John Watson School

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Including Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education, Health Education and PSHE delivery

Policy/Procedure Title	Relationships and Sex Education Policy
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1. Rationale

This policy covers John Watson School's approach to teaching Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), Relationships Education, Health Education and the wider Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum.

RSE is important for the personal, social and emotional development of our pupils. It helps pupils learn about relationships, bodies, feelings, privacy, safety, health, online risks and how to seek help.

At John Watson School, RSE is also a key part of safeguarding. It supports pupils to understand privacy, personal space, safe and unsafe touch, consent, body changes, public and private behaviour, online safety, and how to communicate comfort, discomfort, choice, refusal and concern.

Teaching is positive, factual, inclusive and developmentally appropriate. It is designed to help pupils become safer, healthier, more confident and better prepared for adulthood.

2. John Watson School context

John Watson School is a special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, complex communication needs, autism, sensory and physical needs, and associated social, emotional and behavioural needs.

The school operates across primary and secondary provision. Pupils learn across classroom, therapy, personal care, outdoor, community and enrichment contexts. This means that PSHE and RSE are not confined to a single lesson slot. They are reinforced through daily routines, communication work, personal development opportunities, enrichment, community access and preparation for adulthood.

Pupils may show understanding in different ways, including through speech, signing, symbols, AAC, objects of reference, gesture, eye gaze, body language, anticipation, engagement, rejection, tolerance, regulation, choice-making or increased independence. These are all recognised as meaningful progress. Learning may be captured through observation, written work, photographs, and videos, using Evidence for Learning and EHCP reviews.

Content is taught in a way that is age-respectful, stage-appropriate and accessible.

3. Legal and statutory requirements

This policy is informed by and delivered with regard to the Department for Education statutory guidance: Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, including the revised guidance published in July 2025 for introduction from 1 September 2026.

The policy also has regard to the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Education Act 1996, the Equality Act 2010, the SEND Code of Practice, Keeping Children Safe in Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children and relevant safeguarding, equality and curriculum duties.

Relationships Education and Health Education are statutory for primary-aged pupils. Relationships and Sex Education is statutory for secondary-aged pupils. Sex education in primary schools is not statutory except for elements contained within the Science curriculum. Parents and carers cannot withdraw pupils from Relationships Education, Health Education or statutory Science content.

In special schools, content and teaching may need to be tailored to pupils at different developmental stages. John Watson School will therefore plan RSE and Health Education by considering both chronological age and developmental understanding, alongside safeguarding need, communication profile and individual context.

4. Curriculum aims

Through PSHE and RSE, pupils will be supported to:

- develop a positive sense of self;
- communicate needs, feelings, likes, dislikes, choices and boundaries;
- build safe, respectful and caring relationships;
- understand families, friendships and people who care for us;
- recognise privacy, personal space and public/private places;
- understand body changes, puberty and personal hygiene at a suitable level;
- recognise safe and unsafe touch and know how to seek help;
- understand consent, choice and bodily autonomy in practical ways;
- learn about emotional wellbeing and regulation;
- learn how to stay safe online and offline;
- respect difference, diversity and the rights of others;
- prepare for adulthood, independence and community participation.

5. Inclusion, equality and SEND provision

RSE will be taught in a way that is inclusive, accessible and respectful. The school considers pupils' sex, disability, communication needs, family circumstances, culture, faith, ethnicity, sexuality, gender reassignment, looked-after status and any other relevant protected characteristic or vulnerability.

Teaching will be age-respectful and stage-appropriate. Older pupils will not be denied important safeguarding content because of their learning difficulty, but teaching will be adapted so it is meaningful and accessible.

Adaptations may include:

- symbols, photographs, objects of reference and visual supports;
- AAC, signing, intensive interaction and personalised communication systems;
- sensory stories, social stories and simple repeated scripts;
- role play, modelling, practical routines and real-life practice;
- small group or individual teaching where needed;
- repetition and overlearning through a spiral curriculum;
- work with families, therapists, pastoral staff and safeguarding leads.

Personal care routines may support learning about dignity, privacy, consent and body awareness. They must be handled sensitively and in line with the school's Intimate Care Policy.

6. Curriculum content

The RSE curriculum forms part of the whole-school PSHE curriculum. It is planned as a spiral curriculum so that key ideas are revisited and built on over time.

Content includes:

- families and people who care for us;
- friendships, respectful relationships and positive interaction;
- feelings, self-awareness and emotional regulation;
- privacy, personal space, public and private behaviour;
- safe and unsafe touch, consent, choice and refusal;
- body parts, body changes, puberty, menstruation, erections, wet dreams and masturbation where appropriate;
- personal hygiene, dental health, food, hydration, sleep and physical health;
- sexual health, contraception, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections where appropriate for secondary pupils;
- online safety, digital relationships, harmful content, image sharing, online abuse, AI/deepfake sexual imagery and sextortion where appropriate;
- bullying, discrimination, harassment, coercion, exploitation and how to seek help.

7. Subject delivery

RSE is taught through planned PSHE lessons and reinforced across the wider curriculum. This includes Science, PE, Personal Development, community enrichment and preparation for adulthood.

Class teachers plan and deliver learning for their pupils. HLTAs, TAs, therapists and other professionals may support delivery under teacher direction.

Teaching methods may include stories, sensory exploration, symbols, objects, visuals, videos, books, role play, discussion, practical routines, community experiences and personalised interventions.

Staff will use clear, factual language and correct anatomical terms where appropriate.

8. Safeguarding

RSE is delivered within the school's safeguarding framework. Lessons and conversations may lead to disclosures or concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, online harm, harmful sexual behaviour or other risks.

All staff must follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL or a deputy DSL using the school's agreed procedures.

9. Pupil voice and questions

Pupil voice may be gathered through spoken responses, symbols, AAC, signing, choice-making, observations, school council, lesson evaluation, communication with trusted adults and pupil engagement in personal development opportunities.

Questions are viewed as a positive sign that pupils are engaged and curious. Staff will answer questions in an age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate way. Staff will not answer personal questions about themselves and will not ask pupils direct personal questions that could make pupils or staff vulnerable.

10. Working with parents and carers

John Watson School recognises that parents and carers are pupils' first educators and that successful RSE involves partnership between home and school.

Where sensitive content is due to be delivered, particularly puberty and sex education content, staff will work with families to support consistency of language and approaches.

11. Right to withdraw from sex education

Parents and carers of secondary-aged pupils may request that their child is withdrawn from some or all sex education delivered as part of RSE, except where that content forms part of the science curriculum.

Requests must be made in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will discuss the request with parents/carers and, where appropriate, the pupil, to understand the reasons for the request and to explain the purpose and benefits of the curriculum.

Except in exceptional circumstances, the school will respect the parents'/carers' request until three terms before the pupil turns 16. From that point, if the pupil wishes to receive sex education, the school has a duty to provide it during one of those three terms.

This process is the same for pupils with SEND. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher may take a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making a decision.

Where a pupil is withdrawn, the school will provide appropriate, purposeful alternative education during the period of withdrawal. Requests for withdrawal will be recorded and reviewed annually.

12. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body / Trust Board is responsible for ensuring the school has an up-to-date RSE policy, that statutory requirements are met, and that provision is monitored.

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring RSE is taught consistently across the school, staff are appropriately trained, parents/carers are informed, and requests for withdrawal from sex education are managed appropriately.

The PSHE Lead is responsible for leading curriculum planning, supporting staff, reviewing resources, monitoring coverage and assessment, supporting SEND accessibility and liaising with safeguarding, pastoral, therapy and senior leadership teams.

Teachers are responsible for planning and delivering RSE in a sensitive and appropriate manner that meets the individual needs of pupils in their class. They are supported by HLTAs, TAs and other professionals where appropriate.

All staff are responsible for promoting dignity, safety, respect and safeguarding through their interactions with pupils, including during personal care, transitions, community learning, online activity, social times and enrichment.

13. Assessment, monitoring and review

Progress in PSHE and RSE is assessed through observation, pupil communication, engagement, work samples, photographs, videos, Evidence for Learning, EHCP outcomes and wider evidence from routines and real-life contexts.

Progress may include increased tolerance, anticipation, recognition, intentional communication, choice-making, refusal, emotional regulation, participation, independence or generalisation across contexts.

RSE provision will be monitored through curriculum mapping, planning review, evidence review, learning walks, staff feedback, pupil voice, parent/carer feedback and governor/trust oversight.

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if statutory guidance changes or school monitoring identifies a need for review.

14. References

- Department for Education. Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance, including revised guidance published July 2025 for introduction from 1 September 2026.
- Department for Education. Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- Education Act 1996.
- Equality Act 2010.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.

Appendix A: Parent/carer request for withdrawal from sex education

This form should be completed by parents/carers who wish to request withdrawal from sex education delivered as part of RSE, where this does not form part of the statutory Science curriculum.

Pupil name	
Class / year group	
Parent/carer name	
Date of request	
Specific content the request relates to	
Reason for request	
Date of meeting with Headteacher	
Summary of discussion	
Decision	
Alternative provision arrangements	
Review date	
Headteacher signature	
Parent/carer signature	