Castle School
Together We Learn

Relationships Education including Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

Autumn 2026

Key principle

Castle School is committed to providing accessible, age and developmentally appropriate Relationships Education as part of our RSHE curriculum. We recognise the individual needs of our pupils, including those with complex SEND and health needs, and will provide appropriate support and reasonable adjustments.

Pupils will be supported to develop positive, respectful and safe relationships, understand boundaries, recognise risks and know how to seek help. This includes developing safe and responsible behaviours both online and offline.

We will work in partnership with pupils, parents and carers to promote inclusion, respect, wellbeing and safeguarding, helping pupils develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to keep themselves safe.

1. Introduction

At Castle School we believe that high quality Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is an essential part of preparing pupils for happy, healthy and safe lives. Our pupils have a wide range of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and our curriculum is adapted to meet their individual learning needs, communication profiles and stages of development.

Our RSHE programme is designed to:

- Promote the Castle values of Be Confident, Be Kind, Be Creative.
- Support pupils in understanding their bodies, emotions, health and relationships.
- Equip pupils with knowledge and skills to stay safe in different contexts, including online.
- Promote respect for self and others, celebrate diversity, challenge prejudice and stereotypes, and promote equality.
- Be accessible, age-appropriate, stage-appropriate and responsive to individual developmental needs.
- Build pupils' confidence, self-esteem, resilience, self-regulation and ability to seek help.
- Prevent harm by helping pupils recognise unsafe, abusive, coercive, exploitative or discriminatory behaviour and understand where to obtain support.

This policy has been written in line with:

- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, DfE, July 2025, which came into force on 1 September 2026.
- Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Education Act 2002/1996 statutory framework referred to in the DfE guidance.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- SEND Code of Practice (2015).
- Equality Act 2010.
- National Curriculum requirements for Science, where applicable.
- Guidance and resources from the PSHE Association, NSPCC, Sex Education Forum, Cambridgeshire PSHE Service and other appropriately vetted providers.

2. Aims of RSHE at Castle School

- To ensure pupils understand the features of positive, healthy, respectful and safe relationships.
- To support pupils to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe, including in family, peer, community and online contexts.
- To develop pupils' understanding of their own bodies, health, privacy, personal boundaries and respect for the bodies and boundaries of others.
- To prepare pupils for puberty and, where appropriate, reproduction, sexual health and relationships in later life.
- To foster equality, inclusion and respect for difference, including disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and other protected characteristics.
- To provide pupils with appropriate vocabulary, confidence and trusted channels for seeking help.

- To support safeguarding by equipping pupils with protective and preventative behaviours.
- To develop knowledge and skills relating to mental health, emotional wellbeing, physical health, healthy lifestyles, online wellbeing and access to healthcare.
- To prepare pupils for adulthood, independence, relationships and participation in their community.

3. Statutory Requirements

- Relationships Education is compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education.
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is compulsory for pupils receiving secondary education.
- Health Education is compulsory for pupils in state-funded schools, including maintained special schools and academies, subject to the statutory framework.
- Science remains compulsory where applicable and pupils cannot be withdrawn from statutory Science content, including relevant content relating to puberty and sexual reproduction.
- Parents/carers do not have the right to withdraw their child from Relationships Education or Health Education.
- Parents/carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.
- In primary age, where sex education is provided beyond statutory Science, a withdrawal request must be granted.
- At secondary age, the Headteacher may refuse a withdrawal request only in exceptional circumstances
- From three terms before a pupil turns 16, the pupil may choose to opt back into sex education. Pupils will be informed that they have this right.
- Where a pupil is withdrawn from sex education, the school will provide appropriate and purposeful education during the withdrawal period.
- Withdrawal decisions and discussions will be recorded. The Headteacher will, where appropriate, discuss a request with the parent/carer and pupil, taking account of the pupil's views, developmental needs and safeguarding.

The school will distinguish clearly between Relationships Education, Health Education, Science and Sex Education so that parents/carers understand what is statutory and what is subject to the withdrawal arrangements.

4. Curriculum Design and Delivery

4.1 Principles

- Tailored and differentiated: Our pupils access the RSHE curriculum at different levels depending on need, ability, communication style, emotional development and prior learning.
- Protective behaviours: All content is taught within a safeguarding framework, equipping pupils to understand safe and unsafe behaviours, boundaries, consent, privacy and routes to help.
- Carefully sequenced: Content is planned so pupils receive knowledge and skills before they are likely to encounter relevant experiences, while remaining responsive to emerging needs and safeguarding concerns.

- Cross-curricular links: RSHE is taught mainly through PSHE and Science, but is reinforced across the wider curriculum (e.g. online safety in Computing, consent and cooperation in PE, healthy relationships in Drama and preparation for adulthood).
- Preparation for adulthood: RSHE links directly to our Learning Pathways, preparing pupils for independence, relationships, community participation and adult life.
- Participative and interactive: Teaching uses discussion, modelling, role play, scenarios, social stories and other approaches that allow pupils to practise skills safely.
- Whole-school approach: RSHE is supported by safeguarding, behaviour, equality, online safety, anti-bullying and other relevant policies.
- Age, stage and developmentally appropriate: Topics are taught according to pupils' age, stage, needs and maturity, with reasonable adjustments and differentiated resources.

4.2 Curriculum Content

- The school's curriculum map sets out the detailed sequence and expected outcomes. The following provides the policy-level overview and distinguishes the statutory strands.
- Primary Phase – Relationships Education and Health Education
- Families and people who care for me, including a range of family structures and respect for differences.
- Caring friendships, loneliness, conflict resolution, kindness, trust and seeking help.
- Respectful relationships, boundaries, communication, self-respect, stereotypes, bullying and bystander responsibilities.
- Online relationships and online safety, including privacy, sharing information/images, harmful content/contact, reporting and support.
- Being safe: body ownership, privacy, boundaries, appropriate and inappropriate contact, trusted adults, abuse and reporting concerns.
- Basic body awareness and accurate vocabulary for body parts.
- Puberty and body changes, including physical and emotional changes.
- Emotional wellbeing, self-regulation, resilience, feelings and help-seeking.
- Physical health, healthy lifestyles, healthy eating, physical activity, sleep, dental health, hygiene and prevention of illness.
- Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping, taught at an appropriate stage.
- Health protection and prevention, including hygiene, medicines, vaccination, healthcare and accessing appropriate support.

Primary Sex Education

Sex education is not compulsory in at primary age. Where Castle School provides sex education beyond statutory Science, it will be identified clearly in the curriculum map, consulted on with parents/carers and taught in an age- and stage-appropriate manner. Relevant statutory Science content, including puberty and reproduction where applicable, remains compulsory and is not subject to withdrawal.

Secondary Phase – Relationships and Sex Education

- Healthy and unhealthy relationships, including trust, mutual respect, boundaries, communication, conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships safely.
- Committed and stable relationships, marriage and civil partnership, family life and changing family circumstances.
- Peer pressure, coercion, control, exploitation, grooming and consent.
- Sexual consent, including the ability to give, withhold and withdraw consent at any time; understanding that ethical sexual behaviour involves kindness, care and respect as well as consent.
- Sexual orientation and relationships, taught factually and without stigmatisation.
- Biological sex, gender reassignment, protected characteristics and the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, taught factually and without presenting contested views as established fact.
- Puberty, body changes and reproductive health.
- Conception, pregnancy, pregnancy choices, contraception and access to medically accurate information.
- Sexual health, STIs including HIV, safer sex, testing and routes to medical support.
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online sexual harassment, image sharing without consent, public sexual harassment and upskirting.
- Harmful sexual behaviour and age-inappropriate sexual behaviour, including how to seek help.
- Domestic abuse, controlling or coercive behaviour, stalking, exploitation and grooming.
- FGM, forced marriage, virginity testing and hymenoplasty, including relevant law and routes to support.
- Strangulation and suffocation and the associated risks and law.
- Pornography and its potential impact on expectations, relationships and behaviour.
- Online safety and digital resilience, including pornography, sextortion, intimate images, youth-produced sexual imagery, AI-generated sexual imagery/deepfakes and misinformation.
- Positive relationships and sexual ethics, including respect, kindness, care, responsibility and healthy boundaries.
- Building self-esteem, confidence, assertiveness, independence and resilience.
- Misogyny, harmful gender stereotypes, harmful online content and, where appropriate, incel/manosphere-related content, taught in a way that challenges harmful beliefs without stigmatising pupils.

Secondary Phase – Health Education

- Mental health and emotional wellbeing, including resilience, coping strategies, self-regulation, loneliness, anxiety, depression and seeking help.
- Suicide prevention and safe help-seeking, taught in accordance with the school's safeguarding arrangements and by appropriately trained staff.
- Online wellbeing, including excessive screen use, body image, comparison, harmful content, cyberbullying, online harassment, misinformation and disinformation.

- Physical health and fitness, healthy lifestyles and maintaining a healthy weight.
- Healthy eating and the links between diet and health.
- Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping, including relevant law and health risks.
- Personal hygiene, infection prevention, dental health, medicines, vaccination and antimicrobial resistance.
- Sleep and the impact of sleep on physical and mental health.
- Healthy behaviours before and during pregnancy, including pre-conception health, folic acid, pelvic floor health, miscarriage and pregnancy loss.
- Understanding and navigating healthcare services, including GPs, emergency services, pharmacies and relevant sexual and reproductive health services.
- Risks associated with gambling and gambling-like content in gaming.

Law and safeguarding

Where relevant, pupils will be taught the law concerning marriage and civil partnership, consent and the age of consent, domestic abuse, stalking, rape and sexual offences, FGM, forced marriage, sexual harassment and exploitation, the Online Safety Act, online image sharing and AI-generated sexual imagery, pornography, abortion, protected characteristics, alcohol, smoking, vaping, drugs, gambling, weapons and grooming/exploitation into criminal activity. Content will be factual, age- and stage-appropriate and linked to pupils' safety.

4.3 SEND-specific Adaptations

- Use of visuals, symbols, social stories and Makaton.
- Personalised workbooks and sensory resources.
- Explicit teaching of social norms, including public/private behaviours, personal space, privacy and boundaries.
- Repetition, role play, practical modelling and rehearsal.
- Alternative and augmentative communication where required.
- Additional processing time, simplified language and concrete examples where appropriate.
- Individualised teaching and reasonable adjustments in line with pupils' needs and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), where relevant.
- Careful consideration of vulnerability to abuse, exploitation, bullying and harmful sexual behaviour.

5. Teaching and Learning

- Taught primarily by class teachers and support staff, who know pupils well.
- Supported by the internal PSHE/RSHE Team and external specialists where appropriate (e.g. school nurse, Dhiverse etc.).
- Staff receive training in RSHE delivery, safeguarding, handling sensitive questions and supporting disclosures.
- All sessions follow a safe learning environment protocol with clear ground rules.
- Teaching will use participative and interactive approaches appropriate to pupils' needs.
- Staff may use distancing techniques, scenarios, question boxes and anonymous questions to support safe discussion of sensitive subjects.

- Teachers will never promise confidentiality where a safeguarding concern may arise.
- Staff will use accurate and appropriate language and will avoid shaming, stigmatising or stereotyping pupils.

5.1 Managing Difficult, Unexpected or Sensitive Questions

- Teachers will respond calmly, sensitively and honestly, while remaining within the planned curriculum and the pupil's developmental level.
- Teachers may use a question box or other safe method where appropriate.
- Teachers are not expected to answer questions that fall outside the school's planned programme or that would not be appropriate for the pupil's age or stage.
- Where a question concerns sex education that the school does not cover in primary, or sex education from which a pupil has been withdrawn, the teacher will explain that it is not part of the lesson and will signpost the pupil to an appropriate trusted adult or source of support.
- Questions that indicate possible abuse, exploitation, self-harm, suicide risk, harmful sexual behaviour or other safeguarding concerns will be handled under the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Parents/carers may be contacted where appropriate and consistent with safeguarding requirements.

5.2 External Providers

- External providers may support delivery where they add specialist knowledge or an appropriate alternative way of engaging pupils.
- The school remains responsible for the content and delivery of RSHE.
- The school will check the provider's credentials, safeguarding arrangements, resources and lesson plans in advance.
- Resources will be checked for accuracy, age/stage appropriateness, accessibility, impartiality and consistency with this policy.
- A member of school staff will normally remain responsible for pupils during external sessions.
- External providers will be made aware of the school's safeguarding and confidentiality procedures and how disclosures must be reported.
- Parents/carers will be informed about external provision and will be able to view relevant teaching materials in accordance with this policy.

6. Safeguarding and Confidentiality

- Staff will respond to disclosures in line with the Castle School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Pupils will be taught where to get help, including trusted adults, Childline and appropriate online or specialist reporting routes.
- We recognise that some pupils may be more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, grooming, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour or domestic abuse, and RSHE is a protective factor.
- Teaching will make clear that abuse or harmful behaviour is never the fault of the child or young person.
- RSHE will support pupils to recognise emotional, physical and sexual abuse, coercion, controlling behaviour and unsafe relationships.

- Any safeguarding concern arising through RSHE will be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or appropriate safeguarding professional in accordance with school procedures.
- Confidentiality will be explained clearly: staff cannot promise confidentiality where information suggests that a pupil or another person may be at risk of harm.

7. Working with Parents and Carers

- Parents/carers will be consulted on policy development and curriculum design.
- Information sessions will be held to explain curriculum content and the importance of RSHE for pupils' wellbeing and safety.
- Parents/carers will be informed in advance about sex education content and significant sensitive content where appropriate.
- Parents/carers will be provided with access to the materials used to teach RSHE, subject to lawful copyright restrictions and safeguarding considerations. Where a particular resource cannot lawfully be reproduced or shared in full, the school will provide an appropriate opportunity to view it or provide an explanation/representative extract where possible." The school will provide a representative sample of resources and will respond positively to requests to view teaching materials."
- Parents/carers wishing to request the withdrawal of their child from sex education should contact the Headteacher to discuss their request, in accordance with Section 3 of this policy. The discussion and any decisions made will be recorded. Requests should be made using Appendix 2: *Request to Withdraw a Learner from Sex Education*.
- Parents/carers cannot withdraw their child from Relationships Education, Health Education or statutory Science.
- The school will support parents/carers in talking to their children about RSHE topics and, where appropriate, signpost them to reliable information and support.
- Parents/carers do not have a right to veto statutory curriculum content, but the school will listen and respond to concerns through appropriate consultation arrangements.
- The policy will be published on the school website and made available free of charge on request.

8. Equality and Inclusion

- RSHE will actively promote equality and challenge all forms of prejudice, discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- We will ensure resources represent a diverse range of families and relationships in a positive and non-stigmatising way, including families with same-sex parents, single parents, foster carers, adoptive families, kinship carers and grandparents where appropriate.
- Pupils will be taught to respect difference and understand the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics.
- Teaching about sex, biological sex, gender reassignment and sexual orientation will be factual, age- and stage-appropriate and consistent with the DfE statutory guidance.

- Where topics are contested, the school will teach the relevant facts and law and will not present contested views as established fact or endorse a particular contested position.
- The school will avoid language or activities that reinforce harmful gender stereotypes or stigmatise pupils.

9. Monitoring and Review

- The RSHE lead will monitor delivery through planning scrutiny, lesson observations, work scrutiny, pupil voice and staff feedback.
- Monitoring will consider whether all statutory content is covered, appropriately sequenced and accessible to pupils with SEND.
- Governors will receive an annual report on RSHE provision, including progress, accessibility, safeguarding themes and areas for development.
- The school will monitor the effectiveness of external providers and teaching resources.
- Policy and curriculum review will take account of pupil, parent/carer and staff feedback and any emerging safeguarding or local needs.
- Policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if statutory guidance, legislation or significant school circumstances change.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

- Governing Body: approves the policy, ensures statutory duties are met, monitors compliance and ensures the curriculum is accessible and aligned with statutory guidance.
- Headteacher: ensures policy implementation, appropriate staffing and training, consultation with parents/carers, safeguarding arrangements and appropriate handling of withdrawal requests.
- RSHE Lead: oversees curriculum planning, resources, monitoring, evaluation, staff support and liaison with external providers.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead: provides safeguarding oversight and advice in relation to disclosures or concerns arising through RSHE.
- Teachers and Support Staff: deliver the curriculum sensitively, accurately and inclusively, adapt provision to pupil needs and follow safeguarding procedures.
- External Providers: deliver only agreed content, follow school safeguarding arrangements and provide resources and information requested by the school.
- Parents/Carers: engage with consultation, support learning and reinforce messages at home where appropriate.
- Pupils: engage with lessons, respect the views and boundaries of others, ask for help when needed and develop skills to keep themselves safe.

11. Linked Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- PSHE/RSHE Curriculum Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy
- Preparation for Adulthood/Learning Pathways documentation

Appendix 1 – RSHE curriculum and policy compliance checklist

This appendix is intended as an implementation checklist rather than a replacement for the school's detailed curriculum map.

☐ Relationships Education statutory content is mapped across primary provision.
☐ Secondary RSE statutory content is mapped across secondary provision.
☐ Health Education statutory content is mapped across primary and secondary provision.
☐ Statutory Science content is identified separately from sex education.
☐ Sex education beyond Science is clearly identified and subject to the withdrawal arrangements.
☐ Curriculum progression and outcomes are documented for different ages/stages and pupil pathways.
☐ SEND adaptations and reasonable adjustments are documented.
☐ Parents/carers have a clear route to view curriculum materials.
☐ External provider credentials, resources and safeguarding arrangements are checked.
☐ Staff know how to manage difficult questions and safeguarding disclosures.
☐ Withdrawal requests are recorded and managed according to the statutory framework.
☐ Pupils approaching 16 are informed about their right to opt back into sex education from three terms before their 16th birthday.
☐ Teaching covers sexual harassment, sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour, online harms, grooming and exploitation.
☐ Teaching covers relevant law factually and appropriately.
☐ Teaching about gender, biological sex, gender reassignment and sexual orientation is aligned with the current statutory guidance.
☐ Secondary provision includes the revised online safety, pornography, deepfake/AI sexual imagery and misogyny-related content as appropriate to pupils' age and developmental stage.
☐ Secondary health education includes the revised mental health, suicide prevention, online wellbeing, healthy lifestyle, substance, healthcare and gambling-related content as appropriate.

Appendix 2: Request to Withdraw a Learner from Sex Education

Please complete this form and return it to the school office, addressed to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will contact you to discuss your request. The discussion and any decisions made will be recorded.

1. Parent/carer details

Parent/carer full name

Relationship to learner

Telephone / email

2. Learner details

Learner full name

Year group / class

3. Request

I wish to request that my child named above be withdrawn from the sex education lessons that fall within the school's sex education provision, in accordance with the school's RSHE policy.

Please provide any information you would like the Headteacher to consider (optional):

4. Headteacher discussion and record of decision

Date of discussion:

Attendees:

Summary of discussion, including information explained and any questions raised:

Decision / agreed action and date communicated to parent/carer:

Any review date or follow-up required:

5. Declaration and signatures

I understand that this is a request to withdraw my child from sex education, and that the Headteacher will discuss the request with me. I understand that this request does not apply to relationships education or health education, or to national curriculum science lessons.

Parent/carer signature

Date

Headteacher signature

Date

School use only: Please retain this form and the record of discussion/decision in accordance with the school's record-keeping procedures.