



## HOLMEWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL

*'Kindness, aspiration & self-belief'*

### RELATIONSHIPS and SEX EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

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| <b>Policy Holder</b>        | Assistant Head, Pastoral |
| <b>Date Approved</b>        | February 2025            |
| <b>Approval</b>             | SLT                      |
| <b>Date for next review</b> | February 2026            |

#### 1. Introduction

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) forms part of the statutory curriculum for all schools (reference the DfE 2020, the Equality Act 2010, and Independent School Standards and Regulations, 2014) and is designed to empower pupils when making considered choices about a range of life experiences. At Holmewood House this policy runs in conjunction with our PSHE policy. The policy was developed with the co-ordinator of Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) through a variety of consultation methods involving pupils, parents and staff. It aims to provide guidance and information on all aspects of RSE in the school for staff, parents and governors.

#### 2. Policy statement

At Holmewood the Relationships and Sex Education curriculum is built around lifelong learning about our physical, moral and emotional development. It centres on:

- personal safety
- caring for others and
- building strong family relationships.

Through high quality evidence-based and age-appropriate teaching, pupils are prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. In the context of a supportive environment, the school is able to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, at school and in society.

Effective RSE helps develop pupils' skills in establishing and maintaining a range of relationships and enables them to make responsible and informed decisions about their health and well-being. It is designed to promote informed teaching about the characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships and relationships with children and adults. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, healthy relationships, recognising and managing feelings and sexual health. RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity - this would be inappropriate teaching.

Other related policies and documents include the Anti-Bullying policy, Drugs Education Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and Equal Opportunities Policy.

### **3. How will this be taught at Holmewood?**

RSE at Holmewood House is intended to help pupils learn about relationships, emotions, sexuality and sexual health. Evidence shows that effective relationship and sex education is essential if young people are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives. This area of the curriculum explores the context of the family, friends and wider societal issues and address responsibilities that arise from within these relationships. RSE at Holmewood House will help young people to learn to respect themselves and others and move with confidence from childhood through adolescence into adulthood. Our aim is to present relevant and age-appropriate facts, information and skills, which will be delivered in an objective and balanced manner.

The delivery of RSE at Holmewood House is underpinned by the following statements:

- The delivery of RSE is factual, sensitive and balanced.
- RSE promotes meaningful, loving, and healthy relationships.
- Whilst delivering RSE, staff and external providers will avoid the imposition of personal opinion. Instead, they will stay focused on the social, moral, spiritual, health and education aspects of the topics.
- The religious background of all pupils must be taken into when planning teaching so that topics are appropriately handled. Staff must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.
- The teaching should reflect the law so that young people clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the wider implications of decisions they make.

At Holmewood, RSE will be taught through our own bespoke PSHE program, 'My Heart, My Mind' (MHMM). RSE is not taught in isolation within the My Heart, My Mind lessons but embedded, as appropriate, in all curriculum areas. The school's Science and My Heart, My Mind schemes of work are central in the teaching of RSE. The main biological content is delivered in Science lessons while in PSHE the broader health, moral and social issues are raised. In addition, elements of the RSE curriculum are also explored through assemblies and form times and form part of our broad and balanced curriculum.

RSE is normally delivered in mixed gender groups other than when it is deemed more appropriate for topics to be covered in single sex groups. A variety of learning approaches which involve children's full participation is used.

- From Reception to Year 4 relationships education is taught through an integrated approach within our My Heart, My Mind, My World programme and pupils will be taught by their class teacher.
- From Year 5 to Year 8, relationships education is taught through an integrated approach within our My Heart, My Mind, My World programme by a team of teachers specifically trained in the aspects of the RSE curriculum alongside the School Medical Officer.

Occasionally, appropriate and suitably experienced visitors from outside school may be invited to contribute to the delivery of RSE in school.

#### **4. Equal Opportunities and Accessibility**

The school is committed to the provision of RSE for all pupils and that all pupils understand the importance of equality and respect. Our programme aims to respond to the diversity of cultures, faiths, family backgrounds and sexual orientation, recognising the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Equal time and provision will be allocated for all groups but there may be occasions where pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are given extra support from SEND staff. High quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised will be the starting point to ensure accessibility.

Resources will be chosen to reflect diversity and a range of viewpoints. They will be shared with parents as this can be reassuring and enables parents to continue the conversations started in class at home. All RSE books and materials will be regularly reviewed and refreshed to keep all content as current as possible.

#### **5. Parents**

The role of parents in the development of their children's understanding about relationships is vital. We acknowledge the significant influence parents have in enabling their children to grow and mature and form healthy relationships. We have worked with parents to inform this policy and ensure it reflects the community of Holmewood. Details of the policy, including the key topics covered are made available to parents via the Holmewood House Parent Portal.

#### **6. Outcomes of the RSE curriculum (Nursery - Year 6)**

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| <b>Families and people who care for me</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability.</li> <li>2. The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives.</li> <li>3. That others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care.</li> <li>4. That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up.</li> <li>5. That marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong.</li> <li>6. How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed</li> </ol> |
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| <b>Caring friendships</b>       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends.</li> <li>2. The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties.</li> <li>3. That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded.</li> <li>4. That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right.</li> <li>5. How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Respectful relationships</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs.</li> <li>2. Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships.</li> <li>3. The conventions of courtesy and manners.</li> <li>4. The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness.</li> <li>5. That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority.</li> <li>6. About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help.</li> <li>7. What a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive.</li> <li>8. The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults</li> </ol> |
| <b>Online relationships</b>     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not.</li> <li>2. That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous.</li> <li>3. The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them.</li> <li>4. How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met.</li> <li>5. How information and data is shared and used online.</li> </ol>   |

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| <b>Being safe</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context).</li> <li>2. About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.</li> <li>3. That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact.</li> <li>4. How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know.</li> <li>5. How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult.</li> <li>6. How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard.</li> <li>7. How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so.</li> <li>8. Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources.</li> </ol> |
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## Years 7 & 8

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| <b>Families</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That there are different types of committed, stable relationships.</li> <li>2. How these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children.</li> <li>3. How to: determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy: judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships); and, how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Respectful relationships, including friendships</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online) including: trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. This includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship.</li> <li>2. Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships.</li> <li>3. How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non- consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice).</li> <li>4. That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs.</li> <li>5. About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help.</li> <li>6. What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable.</li> </ol> |

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| <b>Online and media</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online.</li> <li>2. About online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online.</li> <li>3. Not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them.</li> <li>4. What to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online.</li> <li>5. The impact of viewing harmful content.</li> </ol> |
| <b>Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others.</li> <li>2. How to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.</li> </ol>   |

## 7. Explanation of the right to withdraw pupils from the sex education component of RSE

New legislation, brought in through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, brought important changes in relation to parental rights to withdraw children from school RSE.

While parents of pupils in Years 7 & 8 retain the right to withdraw their child from some or all sex education delivered as part of a statutory RSE (other than the aspects of sex education which sits within the science curriculum), parents are not able to withdraw their child from **relationships education** in Reception to Year 6 or Year 7 & 8.

Before granting any such request, parents are invited to meet with the Assistant Head (Pastoral and Wellbeing) who will ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. In addition, the meeting will explore any concerns and discuss any impact that withdrawal may have on the child. Should the family then wish to withdraw, this will be approved by the Headteacher and alternative provision arranged. This process will be documented for future reference.

Once these discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, the school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child. The process remains the same for pupils with SEND and in this situation the pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND will be taken into account when making the decision.

The Headteacher will automatically grant a request to withdraw a pupil from any sex education delivered from Reception – Year 6, other than as part of the science curriculum. If a pupil is excused from sex education, it is the school's responsibility to ensure appropriate, purposeful education is continued.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education.

## **8. Child Protection and confidentiality**

The importance of respecting confidentiality during RSE lessons is paramount. Staff need to regularly remind pupils of the 'safe space code of conduct' and that the teaching of RSE takes place within that safe space allowing all pupils to discuss issues openly.

Teachers should act in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy should a child make a disclosure of a child protection nature during an RSE lesson or discussion. Staff cannot guarantee complete confidentiality to pupils; concerns will always be listened to, taken seriously and, where necessary, pupils will be supported appropriately.

## **9. Controversial and sensitive issues**

Staff are aware that issues raised in RSE create differing viewpoints. Personal views are respected but RSE issues are taught without bias. Topics are presented so pupils can develop their own, informed opinions but also respect others who may have a different opinion.

To facilitate open discussions, the creation and agreement of ground rules will be completed as a class at the beginning of RSE lessons, facilitated by the teacher.

## **10. The use of appropriate language**

In order to support staff during lessons and to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings, the following guidance has been agreed:

- staff and pupils should use the correct terms for all body parts
- clear, unequivocal language should be used in an objective manner
- discussions should take place around what 'slang' words mean and explanations that some can be seen as offensive.
- staff will use their judgement when introducing language depending on understanding and maturity level of learners.

## **11. Dealing with Questions**

Both formal and informal RSE arising from pupils' questions are answered according to the age and maturity of the pupil concerned. The school anticipates that individual teachers will use their skill and discretion in this area and refer to the DSL if they are concerned.

## **12. Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation**

Holmewood School believes that RSE should meet the needs of all pupils regardless of their developing sexuality and be able to deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support. Homophobic bullying is dealt with strongly yet sensitively. The school will liaise with individual parents on this issue regarding a particular child to reassure them of the content and context.

## **13. Dissemination and review**

All members of staff and governors receive a copy of the RSE policy. Training is regularly delivered to staff on the policy content. Copies for parents are available from the School website, and from the school office on request.

**Created by:**

Assistant Head Pastoral & Wellbeing

In conjunction with:

Deputy Head

Assistant Head (Head of Pre-Prep)

**Policy Date:** February 2025

**Review by:** February 2026 (or sooner if needed e.g. if Gov. guidance should change.)