PSHE & RSHE Policy

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Contributors	Rob Arrowsmith		
Mandatory Policy	Yes		
Note	This policy must not be amended without prior approval of the Education Director		

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1. Supporting Documents

This policy should be read alongside our:

- Safeguarding Children in Education Policy (EDE.POL.002)
- Behaviour Policy (EDU.POL.027)
- Anti-Bullying Policy (EDU.POL.007)
- Online Safety Policy (EDU.POL.009)
- Curriculum, SMSC and Fundamental British Values Policy (EDU.POL.008)
- SEND Policy (EDU.POL.022)
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Careers Policy (EDU.POL.006)

Related policies are held within RADAR in the School's policy folder.

2. Introduction

At Acorns School we believe that strong relationships and good health are the foundation of a happy and successful life. Many of our pupils have experienced

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trauma, disrupted relationships or harm, and our relationships, sex and health education help pupils understand themselves, keep themselves safe and build the positive relationships they may not always have known.

This is our policy for personal, social, health and economic education, which we call PSHE. The statutory relationships, sex and health education we must teach sits within it, and this one policy covers both.

This policy sets out what we teach, when and how we teach it, who is responsible for it, and how parents and carers are involved. It reflects our relational and trauma-informed approach through the Keys Connect model, and it is written so that every lesson is sensitive, factual, balanced and accessible to the pupils in front of us.

Relationships, sex and health education at Acorns School is part of a whole-school approach to wellbeing and safety. It sits alongside our safeguarding, behaviour, online safety and anti-bullying work, and it is shaped by the needs of our pupils and the views of their families.

3. Aim & Scope

This policy applies to all staff, pupils, parents and carers, and visitors at Acorns School and to our whole programme of personal, social, health and economic education, including the statutory relationships, sex and health education within it, whether delivered in class, in a small group or one to one. It aims to:

- Give pupils the knowledge and skills to form healthy, respectful relationships and to recognise unsafe or inappropriate behaviour.
- Deliver the statutory relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education that pupils are entitled to, in a way that is adapted for special educational needs.
- Teach sensitive and contested topics in a balanced and factual way, without promoting any particular view.
- Involve parents and carers in the content of the curriculum and respect their right to request withdrawal from sex education.
- Meet our duties under the Independent School Standards and current statutory guidance.
- Develop pupils' wider personal and social skills, their economic and financial understanding, and their readiness for adult life and work.

4. Abbreviations and Definitions

This policy uses the following terms:

- Relationships education: teaching about healthy relationships, including friendships, family and online relationships, that is compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education.
- Relationships and sex education (RSE): teaching that builds on relationships education and includes age-appropriate teaching about sex, sexual health and intimate relationships, compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education.

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- Sex education: the part of RSE that parents have the right to request their child is withdrawn from, other than content taught as part of the science curriculum.
- Health education: teaching about physical health, mental wellbeing, puberty, and keeping safe, which is compulsory in our school.
- RSHE: the combined programme of relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education that this policy covers.
- PSHE education: the school's wider programme of personal, social, health and economic education. It covers health and wellbeing, relationships, and living in the wider world, including economic and financial capability and preparation for adult life. RSHE sits within PSHE.

5. Policy Content

5.1 Principles and Approach

At Acorns School our practice is guided by these principles.

- We teach the facts, accurately and age-appropriately, and we present sensitive and contested topics in a balanced way without promoting any single view.
- We build positive attitudes and healthy norms, and we avoid language that normalises harmful behaviour or stereotypes.
- We are trauma informed. We recognise that topics may be difficult for pupils with direct experience of them, and we adapt and offer support.
- We make the curriculum accessible to every pupil, including those with special educational needs, adapting materials and teaching one to one where that meets a pupil's needs.
- We are open with parents and carers, we consult them on the content of the curriculum, and we make all our materials available to them.
- We treat every pupil with respect and dignity, whatever their background, beliefs or characteristics.

5.2 PSHE & RSHE in Practice

Our curriculum

At Acorns School we teach relationships education for primary pupils and relationships and sex education for secondary pupils, together with health education for all pupils. Our curriculum follows the statutory guidance and is sequenced so that pupils are equipped with knowledge before they need it.

We adapt our curriculum for the pupils we teach. Lesson materials are modified for pupils with special educational needs, and where a topic is better addressed individually we deliver it one to one. The SENCO and the named lead work together to make sure every pupil can access the content in a way that is right for them.

A summary of what is taught, when and by whom is held in our curriculum map. We make this information available to parents and carers. The curriculum map is

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reviewed annually and updated in response to pupil need, safeguarding trends, statutory guidance and emerging risks.

What we teach

Our content differs by phase and is always age and stage appropriate. The full sequenced detail, by year group and topic, is set out in our curriculum map. The themes below name what we cover so that staff, parents and inspectors can see how we meet the statutory content requirements.

Relationships and families. Our pupils learn about:

- Healthy friendships and family relationships, and the features of committed, stable relationships including marriage and civil partnership, and that forced marriage and marriage before the age of 18 are illegal.
- How relationships change over time, and the roles and responsibilities of parents and carers.
- How to judge when a relationship is unsafe and where to seek help.

Respectful relationships, consent and recognising misogyny. Our pupils learn about:

- Consent and personal boundaries, and that kindness and care go beyond consent.
- How stereotypes, including those based on sex and gender, can cause harm, and how to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice.
- How inequalities of power affect relationships, the different types of bullying including online bullying, and the responsibility to report it.

Online safety and media literacy. Our pupils learn about:

- Staying safe online, protecting personal information, and that the same standards of behaviour apply online as offline.
- The law on sharing images, including that keeping or sharing an indecent image of someone under 18 is a crime even if the image was taken or generated by a child or created using AI, and that sharing an intimate image of an adult without consent is a crime.
- Deepfakes and AI-generated images, how they can be used to harm and how to identify them, online scams and the risks of sextortion, and how AI chatbots can create fake intimacy or give harmful advice.
- How to recognise misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories, the risks of online content that promotes self-harm or suicide, and the risks of online gambling and gambling-like content within games.

Tackling misogyny, the manosphere and violence against women and girls. Our pupils learn about:

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- How pornography presents a distorted and often misogynistic picture of sex and relationships.
- How some online sub-cultures shape attitudes, including the views promoted by so-called incels and online influencers, often described as the manosphere, and how these can normalise sexual harassment and abuse.
- The links between sexism, misogyny and violence against women and girls, and positive models of respect that support boys without stigmatising them.

Being safe, abuse and the law. Our pupils learn about:

- What sexual harassment and sexual violence are, that they are never the fault of the person experiencing them, and that they include unsolicited sexual attention or touching, public sexual harassment, upskirting, and taking or sharing intimate images without consent.
- The law on rape and sexual assault, harmful sexual behaviour, domestic abuse including coercive and controlling behaviour, and stalking and other fixated or obsessive behaviour.
- That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences, whether or not they cause injury.
- Exploitation and abuse, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, grooming, county lines and financial exploitation.
- female genital mutilation, virginity testing and hymenoplasty, the harm they cause, the law, and where to find support.
- The Online Safety Act, the age of criminal responsibility, and medical consent and Gillick competence.

Health and wellbeing. Our pupils learn about:

- Mental wellbeing and emotional health, and where and how to seek help.
- Puberty, menstrual and reproductive health, and the proper anatomical names for parts of the body, including at primary level.
- Physical health and lifestyle, and the facts about the harms of smoking, alcohol, drugs, vaping and nicotine products including nicotine pouches, and the risks of nicotine addiction.
- Personal safety, including safety around water, roads and railways at primary level, and basic first aid.
- At secondary level, intimate and sexual relationships, contraception, fertility, and sexual health including sexually transmitted infections, and how to access advice and services.

Sensitive topics such as self-harm, eating disorders and suicide are taught only in a safe and supportive way, led by staff with appropriate training. We never give instructions or methods of self-harm or suicide, we avoid language that romanticises these topics, and at secondary level we address suicide prevention carefully, having regard to the age and needs of our pupils.

Biological sex and gender reassignment

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We teach pupils the facts and the law about biological sex and about gender reassignment. We teach that people have legal rights by virtue of their biological sex that are different from the rights of those of the opposite sex who have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, and that people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, like those with any other protected characteristic, are protected from discrimination and must be treated with respect and dignity.

Beyond the facts and the law there is significant public debate on these issues. We are careful not to endorse any particular view or to teach contested belief as fact. For example, we do not teach as fact that all people have a gender identity. We avoid language and activities that reinforce gender stereotypes, and we are mindful not to suggest that social transition is a simple solution to feelings of distress or discomfort.

We encourage pupils to express their views while respecting the views of others, and we are clear that bullying or disrespectful language or behaviour is never acceptable. Any request relating to a pupil questioning their gender is handled with care, with parents involved as a matter of course, except where doing so would place the child at greater risk, in line with our safeguarding approach.

Inclusive teaching

Our teaching is inclusive of all pupils. We teach about different family arrangements, including same-sex parents, and at secondary level we give equal opportunity to learn about stable and healthy same-sex relationships as part of the wider programme rather than as a separate unit. We cover sexual health in a way that is relevant to all pupils, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning.

Working with parents and carers, and consultation

We engage parents and carers in the content of our RSHE curriculum and we are transparent about the materials we use. Before we make or revise this policy, we consult parents of pupils at the school. We give parents the chance to see the draft policy, we invite their comments, and we consider what they say before we finalise it. This consultation is a requirement of Standard 2A and we keep a record of it. The record template is at Appendix B.

We tell parents in advance about sex education content within lessons, and we keep them informed of any new content we add to respond to issues in school.

The right to request withdrawal from sex education

Parents and carers have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of RSE. They cannot withdraw their child from relationships education, from health education, or from content taught as part of the science curriculum.

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Before granting a request, the headteacher will discuss it with the parent, set out the benefits of the pupil receiving sex education and any detrimental effects of withdrawal, and record the request and the outcome. In primary education, the headteacher will grant a request to withdraw from any sex education that is taught outside the science curriculum. In secondary education, the headteacher will grant the request other than in exceptional circumstances.

From three terms before a pupil turns 16, the pupil themselves may choose to receive sex education even if their parent has requested withdrawal, and we will provide it. Where a pupil is withdrawn, we make sure they receive appropriate and purposeful education during the period of withdrawal. We make the right to withdraw, and the right of the pupil to opt back in, clear to parents and pupils.

Openness about curriculum materials

Parents and carers may view all the curriculum materials we use to teach RSHE. We share materials through a parent portal or a presentation, or by providing copies on request, and we comply with copyright law when we do so. Copyright never prevents a parent from seeing the materials we use. Where a parent asks to see materials, we make them available.

External providers and resources

Where we use an external provider or resource, we remain responsible for the content and for how pupils are taught. We check that any resource is accurate, age and stage appropriate, unbiased and suitable for our pupils, and we check the credentials of any visitor or organisation. We ask to see materials and a lesson plan in advance. We are cautious about resources from organisations with a strong partisan view on a contested topic, and on the topic of biological sex and gender we avoid materials that oversimplify the issue, that perpetuate stereotypes, or that encourage pupils to question their gender. We agree with any visitor how confidentiality and safeguarding reports will be handled in line with our policies. Our due diligence checklist is at Appendix C, and we have regard to the government-funded resources listed in Annex B of the statutory guidance.

Publication

We publish this policy on the school website and provide a free copy to anyone who asks for one, including parents and inspectors, as required by Standard 2A. Where the school does not have a website, we make the policy available by other means.

Safeguarding and confidentiality

RSHE often prompts pupils to share concerns or make disclosures. Staff handle these sensitively, do not promise confidentiality, and report any safeguarding concern to the designated safeguarding lead without delay, in line with our Safeguarding Children in Education Policy (EDE.POL.002). We deliver every topic in a trauma-informed way and provide follow-up support where a lesson raises difficult feelings for a pupil.

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The wider PSHE programme

Alongside RSHE, at Acorns School, we teach a planned programme of personal, social, health and economic education that is adapted to the needs and developmental stage of each pupil. It is built around three themes, health and wellbeing, relationships, and living in the wider world. The first two are delivered largely through the RSHE content above. The sections below set out the wider personal, social and economic learning that completes the programme.

Economic and financial education

We teach pupils to manage money and to understand saving, spending, budgeting and borrowing, and to recognise financial risk, including online scams and fraud. We build this understanding in a functional and age-appropriate way so that pupils leave us better prepared to manage their own money and to take part in working life. For some of our pupils this is taught through practical activities tied to daily living and independence.

Careers, employability and preparation for adulthood

Our PSHE programme helps pupils develop the personal and social skills they need for the next stage of their lives, including independence, self-advocacy and employability. This is closely linked to our careers programme, and the detail of careers education, information, advice and guidance is set out in our Careers Policy (EDU.POL.006). For pupils with an education, health and care plan, this work is aligned with the preparation for adulthood outcomes in their plan.

Personal and social development, citizenship and life in modern Britain

Through PSHE we support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of life in modern Britain. We promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We teach contested and political issues in a balanced way and do not promote partisan political views. This work is set out more fully in our Curriculum, SMSC and Fundamental British Values Policy (EDU.POL.008).

5.3 Recording, Monitoring and Reporting

We record what is taught, to which groups and when, through our curriculum map, and we keep a record of each parental consultation on this policy. Leaders monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of RSHE, including how well it meets the needs of pupils with SEND, and report to the proprietor and governors on a regular cycle. We log and respond to any withdrawal request and any concern raised by a parent or pupil.

5.4 Equality and Inclusion

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At Acorns School this policy is applied fairly and without discrimination, in line with the Equality Act 2010. We design RSHE to be accessible to every pupil, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, and we make reasonable adjustments so that all pupils can take part. We teach respect for all the protected characteristics, and we monitor the impact of our teaching on different groups of pupils so that no pupil is disadvantaged.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Pupils

Engage with RSHE lessons, treat sensitive discussions with respect, and help shape the curriculum through pupil feedback.

6.2 Staff

Deliver RSHE in a sensitive, factual and inclusive way, model positive relationships, and adapt lessons for pupils with additional needs. Follow this policy when handling questions, disclosures and safeguarding concerns that arise in lessons, and report any concern to the designated safeguarding lead without delay.

6.3 Leadership

Make sure the curriculum is in place, taught well and reviewed, and that staff are trained and supported. Make sure parents are consulted before the policy is made or revised, and that the policy and curriculum information are published and available on request.

6.4 Governance

Hold leaders to account for the quality and compliance of RSHE, and review this policy and its impact.

6.5 Parents and carers

Work in partnership with the school, take part in consultation on the curriculum, and raise any questions or concerns with the named lead.

6.6 Named leads

The named lead for relationships, sex and health education at Acorns School Marple is Sarah Bennett. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Paula Tankard. The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is Carrie-Anne Harrison. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator is Kerry Bernard. The headteacher holds overall responsibility for this policy and for compliance with statutory requirements.

The named lead for relationships, sex and health education at Acorns School Ashley is Ellie Coot – Assistant headteacher. The Designated Safeguarding Lead Paula Tankard. The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is Ellie Coot. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator Sarah Booth. The headteacher holds overall responsibility for this policy and for compliance with statutory requirements.

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7. Training Requirements

All staff who deliver RSHE receive training in the curriculum, in handling sensitive and contested topics in a balanced way, and in the Keys Connect trauma-informed approach. Staff are trained to recognise and respond to disclosures and safeguarding concerns that arise in lessons. Training is organised by the named lead and the designated safeguarding lead and is reviewed at least annually and whenever guidance changes.

8. Equality Impact Statement

All policies will be developed and implemented in a manner that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all individuals. Policies must align with relevant equality legislation and reflect the expectations and standards set by our regulatory bodies. They will demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of those we support, as well as our workforce.

9. Sources of Information / References

This policy reflects current legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Standard 2A (relationships education for primary pupils, relationships and sex education for secondary pupils, a separate written policy, consultation with parents, publication, and the right to request withdrawal from sex education).
- The Independent School Standards: Guidance for independent schools, Department for Education, April 2026 (Standard 2A, paragraphs 1.35 to 1.43).
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, statutory guidance, Department for Education, published 15 July 2025 and statutory from 1 September 2026, which replaces the 2019 guidance.
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and section 80A of the Education Act 2002, under which these subjects were made compulsory.
- The Equality Act 2010.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 from 1 September 2026.
- The SEND Code of Practice 2015, in relation to making the curriculum accessible to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Section 78 of the Education Act 2002, which requires a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 1, on the quality of education, including the requirement to preclude the promotion of partisan political views and to offer a balanced treatment of political issues where they are brought to pupils' attention.
- Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education guidance, Department for Education (non-statutory), used as a reference for the wider programme.

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10. Version Control

This document can also be found in Radar. This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes, and it is revised only after parents have been consulted. The named owner for review at Acorns School is the headteacher.

11. Appendices

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11.1 Appendix A: School-Specific Annex

The headteacher completes this annex with the local detail that makes the policy true for this school. Everything in this annex is school personalisation.

At Acorns School Marple the following local arrangements apply:

- The phase or phases we provide and the year groups taught are:
- KS2, years 4, 5 and 6
- KS3, years 7, 8 and 9
- KS4, years 10 and 11

Our PSHE and RSE is taught using the Jigsaw programme. This is a comprehensive, whole-school teaching scheme for PSHE and RSE education designed for primary and secondary students

- Our named RSHE lead is Sarah Bennett and she can be contacted on:
- Sarah.bennet@keyseducation.ac.uk

- Our curriculum map and and our scheme of work is held on the school system and school will provide them to parents at their request

At Acorns School Ashley, the following local arrangements apply:

- The phase or phases we provide and the year groups taught: Key stage 3 and 4 – Ages 11 - 16
- Our named RSHE lead and how staff and parents contact them: Ellie Coot - ellie.coot@keyseducation.ac.uk
- Where our curriculum map and scheme of work are held and how parents view them: Tutor share space for Ashley School. Parents can ask for a paper copy at any time.
- Any external providers or resources we use this year: Jigsaw PHSE
- Local agencies and specialist support we draw on, for example school nursing and CAMHS: In-school wellbeing and therapeutic support offer: Clinical team support from Hayley Luggasy - EP, Ellie Rodway Barnett – Assistant EP, Rachel Hughes – OT and Katy Schreiber SALT.
- Local CAMHS, Mental Health Support Team and early help contacts: Cheshire East CYPMHS - Request for help from Cheshire CYPMHS :: Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust 0124 397397

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11.2 Appendix B: Parental Consultation Record

We complete this record each time we make or revise this policy, to evidence the consultation required by Standard 2A. We keep the completed record on file.

- Policy version consulted on 2nd September 2026
- Parents were given the draft policy and invited to comment via letter
- Consultation opening and closing dates: 2nd September to 16th September
- Summary of comments received from parents and carers:
- Changes made in response, or the reason no change was made:
- Date the policy was finalised and by whom: 02nd October, Steven Pegrum, Executive Headteacher.

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11.3 Appendix C: External Resource Due Diligence Checklist

We complete this checklist before using any external provider or resource. We keep it with the curriculum records.

- Name of resource or provider and the topic it covers: Jigsaw
- Is the content accurate, age and stage appropriate, unbiased and suitable for our pupils? Yes
- Have we seen the materials and a lesson plan in advance? Yes
- Does the organisation hold a strong partisan view on a contested topic, or promote a harmful product? No
- Have we checked the credentials of any visitor or organisation? Yes
- Have we agreed how confidentiality and safeguarding reports will be handled? Yes
- Are the materials available for parents to view? Yes, if requested. If parents wish to review the plans then they need to request these at the correct school site.
- Decision, and the name of the person who approved use:
  Acorns School Marple – Miranda Rathmell
  Acorns School Ashley – Paula Tankard

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