BOOTHAM SCHOOL
AGES 3-18

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

This policy relates to the Senior School. A separate policy exists for the Junior School.

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Scope

Following the Introduction of the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, with effect from 1 September 2020 secondary schools must ensure that every registered student from Year 7 and above is provided with Relationships and Sex education. This is subject to a limited parental right to withdraw students as detailed on Page 4 of this document.

The school complies fully with statutory guidance for Relationships and Sex Education as set out by the Department for Education, ensuring that all required content is delivered in an age-appropriate and inclusive way.

Date of last review: **April 2026**
Person responsible: Head of Wellbeing
Review Group Pastoral, Boarding and Safeguarding Committee
Approval Group Governors' Meeting
Date of next review: **April 2029**

Definition of RSE
Bootham uses the definition provided by The Sex Education Forum which defines RSE as learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health.

Policy Context and Rationale

This policy covers Bootham School's approach to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) throughout Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. It is reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with statutory guidance and responsiveness to the needs of the school community.

The most recent review has been informed by a comprehensive consultation process, including student voice gathered through PSHE lessons, focus groups and student-led panels; parental consultation through an in-person event and an online survey; and input from pastoral staff, the safeguarding team, and governors. Consultation materials were made accessible to the school's international community, including translation into Chinese to support engagement.

Feedback from this process has directly informed developments in the RSE curriculum and provision, including increased transparency for parents and the development of an online parent portal (launching September 2026).

Policies Consulted
In writing this policy, the following school policies were consulted:

- Equality Policy
- Learning Support Policy
- Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism Policy
- Purpose, Aims, Ethos and Values
- SMSC policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying
- Expectations, Standards and Positive Relationships Policy

Additionally, the following DfE documents and legal frameworks were consulted:

- KCSIE September 2025
- National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4 (published 2013 updated 2020)
- Equaliy Act 2010
- Education Act (2002) section 78
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations July 2025
- Children and Social Work Act 2017 sections 34 and 35

Policy Aims
This policy aims to provide guidance on Bootham's commitment to enabling all pupils to make safe decisions regarding sex and relationships through both formal education within curriculum time and as part of wider discussion opportunities,

including through visiting speakers and seeking support from teachers, pastoral staff and the health centre.

RSE at Bootham School supports a whole-school approach to safeguarding, wellbeing, and the development of respectful, responsible relationships.

RSE Aims and objectives

Relationships and Sex Education supports the individual's lifelong learning about sex, sexuality, emotions, different types of relationships and sexual health. Embedded within the wider PSHE curriculum, it is intended to enable young people to acquire information, develop skills and form positive beliefs, values and attitudes that support them to move from adolescence to adulthood safely and confidently.

Young people want reassurance about their body image, behaviour, feelings and relationships. They also need knowledge and skills appropriate to their level of maturity and developmental needs. Central to the RSE programme is the growth of self-esteem and taking responsibility for oneself and one's actions. If young people feel positive and good about themselves, they are more likely to take care of themselves, think positively of other people, and therefore, develop non-exploitative, caring relationships, both with themselves and others. They are also less likely to be exploited by others.

Relationships and sex education is needed as:

(a) Children and young people say that they want to learn more about sex and relationships (including all types of relationships)
(b) Parents say that although they want to talk to their children about sex and relationships, they want schools to help and support them
(c) It is a legal requirement for schools to provide RSE
(d) RSE can make a positive contribution to children's and young people's personal and social development
(e) RSE can help to prevent negative health outcomes such as unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections

The delivery of RSE will seek to:

(a) Generate an atmosphere where questions of a sexual nature can be asked and answered openly without embarrassment and trust and confidentiality are ensured.
(b) Enable pupils to develop knowledge, communication skills and understanding in order to facilitate personal decision-making.
(c) Enable pupils to understand the impact of external factors, such as the media, Internet, peer groups and remain independent decision makers.
(d) Enable pupils to develop the ability to form positive, non-exploitative relationships.
(e) Enable pupils to be aware of personal, psychological, emotional and physical changes in themselves and others.
(f) Enable pupils to understand the process of human reproduction.

(g) Emphasise the role and value of family life.
(h) Enable pupils to know what is and what is not legal in matters relating to sexual activity including FGM.
(i) Inform pupils of where they can go for further information and advice.
(j) Develop students' ability to critically evaluate online content, including pornography, misinformation, and harmful gender norms.
(k) Equip students to recognise and respond to online risks, including coercion, exploitation, image sharing, and unhealthy digital relationships.

Delivery of RSE

RSE is delivered by the Head of Wellbeing and Wellbeing in conjunction with the specialist team working in the school's Lodge (Health Centre). Ofsted has identified that an emotionally safe and secure learning environment is a feature of outstanding PSHE (2013). Use of a working agreement or ground rules is an essential technique to help create and maintain a safe learning environment, and can also be a useful activity in itself.

A class agreement is established at the start of each academic year or if there is a change in the makeup of the class. This is revisited at the start of the RSE topic. Students will have a copy of the agreement in their files for reference.

The Head of Department is appropriately qualified to support and deliver high quality RSE resources and is able to deliver CPD sessions to any staff who are new to the changes in the guidelines for RSE. Appropriate training opportunities are offered to staff who are new to teaching RSE. Alongside the Head of Wellbeing, trained health professionals from the school Health Centre deliver PSHE and RSE content.

As part of an integrated programme, the PSHE education curriculum also covers areas that link closely to RSE including emotional health and wellbeing, drugs, body image, self-esteem and cultural pressures. There are links between areas of knowledge and understanding in PSHE and RSE, for example in relation to alcohol and drugs and emotional health.

Teaching is delivered in a non-judgemental, evidence-based manner, creating a safe space for discussion while maintaining clear professional boundaries.

RSE is delivered throughout the school in a range of ways:

- Schoolrooms and Seniors (Years 7-11): RSE content delivered through PSHE lessons. The RSE units contains age appropriate content and discussion questions. RSE issues will also be discussed in other units (such as the impact of risk-taking behaviours such as drugs and alcohol and how sexuality can relate to issues of equality and gender identity.)
- College: Sixth Form lectures will contain RSE content as part of the two-year cycle of lectures and follow up discussion material. If external visitors contribute to RSE they are selected because they have the right skills and experience to make a unique contribution and add value.

At all stages of PSHE education students are taught in a way that is accurate and factual, covering a comprehensive range of information about sex, relationships, the law and sexual health. Students are positively encouraged to ask questions verbally or anonymously, including through the use of anonymous question boxes or equivalent online platforms.

Equality and Inclusion

All teaching is inclusive and compliant with the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that no student is discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.. In line with the best practices recommended by the PSHE Association and the Sex Education Forum, PSHE/RSE at Bootham is positively inclusive in terms of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, culture, age, religion or belief or other life-experience particularly HIV status and pregnancy

The curriculum recognises that some groups may be more vulnerable to harm and ensures that content supports all students to stay safe. It is the policy of the PSHE department that RSE is taught in an inclusive manner and is accessible to all students including those with SEND and EAL. When planning the subjects, we take into consideration that some students are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues because of any learning differences

- Teachers are to avoid the assumption that romantic or sexual partners will be of the opposite sex and are to avoid heteronormative language.
- Information on contraception, sexual health and healthy relationships will take into account the full spectrum of sexual identification and preference.
- Teachers are to ensure that they use appropriate language and that attitudes in students which suggest homophobic views or which engage in sexist or racist stereotypes are challenged and reported in line with school policies.

Parental Right to Withdraw

Parents have the right to withdraw their child, wholly or partly, from Sex Education lessons and talks, but not from Relationships Education. Students who are withdrawn will be excused until such time as the request is withdrawn or the Head considers that the student should not be so excused. This should be reconsidered three terms before the child turns sixteen after which point, if the student wishes to receive sex education, the school will make arrangements to provide it during one of those terms.

Before granting the request for their child to be excused, the Head will discuss the request with parents and, as appropriate, with the child to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum; such discussion will be documented and a record of this process will be kept. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will respect the parents' request. The school will offer further dialogue to Parents and will encourage them to provide their child with Sex Education at home if they choose to withdraw their child, and school will support parents in their choice by providing copies of materials used with students in school. Parental choice to withdraw a child from Sex Education, does not affect the child's right to use confidential health services provided at the school or elsewhere.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education or Health Education, which are statutory.

Parental Consultation and Engagement

Bootham School is committed to working in partnership with parents and carers in the development and delivery of RSE.

As part of the most recent review, parents were consulted through both an in-person session and an online survey, enabling a broad range of views to be gathered. To ensure accessibility, materials were translated into Chinese to support engagement with the school's international parent community.

Feedback from parents has directly informed developments in RSE provision, including increased transparency around curriculum content and the development of an online parent portal (launching September 2026). This portal will provide access to the syllabus, example lesson materials, and signposting to external resources and helplines, as well as opportunities for ongoing feedback.

Parental consultation is an ongoing process and forms part of the school's regular review cycle.

Student Voice

The RSE programme at Bootham School is actively informed by student voice, ensuring that it remains relevant, responsive, and reflective of the lived experiences of students. Student input is gathered through a range of formal and informal mechanisms, including whole-school wellbeing surveys, lesson-based feedback, and student-led groups such as the Wellbeing Leaders.

These platforms enable students to share their perspectives on the curriculum, identify emerging issues, and contribute to the ongoing development of RSE provision. Feedback is regularly reviewed by the Head of Wellbeing and informs both the strategic direction of the programme and the adaptation of lesson content to meet identified needs.

In addition to structured consultation, teachers gather ongoing feedback through classroom discussion, reflection activities, and anonymous question tools, allowing teaching to remain responsive and adaptive to student need.

The school is committed to ensuring that a diverse range of student voices are heard, including those from different year groups, cultural backgrounds, and with additional needs, to ensure that RSE provision is inclusive and representative.

Student voice has directly contributed to the development of targeted interventions, workshops, and curriculum adaptations in response to emerging trends and concerns. As a result, the RSE curriculum is dynamic and evolves in response to student need, supporting students to feel heard, valued, and empowered within their educational experience.

Pastoral Care and Safeguarding
RSE plays a key role in preventing and addressing peer-on-peer abuse, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, and harmful sexual behaviours, in line with KCSIE 2024 guidance.

Teachers are regularly reminded of their responsibility to pass on disclosures made by students in response to the subject content concerns about child safety. This is usually through CPOMS or by directly approaching the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The Head of Wellbeing meets with school's Health Centre Nurse Manger through PSHE department meetings and Heads of Year in order to discuss a range of issues including those relevant to RSE.

Content/Scheme of Work

The RSE curriculum is structured to meet all statutory requirements as set out in DfE guidance and follows a spiral curriculum model, revisiting key themes in an age-appropriate way.

Below is a list of the topics covered in RSE in each age group. A number of topics that will impact on RSE are taught as part of the Health and Wellbeing units such as puberty education, female genital mutilation, self-esteem, body image, managing emotions, managing conflict and online interactions and safety.

YEAR GROUP	RSE CURRICULUM CONTENT
Lower Schoolroom (Year 7)	• Managing emotions • Managing reactions • Friendship and empathy • Bullying and bystanders • Friendship challenges • Similarities, differences and peer influence • Coercive friendships • Understanding changing relationships • Roles in the family • Managing change, loss and grief • Family courts • Puberty and emotional challenges • Making disclosures • Keeping Safe • Healthy and unhealthy relationships • Managing Conflict • Introduction to consent • Relationships onscreen • Managing challenging content • •

Middle Schoolroom (Year 8)	• Identity and community • Bias and stereotypes • Discrimination and the protected characteristics • Values and constructive disagreements • Diverse and supportive communities • Healthy relationships • Sexualised media • Safer online relationships • Sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour • Sharing of nudes • Consent • Preventing gender-based violence • •
Upper Schoolroom (Year 9)	• Managing strong emotions • Serious and organized crime • Consent – avoiding assumptions • Consent – freedom and capacity • Relationship values • Contraception • Sexual health • Managing the end of relationships • Feelings about sharing nudes • Misogyny – exploring harm and misconceptions • Responding to misogyny •
Lower Senior (Year 10)	• Deepfakes • Social attitudes to sharing nudes • Recognising and challenging bullying behaviour • Recognising and challenging unhealthy attitudes • Valuing diversity • Understanding and preventing extremism • How are people drawn into extremist groups? • Managing influence • The impact and spread of misogynistic narratives • Safely challenging misogynistic beliefs and attitudes • Consent – the role of intimacy and pleasure • The impact of pornography • Pressure, persuasion and coercion • Female genital mutilation • Forced marriage • Relationship rights and reporting abuse
Upper Senior (Year 11)	• Managing change, loss and grief • Gangs – managing risk and staying safe

	• Tacking violence against women and girls • Healthy and unhealthy relationships • Power and control • Setting boundaries and getting help • Relationship behaviours • Choices relating to sex and contraception • Sexual health • Long term commitments • The legal status of marriage • Parenting • Fertility and routes to parenthood • Pregnancy outcomes • Pregnancy choices •

College students (years 12 and 13) receive lectures and follow up materials on consent, contraception and communication, gender pressures and expectations, and the impact of pornography.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of RSE includes:
• Student voice through surveys and focus groups
• Teacher assessment of knowledge, confidence and skills
• Feedback from parents and staff
• Review of safeguarding and wellbeing data

This ensures that the curriculum remains responsive, effective, and aligned with student need.

Resources
In line with Ofsted (2013) recommendations the PSHE department makes use of a 'range of well-chosen and imaginative resources to support learning, such as case studies, scenarios, visual images and video clips with thought-provoking messages'.

When new resources are being considered the following questions will be considered:

- Is the resource consistent with the values set out in the school RSE policy?
- Is it factually correct and up-to-date?
- Does it encourage active and participatory learning?
- Is the resource contemporary in terms of the realities of children and young people's lives?
- Does the resource portray positive images of a range of children and young people?
- Does the resource show positive role models for girls and boys / women and men and avoid stereotypes relating to gender and sexual orientation?

- Is the resource inclusive on the basis of home and family circumstance, gender, sexuality, race, faith, culture and disability?
- Is it appropriate for the age, ability and maturity of the children and young people?
- Are teachers confident about using the resource?

Review of policy

Note: This policy is reviewed annually for matters of fact and process.