
ED0049 Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

Statement of Intent

Esland is committed to delivering high-quality Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) across all of its schools. RSHE supports pupils to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence needed to lead healthy, safe and fulfilling lives.

We recognise that many of our pupils have experienced disrupted education, adverse childhood experiences, social and emotional challenges or barriers to forming positive relationships. Our RSHE curriculum is therefore designed to be inclusive, accessible, sensitive and responsive to the needs of individual learners.

The school believes that RSHE plays a vital role in safeguarding, personal development, emotional wellbeing and preparation for adulthood. It helps pupils understand healthy relationships, recognise risks, make informed decisions and develop the skills needed to participate positively in society.

Our approach reflects Esland's therapeutic, relational and Stage Not Age ethos. Learning is delivered in a way that promotes safety, trust, respect and inclusion while maintaining high expectations and ambition for all learners.

Scope

This is an overarching policy for all Esland schools, including Esland Online School. It sets out the shared approach to RSHE and the minimum standards every Esland school must meet. In this policy, 'the school' means each Esland school and 'the Headteacher' means the Headteacher of that school.

Each school applies this policy in a way that reflects the ages, needs and experiences of its pupils, and whether teaching is delivered in person or online. Where a school needs to set out its own local arrangements, for example how parents and carers can view teaching materials, it publishes a school-specific version using the ED0049 reference with a school suffix (for example, ED0049O for Esland Online School). Any school-specific version must be consistent with this policy.

Aims

The aims of RSHE in Esland schools are to enable pupils to:

- Develop positive and respectful relationships.
- Understand the importance of physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Develop self-awareness and self-respect.
- Understand personal safety and safeguarding.
- Recognise and respond appropriately to risk.
- Develop resilience and confidence.
- Understand and respect diversity.
- Develop knowledge about physical and mental health.
- Prepare for adult life and future relationships.
- Understand how to keep themselves safe offline and online.

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- Make informed and ethical decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships.

Statutory Framework

This policy is based upon:

- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance (Department for Education, July 2025), which replaces the 2019 guidance and applies from 1 September 2026.
- The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019.
- The Equality Act 2010.
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026).
- The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 Years (2015).
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the requirement to provide personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE).
- The Online Safety Act 2023.

The school delivers RSHE in a manner that is age appropriate, developmentally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of individual learners.

As independent schools, Esland schools must teach Relationships Education to primary-age pupils and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) to secondary-age pupils, and have regard to the statutory guidance. Health Education is delivered through each school's PSHE programme, and schools use the health and wellbeing sections of the guidance to plan it.

Principles

RSHE in Esland schools is underpinned by the following principles:

Relationships Matter

Positive relationships are central to wellbeing, learning and future success. The curriculum supports pupils to understand how to build, maintain and repair healthy relationships.

Inclusion

RSHE is inclusive and reflects the diversity of modern society. The school promotes equality, dignity, respect and understanding while challenging discrimination and prejudice.

Safeguarding

Teaching helps pupils recognise situations that may place them at risk and supports them to seek help when needed. RSHE contributes directly to the school's wider safeguarding responsibilities.

Personal Development

The RSHE curriculum is informed by statutory guidance and draws upon the planning frameworks and resources provided by the PSHE Association. Curriculum content is adapted to reflect the needs, developmental stage, interests and experiences of pupils in each school while remaining consistent with the school's safeguarding responsibilities, therapeutic ethos and preparation for adulthood objectives.

RSHE supports pupils to develop confidence, independence, self-awareness and decision-making skills that contribute to positive life outcomes.

Engagement and Transparency

Pupil voice shapes the curriculum so that it stays relevant and engaging. The school is open with parents and carers about what is taught and the materials used.

Positive and Well Sequenced

Teaching builds positive attitudes and healthy norms. Content is sequenced so that pupils have the knowledge they need before they are likely to face a situation. Staff avoid language that could normalise harmful behaviour or stigmatise any group of pupils, including boys.

Whole School Approach

RSHE is part of a whole school approach to wellbeing and positive relationships. It is supported by the school's behaviour, safeguarding and online safety policies.

Curriculum Content

RSHE is delivered through PSHE, pastoral activities, enrichment opportunities and wider curriculum learning.

The curriculum includes learning relating to:

Families and Relationships

Pupils learn about:

- Different types of families.
- Positive and respectful relationships.
- Friendship.
- Kindness, empathy and compassion.
- Boundaries.
- Consent and permission.
- Managing conflict.
- Recognising unhealthy relationships.
- Seeking support when concerned.
- Marriage and civil partnership, including that forced marriage and marriage under the age of 18 are illegal.
- Sexual ethics, including that healthy relationships involve kindness, care and an awareness of power, not only consent.
- Recognising misogyny, sexism, stereotypes and other forms of prejudice.
- Ending relationships with kindness and managing difficult feelings.

Physical Health and Wellbeing

Pupils learn about:

- Healthy lifestyles.
- Nutrition and physical activity.
- Sleep and healthy routines.
- Personal hygiene.
- Puberty and physical development.
- Accessing health support.
- Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vaping and nicotine products.
- Menstrual and gynaecological health, including when to seek help from health professionals.
- Basic first aid, including CPR and the use of defibrillators.

- Using healthcare services, including GPs, pharmacies and sexual health services, and the concept of Gillick competence.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

Pupils learn about:

- Emotional regulation.
- Self-esteem.
- Resilience.
- Stress and anxiety.
- Seeking help and support.
- Positive coping strategies.
- Building healthy relationships with themselves and others.
- Change, loss and bereavement.
- The difference between everyday worries and mental ill health.
- The links between gambling, alcohol and drug use and poor mental health.

Suicide prevention, self-harm and eating disorders are taught with particular care. Before addressing these topics directly, the school seeks advice from mental health professionals, including the Esland clinical team, and makes sure staff are trained. Staff consider each pupil's age, maturity and experiences. They never discuss methods and avoid emotive language, images or video.

Online Relationships and Safety

This aspect of the curriculum is delivered in conjunction with the school's Online Safety Policy and safeguarding curriculum.

Pupils learn about:

- Safe online behaviour.
- Digital citizenship.
- Privacy and personal information.
- Online relationships.
- Cyberbullying.
- Grooming and exploitation.
- Harmful online content.
- Digital wellbeing.
- Artificial intelligence (AI), including deepfakes and the risks of AI chatbots that create fake intimacy or give harmful advice.
- The law on creating, keeping and sharing sexual images of under 18s, including AI-generated images, and how to get images removed through Report Remove.
- Sextortion, online scams, gambling and other financial harms.
- How pornography can distort attitudes to sex and relationships.
- Online misogyny and harmful influencers and sub-cultures, including so-called incels.
- Misinformation, disinformation and how content is targeted.

Personal Safety

Pupils learn to:

- Recognise unsafe situations.
- Understand personal boundaries.
- Recognise coercion and manipulation.

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- Seek support from trusted adults.
 - Understand safeguarding and reporting concerns.
 - Stay safe around roads, railways and water, and in increasingly independent situations.
 - Understand the law on sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic abuse, stalking, strangulation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty.
 - Recognise criminal exploitation, including county lines, and understand the law on knives and weapons.

Sex Education

Where appropriate and developmentally suitable, pupils learn about:

- Human reproduction.
- Physical and emotional aspects of sexual relationships.
- Consent.
- Contraception.
- Sexual health.
- Respectful relationships.
- Responsibility and decision making.
- The age of consent and the right to give, withhold or withdraw consent at any time.
- Sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, testing, PrEP and PEP.
- Pregnancy choices, using medically and legally accurate, impartial information.
- Where to get confidential sexual and reproductive health advice.

Teaching will always be age appropriate, sensitive and aligned with this policy, statutory guidance and each pupil's developmental needs.

Teaching About the Law

Relevant law is taught in a factual way so that pupils understand their rights and responsibilities. This includes the law on consent, image sharing, the Online Safety Act, protected characteristics, substances, weapons, exploitation and medical consent.

Teaching and Learning

The school recognises that discussing relationships, health and personal safety can feel particularly challenging for some pupils. Staff use a relational and therapeutically informed approach to create psychologically safe learning environments in which pupils can participate, reflect and ask questions appropriately.

RSHE is delivered within a safe and supportive learning environment where pupils feel respected and able to participate appropriately.

Staff:

- Establish clear expectations and boundaries.
- Use age-appropriate resources.
- Adapt learning to meet individual needs.
- Encourage discussion and reflection.
- Promote respect for differing views and experiences.
- Respond sensitively to questions and concerns.
- Use approaches such as distancing techniques, ground rules and anonymous question boxes when teaching sensitive topics.

Whether lessons take place in the classroom or online, staff provide opportunities for carefully structured discussion while maintaining safeguarding and confidentiality expectations.

Where teaching is delivered online, staff also follow the school's Online Safety Policy and remote learning arrangements.

External Providers

The school stays responsible for all content taught by external providers. Before a session, the school checks the provider's credentials, reviews the materials and lesson plan, and agrees how any safeguarding concern will be handled. The school will not agree to any contract that prevents it sharing materials with parents and carers.

Supporting Pupils with SEND

The school recognises that pupils with SEND may require adapted approaches to RSHE learning.

Teaching is planned to ensure that content is accessible, meaningful and appropriate to individual developmental needs.

Staff take account of EHCP outcomes, communication needs, social understanding, emotional regulation and identified vulnerabilities.

Pupils are supported to develop the knowledge and skills needed to build safe, healthy and positive relationships and to understand personal safety in ways that are relevant to their individual circumstances.

Staff recognise that pupils with SEND may be more vulnerable to harmful sexual behaviour, abuse, exploitation and bullying, and plan teaching with this in mind.

Sensitive and Safeguarding Issues

RSHE may occasionally raise safeguarding concerns or disclosures.

Staff will not promise confidentiality where a safeguarding risk is identified. Any concerns will be managed in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Where pupils ask questions that are personal, sensitive or outside the planned curriculum, staff will respond appropriately, professionally and in line with safeguarding procedures.

Where a question relates to sex education from which a pupil has been withdrawn, or goes beyond the planned curriculum, staff will support the pupil. This may mean encouraging them to talk to a parent, carer or trusted adult, or signposting to reliable support so they do not turn to unsafe sources online.

At the start of lessons, staff explain how confidentiality works and what happens if a pupil shares a concern. Staff are aware of mandatory reporting duties, including for FGM.

Working with Parents and Carers

The school recognises the important role of parents and carers in supporting children's personal development and wellbeing.

Parents and carers will be consulted when this policy is developed and reviewed. They will be kept informed about the aims and content of the RSHE curriculum and encouraged to work collaboratively with the school to support learning and development.

Where appropriate, the school will provide opportunities for discussion regarding curriculum content and individual pupil needs.

Parents and carers can view all RSHE teaching materials on request, including materials from external providers. The school shares a representative sample of resources in advance and tells parents and carers before sex education content is taught. Any change from this policy will be shared in advance.

This policy, and any school-specific version of it, is published on each school's website. A copy is available free of charge to anyone who asks.

Right to Request Withdrawal from Sex Education

Parents and carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of RSE. The Headteacher will discuss the request with parents or carers and, where appropriate, the pupil. This discussion explains the purpose of the curriculum and the possible impact of withdrawal, and is recorded. For secondary-age pupils, the Headteacher will grant the request except in exceptional circumstances, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or a specific vulnerability.

For primary-age pupils, sex education is not compulsory beyond what is taught in national curriculum science. Where a school chooses to teach sex education to primary-age pupils, the Headteacher will automatically grant a parent or carer's request to withdraw their child from it.

From three terms before their 16th birthday, a pupil can choose to opt back into sex education, even if a parent or carer has requested withdrawal. The school will make sure pupils know they have this option.

A pupil who is withdrawn will receive appropriate, purposeful education during that time.

The right to withdraw does not apply to Relationships Education, Health Education or those aspects of the curriculum that form part of the statutory science curriculum.

The school will work collaboratively with parents and carers to discuss any concerns and ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the pupil.

Inclusion and Equality

RSHE is delivered in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

The school promotes respect for all people and seeks to ensure that pupils understand:

- Diversity and inclusion.
- Protected characteristics.
- Equality and fairness.
- Respectful relationships.
- Individual rights and responsibilities.

Teaching encourages pupils to value diversity while understanding the importance of kindness, respect and mutual understanding.

Content about same-sex relationships is integrated throughout the RSHE programme, not taught as a standalone lesson.

Pupils are taught the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment. Staff do not endorse any particular view on contested questions or teach as fact that all people have a gender identity. Pupils learn that people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment are protected from discrimination and must be treated with respect and dignity.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of RSHE provision is monitored through:

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- Curriculum review.
 - Pupil voice.
 - Lesson observations.
 - Quality assurance activities.
 - Feedback from pupils, parents and carers.
 - Safeguarding monitoring.
 - Staff reflection and evaluation.

Findings are used to continually improve the quality and relevance of the RSHE curriculum.

Roles and Responsibilities

Proprietor

The proprietor of each school makes sure that curriculum content and materials follow the statutory guidance, teaching is accessible to pupils with SEND, and parents and carers receive clear information about content, materials, external providers and the right to request withdrawal.

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that RSHE is implemented effectively, monitored appropriately and aligned with statutory requirements and the school's ethos.

Teaching Staff

Teaching staff are responsible for delivering RSHE in a professional, inclusive and sensitive manner and for following safeguarding procedures where concerns arise.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL will provide support and guidance relating to safeguarding aspects of RSHE and respond to safeguarding concerns arising from curriculum delivery.

Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (ED0017).
- Online Safety Policy.
- Behaviour Policy.
- SEND and Inclusion Policy.
- Curriculum Policy.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.
- Suicide Prevention Policy.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where changes in legislation, statutory guidance or school practice require revision.