Moorlands Learning Trust

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy for Secondary Schools

	Position/Committee	Date
Prepared by	Executive Director	May 2026
Approved by	CEO	May 2026
To be Reviewed	CEO	July 2027 (to be reviewed earlier if there is a change in DfE guidance)

RATIONALE

This is the Trust's Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSHE) and Health Education (RSHE) Policy for secondary schools, updated to reflect DfE Statutory Guidance published July 2025 (statutory from 1 September 2026). For information on primary provision, please see the Trust's separate RSHE policy for primary schools.

At Moorlands Learning Trust, we are committed to delivering a high-quality, age-appropriate and evidence-based relationships, sex and health education curriculum that supports pupils' wellbeing, safety and personal development. Teaching is carefully sequenced and designed to meet pupils' developmental needs throughout adolescence, building on learning from primary education and preparing young people for adult life.

'Children and young people need knowledge and skills that will enable them to make informed and ethical decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships. High quality, evidence-based teaching of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) can help prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life, and can promote their moral, social, mental and physical development. Effective teaching will support young people to cultivate positive characteristics including resilience, self-worth, self-respect, honesty, integrity, courage, kindness, and trustworthiness. Effective teaching will support prevention of harms by helping young people understand and identify when things are not right.' (DFE 2025)

RSHE supports pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to form positive relationships, keep themselves safe and understand how to seek help when needed. In secondary schools, RSHE addresses the increased complexity of young people's lives, including intimate relationships, online influences, peer pressure, consent and the law.

Statutory Requirements
All Moorlands Learning Trust secondary schools must provide Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education to all pupils. Parents have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of RSHE, up to three terms before the pupil turns 16, except for those elements that are part of the science curriculum. (See 'Right to withdraw' section below.) Schools clearly distinguish between statutory relationships and health education and any non-statutory sex education, including those elements from which parents have the right to request withdrawal.

In delivering RSHE, schools have regard to the Education Act 2002 (as amended), Children and Social Work Act 2017, Equality Act 2010, and DfE statutory RSHE guidance.

Aims of RSHE

The aims of Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) at Moorlands Learning Trust secondary schools are to:

- provide pupils with accurate, age-appropriate and evidence-based information
- support pupils' wellbeing, dignity and personal safety
- equip pupils with the knowledge, skills and confidence to form respectful, healthy relationships
- support pupils to understand and manage risk, seek help and keep themselves and others safe
- promote equality, respect and inclusion in line with the Equality Act 2010

Safeguarding and Prevention
This policy should be read alongside the Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, which is reviewed annually in line with the most recent version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). Together, these policies ensure that Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is a core element of the Trust's whole-school approach to safeguarding and child protection.

Relationships Education forms a key part of the Trust's safeguarding and prevention strategy. Through high-quality, age-appropriate teaching, pupils are supported to understand personal boundaries, recognise behaviours and situations that may make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable, and know how and where to seek help. This applies across all contexts, including online environments.

RSHE plays a critical preventative role in addressing child-on-child abuse by addressing issues such as sexual harassment and sexual violence, coercive or controlling behaviour, and online exploitation. Teaching enables pupils to understand consent, personal boundaries and how safeguarding principles apply both online and offline.

Any disclosures made by pupils are handled in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Detailed procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns, including child-on-child abuse, are set out in safeguarding and behaviour policies.

Policy Development
This policy has been developed in consultation with MLT staff and should be read in conjunction with each individual school's 'Handbook/Curriculum and Implementation Plan', and will be meaningfully consulted on with pupils, parents/carers and other key stakeholders.

Curriculum Intent
The secondary RSHE curriculum builds on learning from primary education and focuses on developing pupils' understanding of healthy, respectful and safe relationships in increasingly complex contexts.

This includes:

- friendships, family relationships and wider peer relationships
- respect, kindness, empathy and equality
- personal boundaries, consent and safety, including in intimate and sexual relationships
- online relationships, digital safety and media literacy, including risks associated with online content and behaviours
- physical, mental and sexual health and wellbeing

Teaching is factual, balanced and age-appropriate. RSHE does not promote sexual activity and supports pupils' moral, social, emotional and physical development. Online relationships are taught alongside face-to-face relationships, reinforcing that the same principles of respect, safety and responsibility apply in all contexts, including more complex online environments encountered by adolescents. Through explicit teaching about respect, consent, power, equality, protected characteristics, the curriculum supports pupils to challenge harmful attitudes, understand the impact of their behaviour on others, and develop the knowledge and confidence needed to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and abuse.

The curriculum includes age-appropriate coverage of serious safeguarding and criminal risks relevant to adolescence, including sexual harassment and violence, exploitation, online abuse and image-based harm, in line with statutory RSHE guidance.

Curriculum Content
Teaching in secondary should build on primary content. By the end of secondary school, pupils will have covered the following content:

Relationships Education

- Families
- Respectful relationships
- Online safety and awareness
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

Health Education

- Mental wellbeing
- Wellbeing online
- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping
- Health protection and prevention, and understanding the healthcare system
- Personal safety
- Basic first aid
- Developing bodies

Teaching will cover:

- **Respectful relationships and behaviours:** characteristics of healthy, respectful relationships (including friendships, family and intimate relationships); the importance of respect, kindness, dignity and equality; understanding acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in relationships; recognising and challenging prejudice and discrimination; understanding the benefits of healthy relationships for mental wellbeing
- **Intimate relationships, consent and sexual health:** developing intimate relationships; the meaning and importance of consent and not applying pressure; boundaries and respect; contraception and sexual health, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs); making safe, informed and responsible choices
- **Online safety and digital relationships:** understanding risks associated with online activity, including harmful content (including deepfakes and sextortion) and behaviour; recognising how online content can present unrealistic or harmful portrayals of relationships; understanding privacy, consent and sharing of images; the impact of online behaviours on safety and wellbeing
- **Safety, abuse and exploitation:** recognising unhealthy, harmful or abusive relationships; identifying when relationships are not right; understanding how to respond to risk and seek help; knowing how to report concerns and access support
- **Equality, diversity and the law:** understanding the law relating to relationships and sex; knowledge of rights, responsibilities and protections; respecting others and understanding different types of relationships and family structures
- **Mental health and emotional wellbeing:** understanding the link between relationships and mental wellbeing; recognising how healthy relationships support emotional health; knowing how to seek help and support for self and others
- **Physical health and development:** understanding physical development, including puberty and menstruation, brain development and reproductive health; knowledge of sexual health and its importance for lifelong wellbeing; making informed decisions about health, including an age-appropriate understanding of consent in healthcare contexts
- **Preparation for adult life:** developing confidence, self-esteem and independence; building the skills required for healthy, fulfilling relationships; understanding how to make informed, responsible decisions in adult life

This content is delivered through a carefully sequenced curriculum. Schools are individually responsible for: setting out the subject content, how and when it will be taught, who is responsible for teaching it and any external providers or curriculum materials that will be used. Schools will proactively share a representative sample of RSHE resources with parents in advance of delivery to ensure full transparency.

Teaching and Learning Approach

Building on learning from primary education is essential for preparing pupils for increasingly complex content at secondary level. Teaching recognises that young people may encounter such content earlier or beyond school and online, and supports pupils to respond safely, confidently and appropriately.

Teaching will:

- Be inclusive, sensitive and developmentally appropriate
- Use a range of methods (discussion, stories, videos, practical activities)
- Encourage pupil voice and respectful dialogue
- Be adapted to meet pupils' individual needs, including SEND

Teachers will respond to questions honestly and sensitively, within the scope of the curriculum, and guide pupils to trusted adults where appropriate.

Across all key stages, pupils will be supported to develop the following skills as appropriate to their age:

- Communication skills
- Forming positive relationships including self-respect as well as respect and empathy for others
- Recognising and assessing potential risks
- Assertiveness and managing conflict and difficult emotions

MLT schools will make sure that:

- Core knowledge is sectioned into units of manageable size
- The required content is communicated to pupils clearly, in a carefully sequenced way and within a planned scheme of work
- Teaching includes sufficient and well-chosen opportunities and contexts for pupils to embed new knowledge, so that it can be used confidently in real-life situations

Use of resources
Schools will consider whether any resources they plan to use:

- are aligned with the teaching requirements set out in the statutory RSHE guidance
- would support pupils in applying their knowledge in different contexts and settings
- are age-appropriate, given the age and maturity of the pupils
- are evidence-based and contain robust facts and statistics
- fit into our curriculum plan
- are from credible sources
- are compatible with effective teaching approaches
- are sensitive to pupils' experiences

Where external organisations or speakers are used to support RSHE, schools retain responsibility for the content delivered. They will ensure that any materials are appropriate and shared in advance and teachers will remain present during such sessions.
Parents and carers may view materials on request.

Roles
The **local governing board** is responsible for holding the headteacher to account for this policy's implementation.

As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, governing boards should also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the expected educational outcomes
- teaching is accessible to all pupils with SEND
- curriculum content and teaching materials are aligned with this statutory guidance
- clear information is provided for parents on the subject content, teaching materials and external providers, and on the right to request that their child is withdrawn from sex education

The **Headteacher** is responsible for making sure that RSE is taught consistently across the school, for sharing all resources and materials with parents and carers, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory sex education.

Staff
Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSHE in a way that is sensitive, high-quality and appropriate for each year group
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSHE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents/carers wish them to be withdrawn from the [non-statutory/non-science] components of RSHE
- Modelling positive behaviour and avoiding language that might perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and being conscious of everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes
- Reporting any safeguarding concerns or disclosures that pupils may make as a result of the subject content to the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

Staff Training
Staff are trained on the delivery of RSHE as part of their induction and it is included in the schools' continuing professional development calendars.

The headteacher (or other staff as authorised by them) may invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSHE.

Pupils
Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSHE and, when discussing issues related to RSHE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

Working with Parents/Carers

The role of parents

The MLT schools are aware that the primary role in a child's relationship, sex and health education lies with parents and carers. We pride ourselves on having a positive and supporting relationship with all parents as a result of thorough mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective, we:

- proactively engage parents
- inform parents about the schools' policy, practices and curriculum content
- communicate with parents about how we teach RSHE education in school. By doing this the aim is that we support each other in delivering the key messages that children need to be aware of
- answer any questions that parents may have about the RSHE education of their child
- take seriously any issue that parents raise with teachers or governors about this policy or the arrangements for RSHE education in the school

At the point of delivery of each new year group's curriculum, the school will consult parents and carers, and their views will be taken into account. This process should include offering parents support in talking to their children about sex education and how to link this with what is being taught in school.

Right to withdraw

Parents have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all sex education delivered as part of RSHE, except for those elements that are part of the science curriculum.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education or Health Education.

Parents may request withdrawal from sex education up to three terms before the pupil turns 16. After this point, if the pupil wishes to receive sex education, the school must make arrangements for this to happen.

Requests for withdrawal should be made in writing to the Headteacher and will be considered on an individual basis. A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's file so that a parent's wishes are on record. Alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from lessons (or parts of lessons) at parent's request.

Dealing with difficult questions

Ground rules are essential to provide an agreed structure to answering sensitive or difficult questions.
Any difficult questions which staff feel are more appropriate for discussion at home are addressed by encouraging the pupils to discuss these with their parents. There is clear communication with parents about any unanswered questions in school so these can be answered as parents feel is appropriate.

Confidentiality
Confidentiality within the classroom is an important component of relationships, sex and health education, and teachers are expected to respect the confidentiality of their pupils as far as is possible. Teachers will, however, alert the Designated Safeguarding Leader about any suspicions of inappropriate behaviour or potential abuse as per the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Equality, Inclusion and SEND
These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life, with teaching that is inclusive, non-stigmatising and sensitive to the diverse home circumstances and support networks of pupils within the Trust. Teaching promotes equality, dignity and respect for all, in line with the Equality Act 2010, and challenges discrimination and stereotyping.

Schools make reasonable adjustments to ensure accessibility for pupils with SEND and recognise that some pupils may require more explicit teaching, additional support or alternative approaches to learning. RSHE is inclusive of all pupils and seeks to support their understanding, safety and wellbeing. Schools recognise that pupils with SEND and other

additional needs may be at increased risk of child-on-child abuse or exploitation and ensure that teaching is sufficiently explicit and reinforced to support their safety and understanding.

We will teach about these topics in a manner that:

- Considers how a diverse range of pupils will relate to them
- Is sensitive to all pupils' experiences
- During lessons, makes pupils feel:
  - Safe and supported
  - Able to engage with the key messages

We will also:

- Make sure that pupils learn about these topics in an environment that's appropriate for them, for example in:
  - A whole-class setting
  - Small groups or targeted sessions
  - 1-to-1 discussions
  - Digital formats
- Give careful consideration to the level of adaptation needed

Links with other policies

This policy is linked with the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Equality
- Online Safety
- Behaviour
- SEND

Monitoring and review

The effectiveness of the RSHE programme of study will be evaluated by assessing children's learning and implementing change if required.

Each school's Local Governing Body will monitor the implementation of this policy regularly. The Governors give serious consideration to any comments from parents about the sex education programme, and make a record of all such comments in the event of there being any comments raised.

Consultation

Each school is required to consult with parents on this policy each time they consult on their RSHE curriculum content. There is no statutory timeframe for review and as such schools should ensure that they consult with parents (including this policy) whenever there is a major change to proposed RSHE curriculum content or approach.