



Gillingham School Dorset

United Learning RHSE Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Last review:	July 2026
Next review:	July 2027
Signed:	Subject to ratification
Approval Committee:	Governing Body

United Learning RHSE Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Policy Development, Consultation and Aims

Development of the Policy

This policy has been developed in consultation with pupils, parents and staff. It reflects the statutory requirements set out in the Department for Education (DfE) Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (RSHE) Statutory Guidance 2025.

Consultation

Gillingham School consults with parents by:

- Offering an online consultation/update for parents in early September 2026 in light of curriculum changes
- Emailing all parents summarising the proposed changes and explaining the rationale, including link to curriculum overview.
- Feeding back on any changes made as a result of consultation
- Publishing the curriculum overview on the website
- Notifying parents of any changes to the published schedule through the year.
- Offering one-to-one meetings for parents with specific concerns.

Gillingham School consults with pupils through:

- Whole school surveys
- Pupil voice
- School council meetings
- End of unit reviews

Gillingham School consults with staff by:

- Ensuring all RSHE teachers receive training, with CPD needs identified and addressed
- Regular curriculum review meetings with centralised resources shared, potential risks or barriers signposted (including for SEND), and adaptations made
- Recording agreed changes, CPD actions and resource requests and sharing with SLT.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- set out the school's approach to Relationships and Sex Education in line with the DfE statutory guidance (2025);
- promote pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing through an age-appropriate, evidence-informed RSE curriculum;
- ensure pupils develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to build positive, safe and respectful relationships, including online;
- support safeguarding by teaching pupils to recognise risks, seek help and report concerns;
- ensure content is inclusive of all pupils and respectful of diversity while not presenting contested views as fact;
- promote transparency by explaining how parents can access curriculum materials, identifying which material constitutes sex education, and how withdrawal from sex education works;
- clarify how RSE is delivered, who is responsible and how teaching is monitored and reviewed.

Statutory Requirements

Gillingham School delivers Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance (updated July 2025, effective September 2026). RSE is a compulsory part of the curriculum, ensuring all pupils receive accurate, age-appropriate and inclusive teaching on relationships and sex. Provision addresses safeguarding priorities, including online risks, misogyny, violence against women and girls, harmful influences, and personal safety, while promoting mental health, resilience and respect for diversity. RSE is taught within a safe, supportive environment by trained staff, with clear communication to parents and carers, and is regularly reviewed.

Working with Parents

Gillingham School recognises the importance of parental involvement in their child's education; parents are a child's first and most enduring educators, providing the foundational learning, emotional support, and guidance that shape their development from birth.

It is vital that parents are confident in the content and messaging of the RSE their child receives.

Gillingham School will ensure that parents are consulted on RSE policy and have access to what their child will learn in RSE.

Overviews of content can be found on the RSHE page of the school website. Student-facing lesson content can be accessed on request by contacting the PSRE Head of Department (pip.crockett@gillingham-dorset.co.uk).

If parents have immediate concerns, please contact the school office on 01747 822222.

Parental Right to Withdraw Children

Gillingham School acknowledges the right of parents to withdraw their child from some or all of the sex education provided (except from sex education taught under the science curriculum), but not from relationships education.

Parents wishing to discuss the withdrawal of their child from some or all of the sex education provided should contact pip.crockett@gillingham-dorset.co.uk outlining this request.

In considering such a request, Gillingham School will use the following process:

- The Headteacher will meet with the parent (and, if appropriate, the child) to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum and the content that will be covered.
- The Headteacher will discuss with the parent the benefits of the child receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child, including social or emotional effects of being excluded as well as the likelihood of the child hearing from their peers what was covered (and having that content channelled through a child's voice rather than a teacher's).
- The Headteacher will outline provision that will be made during lessons where the child has been withdrawn from sex education, which will be appropriate and purposeful.
- Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. safeguarding concerns), Gillingham School will respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will make arrangement to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

Definitions: Relationships Education

Relationships education is designed to help pupils build and maintain positive relationships while also recognising potential risks and harms. As part of this, teaching may cover issues such as preventing sexual abuse or avoiding the sharing of inappropriate material online, without the need to describe any sexual activity in detail.

In line with safeguarding best practice, pupils should also learn the correct names for different parts of the body and be able to use these terms confidently and accurately. These terms can be taught without any reference to, or details of, sexual activity.

Relationships education is compulsory, and parents do not have the right to withdraw their child from relationships education or health education.

Relationships education includes teaching about:

- families, including diverse family structures
- friendships and respectful relationships
- safe, caring and healthy relationships
- harmful relationships, sexual harassment and sexual violence
- boundaries, consent and communication
- online behaviour, digital safety, harmful online attitudes and image-sharing
- recognising and reporting unsafe behaviours

Relationships education does not describe the detail of sexual activity.

Definitions: Sex Education

Sex education is teaching about:

- sexual activity and sexual decision-making
- contraception and safer sex
- sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- sexual health services
- intimate relationships and sexual consent in context

When sharing overviews of content in upcoming units, all content that is considered “sex education” and subject to the right to withdraw will be clearly indicated with a (W).

Curriculum Content and Organisation

The RSE curriculum is delivered through:

- Timetabled PSRE lessons
- The tutor programme and assemblies
- assemblies
- cross-curricular links to Science, PE and Computing

Gillingham School uses RSE materials which are created by our subject teachers, using resources from the central team of subject specialist at United Learning and additional content from the PSHE Association. Specific lessons are also supported by expert information and resources from the NSPCC, Brook Sexual Health and NHS Dorset Sexual Health.

RSE lessons at Gillingham School are delivered by subject specialist teaching staff or other teachers working under the guidance of this team. The central curriculum is accompanied by guidance and support, and more bespoke training is delivered when lessons cover especially complex or sensitive materials. All teachers receive annual safeguarding training. Departmental CPD around sensitive topics will take place during Departmental Meetings.

The RSHE curriculum is responsive and adaptable, allowing staff to address emerging local and national issues, safeguarding concerns, and incidents within the school community in a timely and appropriate way. This ensures that learning remains relevant and equips pupils with the knowledge and skills to recognise and respond to risks in real time. External providers may be used to supplement the curriculum at various points throughout the year. When external providers are invited to work with students, parents will be informed about the provider and the nature of the session via school messaging systems.

Parents can request to see all student-facing lesson materials by contacting: pip.crockett@gillingham-dorset.co.uk
If parents have immediate concerns, please contact the school office on 01747 822222.

The objectives that are covered in each year group are as follows:

Year 7	Starting Secondary School: Features of respectful friendships, bullying, managing conflict, recognising and reporting unsafe behaviours Changing Bodies and Brains: hormonal and cognitive changes during puberty, male and female body changes during puberty
Year 8	Influences: Boundaries, peer pressure, characteristics of unhealthy friendships and relationships, recognising and reporting unsafe behaviours The Online Universe: online behaviour, digital safety, harmful online attitudes and image-sharing Intimate relationships: Features of safe, caring and healthy relationships, consent, choices and consequences including pregnancy and parenting, families and marriage
Year 9	Looking After Yourself: Consent, fertility and conception, contraceptive choices, preventing and treating STIs
Year 10	Respectful Relationships: Features of safe, caring and healthy relationships, consent, sexual activity and sexual decision-making, pornography, pregnancy choices, harmful sexual behaviours (sexual harassment and sexual violence) and the law, sexual health services Influences: Boundaries, peer pressure, characteristics of unhealthy friendships and relationships, recognising and reporting unsafe behaviours
Year 11	The Essentials: consent, sexual activity and sexual decision-making, harmful sexual behaviours and the law, contraceptive choices, sexual health services

Teaching and Learning

RSE at Gillingham School is delivered in a way that:

- is appropriate to age and stage
- is scientifically factual, objective and legally accurate
- equips pupils with communication and decision-making skills
- encourages open discussion while setting safe boundaries
- promotes respect, inclusivity and safeguarding
- avoids teaching contested views as fact
- maintains balance and impartiality

Staff will:

- use ground rules
- prepare pupils ahead of time where appropriate
- signpost pupils to support
- manage disclosures in line with safeguarding procedures
- balance the need for accuracy with sensitivity

Responding to Questions

Pupils may ask questions that are outside of the scope of the lesson or what is appropriate for a member of staff to discuss with them. This may be due to the fact that the child in question has been withdrawn from the sex education element of the subject.

Nonetheless, children's curiosity makes it unlikely that an unsatisfied request for information will end there, and it is highly likely that they will seek alternative sources. These are likely to be less reliable and even unsafe.

If a pupil asks a question that a member of staff cannot answer, the following steps will be followed:

- The member of staff will discreetly and sensitively reassure the pupil that it is normal to be curious and explain to the pupil why they are unable to answer the question. They may ask the pupil whether this is something they would feel able to ask a parent about, or signpost to specialist services if appropriate.
- The member of staff will follow safeguarding policies and procedures as appropriate, but even if the question posed does not constitute a safeguarding concern, the RSHE lead and/or the SLT line manager for RSHE will be informed on the same day.
- Leaders will consider the likelihood of the pupil seeking answers to their question/s elsewhere and the possible implications of this. They may consider it appropriate to contact parents to discuss how to best support and guide the pupil.

Inclusivity and Accessibility

Pupils with SEND

All pupils, including those with SEND, have a full entitlement to RSE, and having an additional need is never a reason to restrict access to essential learning about relationships, safety, consent and wellbeing.

Research suggests that children and adults with SEND can be more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Provision of high-quality, adapted RSE is a critical protective factor.

This section should be read in conjunction with the school's SEND Policy and Teaching and Learning Policy.

Teaching and Learning

- Teaching will be personalised through adapted resources to match tasks to ability
- Lessons will be paced carefully, using multi-sensory approaches and provide extra processing time.
- Staff will maintain high expectations of dignity, age-appropriate content and respect, ensuring materials reflect diverse families, relationships and identities, including those of young people with SEND.
- As appropriate, planning will be trauma-informed and sensitive to pupils who may have experienced adversity, with clear routes for help-seeking at appropriate points in units. These adaptations support access without lowering ambition or omitting statutory content.

Pupils' Religious and Faith Backgrounds

RSE will respect religious and cultural diversity, uphold pupils' rights to accurate information and safety, and comply with the Equality Act. Teaching will avoid discrimination and protect pupils' dignity.

Principles

- Assume diversity, not uniformity: different pupils of the same faith will interpret teachings differently.
- Meet statutory RSE outcomes while treating faith backgrounds fairly and avoiding discrimination.
- Prioritise pupils' wellbeing, dignity and safeguarding when adapting content.
- Engage fully with parents and pupils when consulting on the curriculum.

Teaching, Learning and Curriculum

Teachers and leaders must balance pupils' rights to access all statutory content with sensitivity to religious and cultural diversity.

When planning lessons, Gillingham School will:

- Offer neutral, balanced coverage: RSE should be delivered in a balanced and neutral way. This is especially important where religious and cultural perspectives mean that pupils may have strong beliefs about some content. Teachers will present accurate faith viewpoints alongside secular and other perspectives, so pupils see a balanced picture.
- Use inclusive imagery and language: ensure visuals show religious and cultural diversity and avoid metaphors that may confuse pupils with mobility needs or ASD.
- Manage discussions carefully: deliver content in an objective way and use ground rules and clear boundaries to manage pupil discussion.
- Map objectives to need: teachers start from the required learning outcomes and identify where faith perspectives are most likely to be relevant (e.g. family, marriage, contraception, gender).
- Build in alternatives: consider additional consultation with parents and pupils to ensure sensitive delivery where appropriate.
- Consider faith perspectives: build in opportunities to reflect on RSE objectives through the lens of faith teachings when appropriate and helpful.
- Employ distancing techniques: use stories, role-play, third-person scenarios or case studies to explore sensitive issues safely.

Complaints

Any complaints about the Relationships and Sex Education programme should be made in accordance with the school's usual complaints procedure. This can be accessed [Statutory Policies for Schools - Gillingham School](#)

Approval and Review

- This policy is approved by the governing body.
- It is reviewed annually, or sooner if national guidance changes or it is otherwise appropriate to make amendments.
- The PSRE Lead is responsible for coordinating the review process.
- The policyholder is always a member of the Senior Leadership team.