

ABBAY
COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

**Relationships
Education, Relationship
and Sex Education (RSE)
and Health Education
Policy**

2026-2027

SLT Responsible for this Policy

- Carolyn Dunn, Vice Principal (Pastoral)

Telephone: 01223 578280

Email: Carolyn.Dunn@abbeycambridge.co.uk

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This policy has been approved by SLT and adopted on behalf of the Governors, and is addressed to all members of staff and volunteers and is available on the school's [portal](#). It is available to parents on request. It applies wherever staff or volunteers are working, including when this involves being away from the school.

Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	4
2.	AIMS	4
3.	STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS	5
4.	DELIVERY	5
5.	NATIONAL CURRICULUM SCIENCE	7
6.	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	8
7.	CONCERNS	9
8.	MONITORING AND REVIEW	9
9.	LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES	10
	APPENDICES	11
	APPENDIX 1	11
	<i>By the end of secondary school pupils should know</i>	<i>11</i>
	APPENDIX 2	0
	<i>Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within RSE</i>	<i>0</i>

Introduction

Abbey College Cambridge values and respects the variety of nationalities, backgrounds and cultural traditions among its students and staff.

RSE is lifelong learning about physical, moral, and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of stable and loving relationships, respect, love, and care.

It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity – this would be inappropriate.

This policy follows the guidance outlined in the following documents:

- DfE Relationships, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance 2025
- The Equality Act 2010

Aims

To give students opportunities to learn about three key areas:

1. Attitudes and values

- Learning the importance of values, individual conscience and moral considerations.
- Learning the value of family life and stable loving relationships for the nurture of children.
- Learning the value of respect, love and care.
- Learning how to identify and learn from positive male role models
- Exploring, considering and exploring moral dilemmas and developing critical thinking as part of decision making.
- Learning about the links between sexism and misogyny and violence against women and girls

2. Personal and social skills

- Learning to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively
- Developing self-respect, self-confidence and empathy for others.
- Learning to make choices based on an understanding of difference and an absence of prejudice.
- Developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made.
- Managing conflict and learning how to recognise exploitation and abuse and developing strategies to deal with these issues.
- Learning about grief and loss
- Learning about ethical behaviour in relationships beyond respecting boundaries and consent

3. Knowledge and understanding

- Learning and understanding physical development at appropriate stages.
- Understanding their own mental health wellbeing and the range of advice and support available.

- Understanding human sexuality, reproduction, sexual health emotions and relationships.
- Learning about contraception and the range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception and support services.
- Learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity, and the benefits to be gained from such delay.
- The avoidance of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.
- Understanding the implications of on-line relationships and knowing how to manage them safely.
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships
- Preparing pupils for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Teaching students the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies

The school aims to take a common-sense approach to securing balance and ensure issues are discussed in a fair and dispassionate way and that alternative viewpoints are considered.

Staff should actively challenge everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes.

Statutory Requirements

Abbey College Cambridge aims to provide RSE to all students as per the Children and Social work act 2017 and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education

In teaching RSE, we have due regard for the guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

1. Delivery

Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) is carefully planned and delivered through:

- Timetabled, tutor-led personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE).
- Assemblies with a variety of speakers.
- Specified science lessons.
- PSHEE Association and other approved resources are used to deliver content.
- Students also receive stand-alone sex education sessions delivered by a trained health professional.

Assemblies, tutor and PSHEE sessions are a time when groups within the school meet together in order to learn about and reflect on common concerns, issues and interests. Assemblies take place once a week for 20 minutes and PSHEE takes place in a 50-minute session each week.

Abbey College Cambridge approved visitors are welcomed to speak on specialist subjects from time to time (for example the Police Community Liaison Officer speaking about personal safety, a veteran on

Remembrance Day and a specialist nurse informing students about consent and Sexual Health) and will be given guidance by the Housemasters (HSM) regarding planning for these events.

The College undertakes to ensure that visiting speakers are appropriately checked, to prevent presentations (including the distribution of materials) which are contrary to fundamental British values, and that they are supervised at all times. Speakers will not be able to address students without a member of staff being present.

The College will not use a visiting speaker where any link is found to extremism, such as extremist groups and movements. The College's responsibility to students is to ensure that they can critically assess the information that they receive as to its value to themselves, and that such information is aligned to the ethos and values of the College and Fundamental British Values.

Students arrive in Years 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 and some are Compulsory School Age (CSA). The age range is 12 to 23 years and RSE provision is both age and course appropriate.

CSA, GCSE and Pre-Sessional students explore a range of topics including:

- Peer pressure.
 - Puberty.
 - Body image.
 - Personal hygiene.
 - How to have healthy friendships and relationships.
 - Rights and responsibilities in relationships.
 - How having a baby changes a relationship.
 - The reality of young parenting.
 - Consent and sex in the UK.
 - The role of consent, and awareness of power dynamics
 - Negotiating with adults.
-
- Effects of changes caused by divorce, separation, bereavement, and new family members.
 - Grief and loss
 - Mental health and well being
 - Road safety and staying safe around water and railways

All students will explore a range of age-appropriate topics including:

- The consequences of high-risk behaviour in relation to sexual activity.
- Underage sex, the law and emotional and physical impact.
- Different cultural norms regarding sex and relationships.

- The impact of drug use on relationships.
- The dangers of date rape drugs.
- The impact of drug use on health.
- The dangers of drug use including legal highs, cigarettes and alcohol.
- STIs.
- HIV / AIDS – the global dimension.
- Misogyny and the manosphere
- How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours
- How sub-cultures such as 'incels' might influence our understanding of sexual ethics
- The prevalence of AI-generated sexual imagery and 'deepfakes'
- Contraception – making the right choices.
- Gynaecological health
- Exploitation in relationships.
- Domestic violence.
- Online safety financial harms and age restrictions
- Personal safety including topics such as knife crime and conflict resolution

2. National Curriculum Science

At secondary school, the National Curriculum in Science requires that the following elements of RSE should be taught:

KEY STAGE 3 Year 7-9

- Fertilisation in humans is the fusion of a male and female cell.
- The physical and emotional changes that take place during adolescence.
- The human reproductive system, the menstrual cycle and fertilisation.
- How the foetus develops in the uterus.
- How the growth and reproduction of bacteria and the replication of viruses can affect health.
- How fertilisation can be prevented by contraception and how some methods of contraception protect us from disease.

KEY STAGE 4 Year 10-11

- The way in which hormonal control occurs, including the effects of sex hormones.
- Some medical uses of hormones, including the control and promotion of fertility.
- The defence mechanisms of the body.
- How sex is determined in humans.
- Gynaecological health

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Governing Body

The governing board has delegated the approval of this policy to the Principal.

3.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from [non-statutory/non-science] components of RSE

3.3 Teachers

All teachers are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the [non-statutory/non-science] components of RSE
- Actively challenging everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes

Any teacher who has concerns about teaching RSE are encouraged to discuss these with the Principal/VPP/APP or PSHE Lead.

Housemasters, the Vice Principal Pastoral, the Assistant Principal Pastoral, and the PSHEE Lead research and plan the schedule and content of Assemblies and PSHEE/RSE, using approved resources such as those signposted by the PSHE association and external specialist support as necessary.

Teachers are given regular training on how to deliver the content, create a safe and secure classroom environment and how to respond to difficult questions.

If a question asked is too personal or explicit, the teacher should, in consultation with the Housemaster refer the student to an appropriate agency, such as the school nurse, GP or academic mentor.

Staff must make sure that no student is pressured to join a group, club or society.

All staff must follow the ACC Safeguarding Policy when a disclosure is made.

The Housemaster is responsible for sending an email to parents of those students who are Compulsory School Age to explain how RSE is delivered and to inform them of the content of this.

3.4 Parents

The school will proactively engage and consult parent/guardians when developing or reviewing your RSE policy.

An outline of the RSE curriculum will be shared with parents/guardians at the start of the academic year and feedback sought. The curriculum materials are available to view all on request.

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from some, or all, RSE lessons, but not statutory science lessons. Whilst Abbey College Cambridge recognises the right of parents to withdraw students, and provision will be made by the Housemaster at these times we do however, have a strong tradition of being fully inclusive, and whilst we respect parental wishes, would wish to encourage discussion of concerns regarding RSE to avoid students feeling excluded and to share with parents the importance of relationship and sex education, encouraging inclusion, healthy relationships and encouraging empathy.

In line with government guidance students and parents are informed that from three terms before the pupil turns 16, a pupil can choose to opt back into sex education even if their parent has requested withdrawal.

4. Concerns

The following are recommended guidelines for specific sex and relationship incidents. Each incident is unique and therefore the guidelines should be used as a reference rather than a set of rules.

Staff, students, carers, hosts, parents and anyone associated with the school community can contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with concerns regarding anyone in the community regarding sex and relationships. Staff should be alert to changes in a student's behaviour or any signs that a student may be at risk. This includes concerns on school trips, in the holidays and concerns relating to pre-admission to the school.

Staff have a duty of care to report any welfare concerns to the DSL immediately and provide a full and detailed report of the concern. This includes any disclosures from any member of the school community to staff, and disclosures must be shared immediately. All concerns should be recorded on CPOMs.

From time-to-time questions may be raised by students which staff may have difficulty in addressing, due to their nature and content. The staff member in question is not required to answer such questions immediately. In such cases they are advised to defer a reply and consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead before taking further action. Teachers and tutors are urged to use their skill, good sense and discretion in such situations. The recommended ground rules involve the students being able to ask anything they wish as long as they respect the right of both staff and other students not to answer questions if they do not wish to.

5. Monitoring and Review

A central plan and record of the themes and content of assemblies and PSHEE time is kept on OneNote.

The delivery of RSE is monitored by the Vice Principal Pastoral, the Assistant Principal Pastoral, the PSHEE Lead and the Housemasters through the Assuring Pastoral Excellence programme by:

- Work scrutiny

- Learning walks
- Student Feedback
- Staff Feedback
- Parent feedback

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps: The content is reviewed and amended annually in light of Government guidance, student/staff feedback and parental comments and developments in the real world.

6. Links to other Policies

- PSHEE Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Student drugs and misuse policy
- Smoking/Vaping Policy
- Social Media Mobile & Student Photograph Policy
- Student Health Policy
- DfE Relationships, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance 2025
- The Equality Act 2010
- E-safety Policy
- Visitor and Visiting Speaker Policy
- Reflection and Worship Policy.
- Fundamental British Values Policy
- SEND Policy

Appendices

Appendix 1

By the end of secondary school pupils should know

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Families	• That there are different types of committed, stable relationships • How these relationships might contribute to wellbeing, and their importance for bringing up children • Why marriage or civil partnership is an important relationship choice for many couples. The legal status of marriage and civil partnership, including that they carry legal rights, benefits and protections that are not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have, for example, undergone a non-legally binding religious ceremony • That 'common-law marriage' is a myth, and cohabitants do not obtain marriage-like status or rights from living together or by having children • That forced marriage and marriage before the age of 18 are illegal • How families and relationships change over time, including through birth, death, separation and new relationships. • The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting and the importance of the early years of a child's life for brain development. • How to judge when a relationship is unsafe and where to seek help when needed, including when pupils are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Respectful relationships, including friendships	GROUP OF COLLEGES CAMBRIDGE · LONDON · MANCHESTER • About the characteristics of positive relationships of all kinds, online and offline, including romantic relationships. For example, pupils should understand the role of consent, trust, mutual respect, honesty, kindness, loyalty, shared interests and outlooks, generosity, boundaries, tolerance, privacy, and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships • How to evaluate their impact on other people and treat others with kindness and respect, including in public spaces and including strangers. Pupils should understand the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, and that everyone is unique and equal • The importance of self-esteem, independence and having a positive relationship with oneself, and how these characteristics support healthy relationships with others. This includes developing one's own interests, hobbies, friendship groups, and skills. Pupils should understand what it means to be treated with respect by others • What tolerance requires, including the importance of tolerance of other people's beliefs • The practical steps pupils can take and skills they can develop to support respectful and kind relationships. This includes skills for communicating respectfully within relationships and with strangers, including in situations of conflict • The different types of bullying (including online bullying), the impact of bullying, the responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help • Skills for ending relationships or friendships with kindness and managing the difficult feelings that endings might bring, including disappointment, hurt or frustration • The role of consent, including in romantic and sexual relationships. Pupils should understand that ethical behaviour goes beyond consent and involves kindness, care and attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of the other person, as well as an awareness of power dynamics. Pupils should understand that just because someone says 'yes' to doing something that doesn't automatically make it ethically okay • How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). Pupils should be equipped to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice • How inequalities of power can impact behaviour within relationships, including sexual relationships. For example, how people who are disempowered can feel they are not entitled to be treated with respect by others or how those who enjoy an unequal amount of power might, with or without realising it, impose their preferences on others • How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, including by normalising harmful sexual behaviours and by disempowering some people, especially women, to feel a sense of autonomy over their own body and providing some people with a sense of sexual entitlement to the bodies of others • How some sub-cultures might influence our understanding of sexual ethics, including the sexual norms endorsed by so-called 'involuntary celibates' (incels) or online influencers

Online safety and awareness

- Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online
- About online risks, including that any material they provide provides to another has the potential to be shared and circulated online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online. They should also understand the difference between public and private online spaces and related safety issues
- Not to provide material to others that they would not want to be distributed further and not to pass on personal material which is sent to them. Pupils should understand that any material provided online might be circulated, and that once this has happened there is no way of controlling where it ends up. Pupils should understand the serious risks of sending material to others, including the law concerning the sharing of images
- About the characteristics of social media, including that some social media accounts are fake, and/or may post things which aren't real or have been created with AI. They should also know that social media users may say things in more extreme ways than they might in face-to-face situations, and that some users present highly exaggerated or idealised profiles of themselves online
- That keeping or forwarding indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime (even if the photo is of themselves or someone who has consented, and even if the photo was created by that child and/or using AI). That there are potentially serious consequences of acquiring or generating these images. That sharing indecent images of people over 18 without their consent is also a crime
- How to seek support. They should also understand that they will not be in trouble for asking for help, either at school or with the police, if an image of themselves has been shared
- What to do and how to report when they are concerned about material that has been circulated, including personal information, images or videos, and how to manage issues online
- About the prevalence of deepfakes including videos and photos, how deepfakes can be used maliciously as well as for entertainment, the harms that can be caused by deepfakes and how to identify them
- That the internet contains inappropriate and upsetting content, some of which is illegal, including unacceptable content that encourages misogyny, violence or use of weapons
- Where to go for advice and support about something they have seen online. Pupils should understand that online content can present a distorted picture of the world and normalise or glamourise behaviours which are unhealthy and wrong
- That social media can lead to escalations in conflicts, how to avoid these escalations and where to go for help and advice
- How to identify when technology and social media is used as part of bullying, harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and other forms of abusive and/or illegal behaviour and how to seek support about concerns
- That pornography, and other online content, often presents a distorted picture of people and their sexual behaviours and can negatively affect how people behave towards sexual partners. That this can affect people who see pornographic content accidentally, as well as those who see it deliberately. That pornography can also portray misogynistic behaviours and attitudes which can negatively influence those who see it
- How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online
- That websites may share personal data about their users, and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes (for example, to enable targeted advertising)

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
	GROUP OF COLLEGES CAMBRIDGE • LONDON • MANCHESTER • That criminals can operate online scams, such as using fake websites or emails to extort money or valuable personal information. This information can be used to the detriment of the person or wider society. About risks of sextortion, how to identify online scams relating to sex, and how to seek support if they have been scammed or involved in sextortion • That AI chatbots are an example of how AI is rapidly developing, and that these can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice. That it is important to be able to critically think about new types of technology as they appear online and how they might pose a risk

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Being safe	• How to recognise, respect and communicate consent and boundaries in relationships, including in early romantic relationships (in all contexts, including online) and early sexual relationships that might involve kissing or touching. That kindness and care for others requires more than just consent • That there are a range of strategies for identifying, resisting and understanding pressure in relationships from peers or others, including sexual pressure, and how to avoid putting pressure on others • How to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, how to judge when a relationship is unsafe (and recognise this in the relationships of others); how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others if needed • How to increase their personal safety in public spaces, including when socialising with friends, family, the wider community or strangers. About ways of seeking help when needed and how to report harmful behaviour. That there are strategies they can use to increase their safety, and that this does not mean they will be blamed if they are victims of harmful behaviour. About the importance of trusting their instincts when something doesn't feel right, and they should understand that in some situations a person might appear trustworthy but have harmful intentions • What constitutes sexual harassment or sexual violence, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it • That sexual harassment includes unsolicited sexual language, attention or touching, taking and/or sharing intimate or sexual images without consent, public sexual harassment, pressuring other people to do sexual things, and upskirting • About concepts and laws relating to: • Sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault • Harmful sexual behaviour, which includes all types of sexual harassment and sexual violence among young people but also includes other forms of concerning behaviour like using age-inappropriate sexual language • Domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour • Harms which are exploitative, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and abuse, grooming, and financial exploitation • Forced marriage • Female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty • That fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviours can be criminal, and where to get help if needed • That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences, and that strangulation (applying pressure to the neck) is an offence, regardless of whether it causes injury • That any activity that involves applying force or pressure to someone's neck or covering someone's mouth and nose is dangerous and can lead to serious injury or death • That pornography presents some activities as normal which many people do not and will never engage in, some of which can be emotionally and/or physically harmful • How to seek support for their own worrying or abusive behaviour, or for worrying or abusive behaviour they have experienced from others, including information on where to report abuse and where to seek medical attention when required, for example after an assault

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	GROUP OF COLLEGES CAMBRIDGE — LONDON — MANCHESTER • That sex, for people who feel ready and are over the age of consent, can and should be enjoyable and positive • The law about the age of consent, that they have a choice about whether to have sex, that many young people wait until they are older, and that people of all ages can enjoy intimate and romantic relationships without sex • About sexual consent and their capacity to give, withhold or remove consent at any time, even if initially given, as well as the considerations that people might take into account prior to sexual activity, such as the law, their faith and family values. That kindness and care for others require more than just consent • That all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing • That some sexual behaviours can be harmful • The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available, including male and female condoms, and signposting towards medically accurate online information about sexual and reproductive health to support contraceptive decision making • That there are choices in relation to pregnancy. Pupils should be given medically and legally accurate and impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help • How the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted. How risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) • About the use and availability of the HIV prevention drugs pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and how and where to access them. The importance of, and facts about, regular testing and the role of stigma • About the prevalence of STIs, the short and long-term impact they can have on those who contract them, and key facts about treatment • How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead people to take risks in their sexual behaviour • How and where to seek support for concerns around sexual relationships including sexual violence or harms • How to counter misinformation, including signposting towards medically accurate information and further advice, and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment

Appendix 2

Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within RSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS			
Name of Student		Class	
Name of Parent		Date	
Reason for withdrawing from sex education within relationships and sex education			
Any other information you would like the school to consider regarding this policy and the delivery of relationships and sex education at Abbey College Cambridge			
Parent signature			

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL	
Agreed actions from discussion with parents	Include notes from discussions with parents and agreed actions taken.