Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

Abingdon House School
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1. INTRODUCTION

Abingdon House School is owned and operated by Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular, it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Abingdon House School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

In the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Department for Education guidance Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility updated August 2023, considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part-time, and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school contracts the services of third-party organisations to ensure regulatory compliance and implement best practices for:

- HR and Employment Law
- Health & Safety Guidance
- DBS Check processing
- Mandatory Safeguarding, Health & Safety, and other relevant training
- Data protection and GDPR guidance
- Specialist insurance cover

Where this policy refers to 'employees', the term refers to any individual who is classified as an employee or a worker, working with and on behalf of the school (including volunteers and contractors).

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, pupils and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and seek to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at Abingdon House School.

The policy documents of Abingdon House School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasions, a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the republication of a set of policy documents. Care should therefore be taken to ensure, by consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, that the details of any policy document are still effectively current at a particular moment.

2. AIMS

The aims of RSE at Abingdon House School are to enable students to:

- develop healthy, respectful and inclusive relationships based on kindness, trust, empathy, consent and appropriate boundaries;
- understand puberty, sexual development and sexual and reproductive health using accurate, age and stage-appropriate language;
- recognise healthy and unhealthy behaviours, including coercion, harassment, abuse, exploitation and harmful online behaviour;
- make informed, safe and responsible decisions and know how, when and where to seek help;
- develop self-respect, confidence, self-advocacy, resilience and respect for others;
- understand diversity, equality and the rights and responsibilities that underpin safe relationships;
- prepare for increasing independence, adulthood and participation in wider society.

RSE supports the Cavendish Four Cs - Confidence, Competence, Creativity and Character and contributes to wider personal development, including emotional regulation, confidence and sense of safety, social understanding and relationships, communication of needs and reflective development.

3. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Abingdon House School teaches RSE in accordance with the Department for Education statutory guidance Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, revised guidance effective from 1 September 2026.

As an independent school, we provide relationships education to all pupils receiving primary education and RSE to all pupils receiving secondary education under section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and have regard to section 403 of the Education Act 1996 and the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019.

We also have regard to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the Equality Act 2010, the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, current Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance and other relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance.

Health education guidance is not directly statutory for independent schools; however, PSHE is compulsory in independent schools and Abingdon House Senior School provides a broad programme of health, wellbeing and personal development education through PSHE.

The school maintains an up-to-date written RSE policy, publishes it on the school website and provides a copy free of charge on request.

4. POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This policy is developed and reviewed through a process that reflects statutory guidance and the needs of the Abingdon House School community.

• Review: relevant statutory guidance, safeguarding priorities, school policies, curriculum content and emerging needs are considered.

• Staff consultation: teaching, pastoral, safeguarding and therapeutic colleagues are able to contribute to policy and curriculum development.

• Parent/carer engagement: parents and carers are proactively informed and consulted when the RSE policy is developed or materially reviewed. Curriculum materials are available to view on request.

• Student voice: students are given accessible, developmentally appropriate opportunities to share views about RSE, including through discussion, questionnaires, visual choice systems and individual conversations.

• Approval and review: the policy is approved through the school/Cavendish governance arrangements and reviewed at least annually, or sooner where statutory guidance, safeguarding priorities or curriculum needs change.

5. DEFINITION

RSE is the planned teaching of the emotional, social, physical and legal aspects of relationships and sexual health. It includes learning about relationships, consent, boundaries, puberty, sexual health, sexuality, online safety, diversity, personal identity and how to seek help.

RSE combines accurate information with opportunities to develop communication, decision-making, self-advocacy and relationship skills. It is not about promoting sexual activity or encouraging early sexual experimentation.

Relationships education

Relationships education develops understanding of positive relationships, family and friendship, respect, equality, consent and boundaries, online and offline safety, abuse prevention and help-seeking. Parents do not have a right to withdraw their child from relationships education.

Sex education within RSE

Sex education includes teaching about sexual activity, contraception, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and access to sexual and reproductive health services. Parents may request withdrawal from some or all of this content, subject to the arrangements set out in section 10. Content taught as part of science, and relationships or health content, is not subject to withdrawal.

6. CURRICULUM

RSE is taught primarily through the school's weekly PSHE programme, with relevant biological content also taught through science. Wider assemblies, safeguarding and online-safety work, themed events and pastoral or therapeutic learning reinforce but do not replace the planned curriculum.

The curriculum is carefully sequenced and responsive to students' developmental stage, prior learning, communication profile and safeguarding needs. Teaching progresses from public and private behaviour, trusted adults, everyday consent, friendship and personal safety to romantic relationships, consent and the law, sexual health, contraception, pregnancy and fertility, sexually transmitted infections, pornography and exploitation, and accessing support and services.

The 2026–27 PSHE curriculum includes specific RSE-related learning across Prep, Lower Senior, Upper Senior Purple and Blue pathways, and College. The detailed school map is summarised in Appendix 1.

Curriculum content is reviewed so that emerging risks are addressed appropriately. This includes age- and stage-appropriate learning about image sharing, pornography, sextortion, AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes, coercive or controlling online behaviour, harassment, harmful sexual behaviour and reliable sources of support.

Where an individual student requires additional preparation, repetition, pre-teaching or targeted work, the school may adapt the route through the curriculum while maintaining appropriate ambition and ensuring statutory content is covered.

7. DELIVERY OF RSE

Curriculum delivery

All students receive a dedicated PSHE lesson once each week. RSE is delivered by designated form tutors, selected teachers and members of the Senior Leadership Team. Staff are supported with shared planning, resources and guidance to promote consistency and quality.

Lessons use explicit teaching, modelling, structured discussion, visual and multimedia resources, social narratives, practical tasks, role play where appropriate, real-life and hypothetical scenarios, problem-solving, reflection, quizzes and retrieval practice. Teachers avoid requiring students to disclose personal experiences in front of peers.

Wider-school provision including assemblies, safeguarding and online-safety events, Neurodiversity Celebration Week, mental-health and wellbeing activities, equality and LGBTQ+ inclusion work, cultural and religious events and preparation for adulthood supports students to apply RSE and PSHE learning in meaningful contexts.

Inclusion, SEND and the integrated therapeutic approach

RSE is accessible to all students, regardless of ability, special educational need and/or disability. Staff consider developmental understanding and individual need rather than relying on chronological age alone.

Teaching may be adapted through reduced or clarified language, visual supports, explicit vocabulary teaching, manageable steps, repetition and overlearning, modelling, concrete examples, social narratives, additional processing time, alternative recording methods, assistive or augmentative communication, pre-teaching, structured choice, movement or sensory breaks and smaller-group or individual reinforcement.

Education, pastoral and therapeutic colleagues collaborate where appropriate. Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and mental-health expertise can inform strategies that support communication, emotional regulation, sensory processing, social understanding and safe participation.

Particular attention is given to explicit teaching of consent, personal boundaries, public and private behaviour, interpreting social situations, online communication, recognising unsafe or exploitative behaviour, self-advocacy and how to seek help.

Safe, balanced and responsive teaching

RSE is taught within a safe, respectful and predictable environment. Ground rules, distancing techniques, hypothetical scenarios and anonymous question opportunities may be used for sensitive topics. Staff never promise absolute confidentiality and follow safeguarding procedures immediately where a disclosure or concern arises.

Difficult or controversial questions are answered factually, sensitively and in a way that is appropriate to the student's age, developmental understanding and individual needs.

Teachers distinguish fact, law and opinion, use reliable sources, do not promote personal beliefs and challenge misinformation or discriminatory language appropriately.

Resources and parent transparency

Resources are checked for accuracy, accessibility, safeguarding suitability and alignment with statutory guidance. Parents/carers may request to view the curriculum and materials used in RSE. Copyright restrictions will not be used as a reason to prevent appropriate parent access to materials.

Assessment and reporting

Assessment focuses on knowledge, understanding, skills and application rather than students' personal experiences, beliefs or family circumstances. Evidence may include baseline activities, discussion, observation, reflection, practical scenarios, quizzes and review of work. Progress may be communicated through reports, parents' evenings, review meetings and other established home–school communication.

8. USE OF EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND MATERIALS

External organisations or specialist visitors may complement RSE where this adds educational value. The school remains responsible for the curriculum and the quality and safety of all provision.

Before using an external provider or resource, the school will:

- check the provider's credentials, safeguarding arrangements and suitability;
- review teaching content and materials in advance, including how sensitive questions and disclosures will be managed;
- ensure material is age- and stage-appropriate, inclusive, factual and consistent with this policy and statutory guidance;
- ensure a member of school staff is present and retains responsibility for the lesson;
- make relevant materials available to parents/carers on request; and
- ensure external provision does not promote partisan political views, extremist views or personal beliefs as fact.

9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body/Directors

The governing body/directors approve the RSE policy and hold the Headteacher to account for its implementation, ensuring statutory duties are met.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring RSE is taught consistently, that staff and resources are appropriate, that parents are able to access information and materials, and that requests for withdrawal from sex education are considered in line with statutory guidance.

Staff

Staff are responsible for delivering RSE sensitively and accurately; modelling respectful attitudes; creating a safe learning environment; adapting teaching to individual needs; using approved resources; responding to safeguarding concerns; avoiding promotion of personal political or religious views; and contributing to assessment, evaluation and curriculum review.

The PSHE/RSE Lead

The PSHE/RSE Lead coordinates curriculum sequencing and resources, supports staff, monitors teaching and pupil outcomes, maintains links with safeguarding, SEND and therapeutic colleagues, and reviews provision in response to statutory guidance, student needs and emerging safeguarding issues.

Students

Students are encouraged to participate in RSE in ways that are accessible to them, ask questions, reflect on learning and treat others' views, identities, experiences and boundaries with respect and sensitivity.

10. PARENTS' RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

Parents/carers have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of RSE. There is no right to withdraw from relationships education, health education or content taught as part of the science curriculum, including science content relating to puberty or sexual reproduction.

Requests should be made in writing to the Headteacher using the form in Appendix 3. Before deciding on a request, the Headteacher will normally discuss it with the parent/carer and, where appropriate, the student. The discussion will clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum, the content to which withdrawal would apply, and the possible educational, social and emotional effects of withdrawal.

In secondary education, the Headteacher may refuse a withdrawal request in exceptional circumstances, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or a student has a specific vulnerability. The school will keep an appropriate record of the discussion and decision.

From three terms before a student turns 16, the student may choose to receive sex education even if a parent/carer has previously requested withdrawal. Students will be made aware of this right.

Where a student is withdrawn, the school will provide appropriate and purposeful alternative education during the relevant lesson. The withdrawal will be reviewed if circumstances change.

11. TRAINING

Staff who deliver RSE receive appropriate support through induction, curriculum guidance and continuing professional development. Training may include statutory content, safeguarding and disclosures, consent and boundaries, sexual health, online harms, equality and inclusion, adaptive teaching for SEND, use of resources and managing sensitive questions.

Staff who have concerns about their knowledge, confidence or ability to teach an area of RSE should raise this promptly with the PSHE/RSE Lead, line manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Support may include planning guidance, professional development, team teaching, observation or input from an appropriately qualified colleague.

A member of staff's personal beliefs must not result in students receiving an incomplete, inaccurate or unbalanced curriculum.

12. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The delivery of RSE is monitored by Christopher Lloyd, Head of Prep and Lee Deller, Assistant Headteacher (Academic), through planning and delivery scrutinies, learning walks, regular staff contact and termly subject/curriculum consultation.

Monitoring also includes review of curriculum coverage and sequencing, student work, staff feedback, student voice, parent/carer feedback where appropriate, safeguarding themes and assessment information. Evaluation considers accessibility, student engagement, quality of teaching and the impact of provision on knowledge, skills and personal development.

Where appropriate, evidence from RSE may contribute to wider evaluation through the Cavendish Personal Development Scale. The scale is broader than the RSE/PSHE curriculum and is not used as a direct grade for a student's personal experiences, beliefs or family circumstances.

This policy is reviewed at least annually and sooner where statutory guidance, safeguarding priorities or the school curriculum change.

13. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy should be read alongside the following school policies and procedures:

- Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Curriculum Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Equality and Diversity Policy;
- SEND Policy / SEN Information Report;
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use policies;
- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies;
- Curriculum Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy; and
- Promoting British Values / personal development documentation.

14. APPROVAL & POLICY REVIEW

Policy Approver(s)	Cavendish Education Board of Directors / Senior Leadership Team of the school
Storage Location	School website, online policy library and hard copy in school
Effective Date	July 2026
Next Review Date	July 2027

15. REVISION HISTORY

Version	Change	Author	Date of Change
1	Initial Cavendish publication	Cavendish Central Team	July 2026
2	School-specific RSE update	Abingdon House Senior School	July 2026

APPENDIX 1: ABINGDON HOUSE SCHOOL RSE CURRICULUM MAP 2026–27

RSE progression within the PSHE curriculum

The map below identifies the main RSE-related learning in the 2026–27 PSHE curriculum. Wider PSHE units continue to reinforce wellbeing, safeguarding, decision-making, independence and preparation for adulthood.

PHASE / YEAR	RSE-RELATED PROGRESSION ACROSS THE YEAR	KEY APPROACHES
Year 1	So-safe; Roles of different people, families; feeling cared for; recognising privacy; feeling safe; seeking permission; how behaviour affects others; being polite and respectful	SoSafe! Visual tools, explicit boundary rules, social narratives, role-play
Year 2	Making friends; feeling lonely and getting help; managing secrets: resisting pressure and getting help; recognising hurtful behaviour; recognising things in common and differences: me, my body and staying safe.	Visual scenarios, concrete examples, social stories for friendships, explicit vocabulary teaching
Year 3	What makes a family: features of family life; personal boundaries; safely responding to others; recognising respectful behaviour; the importance of self-respect	Visual supports, explicit boundary language, pre-teaching vocabulary, structured group discussion
Year 4	Positive friendships, including online; responding to hurtful behaviour; recognising risks online; respecting differences and similarities: discussing difference sensitivity	Hypothetical scenarios, online-safety visuals,structures discussion, overlearning key concepts
Year 5	Managing friendships and peer influence; physical contact and feeling safe; responding respectfully; recognising prejudice and discrimination	Safe question opportunities, social narratives, explicit consent language, practical scenarios
Year 6	Attraction to others; romantic relationships; civil partnerships and marriage; recognising and managing pressure; consent in different situations; expressing opinions and respecting other points of view; conception and birth	Decision-making scenarios, explicit consent language, distancing techniques, structured discussion
Prep/Lower Senior Year 7	SoSafe: public/private behaviour; trusted adults and school safeguarding; introduction to consent in everyday situations; equality, diversity and discrimination; diversity and LGBTQ+ inclusion.	Explicit language, visuals, scenarios and help-seeking.

PHASE / YEAR	RSE-RELATED PROGRESSION ACROSS THE YEAR	KEY APPROACHES
Prep/Lower Senior Year 8	Positive friendships; online safety and social media; personal safety; bullying and cyberbullying; puberty and body changes; personal hygiene.	Concrete examples, social narratives, safe questions and repeated vocabulary.
Lower Senior Year 9	Relationships; peer pressure; consent and romantic relationships; age-appropriate introduction to sexual health; human rights and equality.	Decision-making scenarios, boundaries, consent and help-seeking.
Upper Senior – Purple Year 9 / Year 1	SoSafe public/private behaviour; online relationships and internet safety; equality and discrimination; consent and the law; personal safety.	Sequenced RSE with explicit legal and safeguarding language.
Upper Senior – Purple Year 10 / Year 2	Healthy and unhealthy relationships; harassment, abuse and reporting concerns; STIs — prevention and treatment; pornography, exploitation and the law.	Distancing, factual sexual-health information and reporting routes.
Upper Senior – Purple Year 11 / Year 3	Self-awareness; pregnancy and fertility; sexual-health access and responsibility; substance misuse and risk.	Adult preparation, services, support and risk/protective factors.
Upper Senior – Blue Year 9 / Year 1	SoSafe public/private behaviour and consent; unhealthy behaviours online; gangs/county lines; pornography, exploitation and the law; self-esteem and identity.	Explicit consent/boundary language and online-safety scenarios.
Upper Senior – Blue Year 10 / Year 2	Healthy and unhealthy relationships; managing emotions and resilience; substance use; radicalisation/Prevent; society and stressors.	Regulation, relationship skills, risk assessment and help-seeking.
Upper Senior – Blue Year 11 / Year 3	Harassment, abuse and reporting concerns; sexual-health access and STIs; British values and the law; healthy lifestyles beyond school.	Safeguarding routes, sexual-health services and independence.
College Year 12/13	SoSafe public/private behaviour; consent and fertility; healthy and unhealthy relationships; self-esteem and identity; sexual-health access and responsibility.	Adult-life application: autonomy, consent, services and self-advocacy.
College Year 13/14	Digital resilience and unhealthy online behaviours; managing emotions and resilience; substance misuse and risk; healthy lifestyles beyond school; preparation for next steps.	Generalising to community, relationships, work/college and independent life.

APPENDIX 2: SECONDARY RSE STATUTORY CONTENT SUMMARY

TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW / UNDERSTAND
Families	Different types of committed and stable relationships; the legal status of marriage and civil partnership; the myth of "common-law marriage"; that forced marriage and marriage under 18 are illegal; how families and relationships change; parenting responsibilities; and how to recognise unsafe relationships and seek help.
Respectful relationships	Characteristics of positive relationships; kindness, trust, honesty, boundaries, privacy and conflict management; self-esteem and independence; equality and tolerance; bullying and bystander responsibility; consent and ethical behaviour beyond consent; power dynamics; stereotypes, misogyny and prejudice; and the influence of pornography, online subcultures and influencers on sexual attitudes.
Online safety and awareness	Rights and responsibilities online; privacy and location settings; fake accounts and AI-created content; risks of sharing sexual or intimate images; the law on indecent images of under-18s and non-consensual image sharing; deepfakes; harmful and misogynistic content; online bullying, harassment, stalking and coercive control; pornography; scams and sextortion; and risks from rapidly developing technologies such as AI chatbots.
Being safe	Consent and boundaries in online, romantic and sexual relationships; resisting pressure; personal safety and help-seeking; sexual harassment and sexual violence; harmful sexual behaviour; domestic abuse and coercive control; stalking; grooming and exploitation; forced marriage; FGM, virginity testing and hymenoplasty; the risks and law relating to strangulation and suffocation; and how to report or seek support for abusive behaviour.
Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	Healthy intimate relationships; the age of consent; choosing whether or when to have sex; giving, withholding and withdrawing sexual consent; sexual and reproductive health; contraception and condom use; pregnancy choices including parenting, adoption and abortion; STIs including HIV, testing and treatment; PrEP and PEP; the impact of alcohol and drugs on sexual risk; reliable information and access to confidential sexual-health support.

APPENDIX 3: PARENT/CARER REQUEST FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM SEX EDUCATION WITHIN RSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS/CARERS			
Name of child		Class	
Name of parent/carer		Date	
Sex education content from which withdrawal is requested and reason (optional)			
Any other information you would like the school to consider			
Parent signature			

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL	
Record of discussion, decision and agreed actions	Record the content to which the request applies; discussion with parent/carer and, where appropriate, the student; decision and rationale; alternative education arrangements; review date; and any safeguarding considerations.