather than law or established fact. Where topics are contested, teaching is balanced and respectful. Staff do not present contested views as facts and do not use lessons to promote their personal beliefs or political opinions.

Teaching about sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment is handled factually, respectfully and in accordance with current law and statutory guidance, while ensuring that pupils with different characteristics, family circumstances or beliefs are not stigmatised.

Teaching includes the facts and law about biological sex and gender reassignment. Pupils are taught that these are distinct concepts in law, and that people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment are protected from discrimination and must be treated with respect and dignity. Where matters go beyond the facts and law and are contested, staff do not present any particular view as established fact, including the proposition that all people have a gender identity.

8. Parents/carers and curriculum materials

The school will proactively engage parents/carers about the RSE curriculum. Parents/carers are entitled to understand what is being taught and to see the materials used.

- A representative sample of RSE resources will be made available to parents/carers as part of curriculum transparency arrangements.
- All RSE curriculum materials can be viewed on request. Where copyright applies, the school will arrange access in a way that respects copyright rather than refusing access.
- The school will not enter into arrangements with external providers that prevent required parental transparency.
- Parents/carers may discuss content, timing, SEND adaptations or concerns with the school. They do not have a veto over required curriculum content.
- Parents/carers must be consulted before this RSE statement is made or revised. The school will share the draft, invite views, consider responses and record the consultation before final approval.

9. Right to request withdrawal from sex education

Parents/carers have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. A request should be made to the Head Teacher.

1. The Head Teacher will normally discuss the request with the parent/carer and, where appropriate, the pupil. The discussion will clarify which planned content is sex education, the purpose and benefits of the teaching, and any possible effects of withdrawal.
2. The school will keep a record of the request and discussion.
3. In secondary education, the Head Teacher will normally grant the request. A request may be refused only in exceptional circumstances, for example where there are specific safeguarding concerns or a particular vulnerability that makes the relevant education necessary.
4. If a pupil is withdrawn, the school will provide appropriate and purposeful education during the withdrawal period.
5. From three terms before the pupil turns 16, the pupil may choose to opt back into sex education even if a parent/carer previously requested withdrawal. The school will ensure pupils know about this right.
6. There is no right to withdraw from relationships education or from relevant content taught as part of the science curriculum.

10. Safeguarding and confidentiality

RSE can lead to safeguarding disclosures or concerns. All staff follow Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the school's safeguarding and child protection policy. Any concern about a pupil's welfare is acted on immediately and shared with the DSL or deputy in accordance with school procedures.

- Staff explain lesson confidentiality clearly and do not promise to keep disclosures secret.
- Personal information is handled on a need-to-know basis and in line with safeguarding and information-sharing requirements.
- Pupils are told how to report concerns and seek help in school and externally.
- Staff avoid asking pupils to share personal experiences in whole-class discussion.
- Where external visitors contribute, the safeguarding route is agreed before the session starts.

11. Managing difficult questions

Pupils may ask questions that go beyond planned content, are not suitable for a whole-class response, or relate to sex education from which they have been withdrawn. Staff will respond in a way that supports the pupil without providing inappropriate or unnecessary detail.

- Where appropriate, a factual, age/stage-appropriate answer will be given in class.
- A teacher may defer a question, answer it privately, involve a trusted adult or curriculum/safeguarding lead, or signpost a reliable support service.
- Questions that indicate a possible safeguarding concern are handled through safeguarding procedures rather than treated only as curriculum questions.
- Staff will not shame or dismiss a pupil for asking a question. Where an immediate answer is not appropriate, the pupil will be supported to access safe and reliable information.

12. External visitors and resources

External organisations can add specialist knowledge but the school always remains responsible for what pupils are taught. Before a visitor or resource is used, the school checks credentials, lesson plans and materials for accuracy, age/stage suitability, accessibility, safeguarding, impartiality and compatibility with the school's policy.

External providers must understand the school's safeguarding procedures and parental transparency requirements. Materials must be available for parents/carers to view on request.

13. Monitoring and evaluation

RSE is monitored through the same established quality-assurance arrangements as PSHRE:

- Centre Managers conduct and record learning walks, provide feedback and follow up identified actions.
- The Head of Curriculum, SENDCO, subject leads and Senior Leadership Team review monitoring findings and other curriculum evidence to identify themes, target support or coaching, develop curriculum/SEND practice and check the impact of actions.
- Formal lesson observations, supervision and appraisal evidence are used where relevant within wider teaching quality assurance.
- The PSHRE subject lead reviews curriculum coverage, sequencing, materials, assessment evidence and pupil voice, including whether statutory RSE content is being delivered and understood.
- Safeguarding and pastoral themes are considered when leaders decide whether content needs to be revisited, strengthened or brought forward.

Evaluation considers both implementation and impact: whether required content is taught, whether it is accessible, whether pupils can demonstrate key safety knowledge and help-seeking skills, and whether identified actions improve provision.

14. Policy development, consultation, approval and review

This revised statement has been drafted by school leadership following review of the statutory RSE guidance effective from 1 September 2026 and the April 2026 Independent School Standards guidance.

Parents/carers were consulted when the school's RSE provision was originally introduced. This 2026 revised statement is being published and issued to parents/carers for consultation because it reflects updated statutory guidance effective from 1 September 2026. Comments are invited by 23 October 2026. The school will consider all feedback received and keep a record of the consultation before the Head Teacher formally approves the revised statement, with the proprietor retaining responsibility for ensuring the Independent School Standards are met.

The final approved statement will be published on the school website and provided free of charge to anyone who requests a copy.

The statement will be reviewed every three years, or sooner where legislation or statutory guidance changes, curriculum or school provision changes materially, safeguarding or monitoring identifies a

need, or inspection/regulatory feedback requires earlier review. Any substantive revision will be subject to parent/carer consultation before finalisation.

15. Related policies and guidance

Related school policies and arrangements: PSHRE Policy and PSHRE Statement; Curriculum; Safeguarding / Child Protection; SEND and Accessibility; Equality; Behaviour and Anti-Bullying; Online Safety / Acceptable Use; and Science curriculum documentation and schemes of work.

Key external guidance: Department for Education statutory guidance on Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education (effective 1 September 2026); Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; Independent School Standards guidance (April 2026); SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.