

RSHE Curriculum Principles

This should be read alongside:

- the Dixons Academy Trust Relationships, Sex (and Health) Education Policy.
<https://www.dixonsat.com/uploads/files/dixonsat/Relationships-and-sex-education-RSE-and-health-education.pdf?v=1788274007>
- the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (September 2026)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

Ambition

The RSHE curriculum equips students with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to be safe, healthy and prepared for life in modern Britain. It supports students to build positive relationships, make informed decisions, manage risk, understand themselves and others, and know how to access support when needed. The curriculum is based on statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education guidance, whilst also reflecting the needs of our communities and the lived experiences of our students.

Our curriculum goes beyond statutory requirements by including additional content that supports students to thrive, including financial literacy, young carers, wider aspects of personal development.

Students leave our academy with the knowledge and skills to:

- maintain healthy and respectful relationships
- make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing
- recognise and manage risk
- understand their rights and responsibilities
- contribute positively to society
- know when and how to seek help for themselves or others

Rationale

At Dixons, we use the term Personal Development Studies (PDS) to describe our wider personal development curriculum. This includes Careers Education, Citizenship Education and Relationships, Equity and Health Education (REH). REH covers the statutory Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (RSHE) required by the Department for Education, whilst also reflecting our commitment to equity, inclusion and fairness for all students. Through PDS, students gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to stay safe, make informed decisions and prepare for adult life

How is the curriculum designed?

The curriculum is informed by:

- Statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- PSHE Association guidance
- Local safeguarding priorities
- Student voice and emerging issues

The curriculum is reviewed regularly alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure content reflects current safeguarding concerns, local context and emerging risks facing young people. This may result in adaptations to examples, resources or emphasis within units.

A spiral curriculum

RSHE follows a spiral curriculum. Students revisit key themes throughout secondary school, building on prior knowledge and developing a deeper understanding over time. All year groups study the same broad unit at the same point in the year. Content is adapted to be age-appropriate, allowing students to revisit important concepts with increasing complexity and relevance as they mature.

Inclusion and equity

All RSHE content is taught through an equality, diversity and inclusion lens. Students learn about the diversity of British society and are encouraged to develop respect, empathy and understanding for others. Teaching reflects a wide range of experiences, identities, cultures, faiths, family structures and backgrounds. The curriculum actively challenges stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and harmful misconceptions whilst ensuring all students feel represented and valued.

Supporting Students with SEND

All students are entitled to the full RSHE curriculum. Teachers adapt delivery to ensure content is accessible whilst maintaining high expectations. Social stories and other supportive approaches may be used where appropriate to help students understand concepts, relationships, situations and social expectations.

Relationships and Sex Education: The distinction

Parents and carers have the right to request withdrawal of their child from some or all of sex education as delivered as part of Relationships and Sex Education. Parents and carers do not have the right to withdraw their child from relationships and health education, nor can they be withdrawn from topics taught as part of the science curriculum, including science topics related to puberty or sexual reproduction.

At Dixons Academies Trust, detailed teaching about human reproduction is delivered through the science curriculum. RSHE does not teach the mechanics of sexual activity. Instead, learning focuses on ensuring young people understand the concept of consent, knowing that they have a choice about whether to have sex, and that many young people choose to wait until they are older, and knowing that people can enjoy positive intimate and romantic relationships without sex. The purpose of sex education is to ensure that young people can make safe, informed and responsible decisions when they are older and ready to do so. Research suggests that high-quality relationships and sex education does not encourage earlier sexual activity, and can support young people to make safer and more informed decisions in relation to relationships and sexual health.

Within our curriculum, sex education is taught only in Year 10 and Year 11 through the 'intimate and sexual relationships' lessons. These Year 10 and Year 11 lessons focus on contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV prevention through PrEP and PEP (information about accessing sexual health and family planning clinics is taught separately in 'health protection and prevention, and accessing the healthcare system'). The 'intimate and sexual relationships' lessons also build on learning from the 'online safety' and 'being safe' lessons to further explore, in an age-appropriate way, how pornography can contribute to harmful attitudes and behaviour. Details of when 'intimate and sexual health' is taught is on our long-term plan on the website.

Concepts

Knowledge, application and support

Students need more than knowledge alone.

The curriculum develops:

- Knowledge – the facts, concepts and understanding needed to make informed decisions about health, relationships and wellbeing.
- Application – the ability to use that knowledge when facing challenges, risks and complex situations.
- Support-seeking – understanding when, how and where to access help for themselves or others.

Knowledge in action

Many RSHE topics relate directly to future "crunch moments" where young people may have to make quick decisions about relationships, health, consent, online behaviour or personal safety. Lessons help students develop the confidence, strategies and self-efficacy needed to apply their knowledge in these situations. The curriculum aims to empower students to make decisions that are safe, healthy and aligned with their values.

Retrieval and long-term memory

RSHE is treated as an academic subject. Students are expected to learn, remember and apply important knowledge.

To support long-term retention:

- lessons begin with retrieval practice through do nows, brain dumps, and Freyer models
- structured reflection helps strengthen understanding
- students regularly revisit prior learning
- knowledge organisers support recall and revision

- cycle assessments take place in line with the academy calendar

The curriculum follows the same principles for teaching and learning as other curriculum subjects.

Implementation

Safe learning environment

The RSHE curriculum is designed to be flexible and can be delivered through a range of models, including year-group sessions, classroom-based lessons, tutor time, dedicated curriculum time or a combination of approaches.

RSHE is taught within a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment. Students are supported to discuss sensitive topics in a way that protects privacy, promotes respect and maintains emotional safety. Staff establish and reinforce clear ground rules, including:

- respecting different viewpoints
- using appropriate language
- not sharing personal information
- not putting others on the spot
- listening respectfully to others
- understanding that it is acceptable to pass on a question if needed

Teaching is carefully structured around whole-class discussion and teacher facilitation. Pair and group discussions are used cautiously where topics are sensitive, so teachers can monitor conversations, challenge misconceptions and maintain safeguarding.

Distancing techniques

Many RSHE topics involve sensitive issues. Distancing techniques are used routinely to safeguard students and encourage participation. Students explore fictional scenarios, case studies and characters rather than discussing personal experiences. Students are encouraged to consider questions such as: "What could they do?" "What advice would you give?" "What are the options available?", rather than discussing their own circumstances. Distanced learning allows students to discuss complex situations, evaluate choices and explore consequences without personalising risk or revealing private information. Social stories may also be used, particularly for students with SEND, to support understanding and engagement.

Reflection and discussion

Students are encouraged to think critically about values, choices, responsibilities and relationships. Structured reflection is embedded throughout the curriculum and is a feature of every lesson. Students are encouraged to consider how learning may apply to situations they encounter now or in the future.

Exit tickets

Exit tickets are used regularly across the curriculum. These provide students with a safe and confidential way to:

- ask questions
- clarify understanding
- identify misconceptions
- highlight concerns

that they may not feel comfortable raising publicly.

Signposting support

Every lesson ends with signposting to support. Students are routinely reminded of trusted adults, school support systems and external organisations. They are encouraged to seek help for themselves or others whenever they need it. Students are regularly reassured that asking for help is a strength and that concerns will be taken seriously.

Working with safeguarding teams

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is involved in curriculum planning and review. Staff work closely with safeguarding teams before, during and after units to ensure content reflects emerging concerns, local context and the needs of students. This helps ensure the curriculum remains preventative, relevant and responsive.

Visitors and External Organisations



Where external visitors or organisations contribute to delivery, academy staff will remain responsible for the curriculum, safeguarding, and quality assurance of all content. All visitors will be appropriately vetted, briefed on safeguarding procedures, and supervised by academy staff.

Staff Expertise

Professional and objective delivery

Staff recognise that their own experiences, beliefs and values may differ from those of students and their families. Teaching is delivered in a factual, balanced and age-appropriate manner. Staff avoid promoting personal opinions and instead present information objectively, recognising that students may encounter different viewpoints through their families, communities, cultures, faiths and online experiences. Staff are mindful of the messages communicated through verbal responses, body language and facial expressions, ensuring students feel respected and supported regardless of their background or viewpoint.

Professional development

RSHE requires strong subject knowledge and confidence. Staff receive regular professional development to ensure teaching remains accurate, inclusive, safeguarding-focused and aligned with current guidance and emerging issues. CPD is ongoing and reflects changes in legislation, safeguarding concerns, online trends, research evidence and curriculum developments.

Teacher wellbeing

The wellbeing of staff is important. Some RSHE topics may be personally challenging for individual members of staff due to their own experiences or beliefs. Staff are encouraged to seek support from line managers, safeguarding teams or curriculum leaders where needed. High-quality RSHE relies on staff feeling supported, confident and professionally prepared to deliver the curriculum.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is central to the RSHE curriculum. Teaching provides students with the knowledge and skills needed to:

- recognise risk
- make informed decisions
- stay safe online and offline
- understand healthy and unhealthy behaviours
- access support when needed

The curriculum is designed to empower rather than alarm. We do not use shock, fear or sensationalist approaches. Whilst students are taught about genuine risks and consequences, these are presented in a balanced, measured and age-appropriate way that supports informed decision-making rather than fear-based responses. Lessons are planned on the assumption that there may be students present who have been directly affected by the issues being discussed. Teaching is therefore preventative rather than instructive and avoids content that could cause distress, stigma or harm.

RSHE lessons are not designed to be a forum for personal disclosure. The purpose of the curriculum is to provide universal, preventative education and to help students know when, how and where to seek support. Distancing techniques, ground rules, exit tickets and routine signposting help minimise public disclosures. Where students do make disclosures, staff follow academy safeguarding procedures. Protective interruption may be used where appropriate to prevent students sharing sensitive information publicly, whilst ensuring concerns are followed up promptly and appropriately.

Students are regularly reminded:

- how to report concerns
- how reports will be handled
- how to seek help for themselves
- how to seek help for a friend
- that they will be listened to and taken seriously

Every lesson ends by reinforcing available sources of support both within school and beyond.



Impact

Through the RSHE curriculum, students develop the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to be safe, healthy and happy both now and in the future.

Students leave school better able to:

- build healthy and respectful relationships
- recognise and manage risk
- challenge prejudice and discrimination
- make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing
- seek support when needed
- contribute positively to their communities and wider society

The curriculum aims to equip all students, regardless of background, with the powerful knowledge, understanding and skills needed to thrive in modern Britain.