



THE ELMS

EST 1614

The Elms School

RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION (RSHE) POLICY	
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Extent of Policy	The Elms School
Policy Owner	Deputy Head Pastoral & Head of SEND
Authorised by	Chair of Governors
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Frequency of Audit	Annual

This policy sets out how The Elms provides Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and the wider health/personal development curriculum for pupils aged 3–13. It should be read alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy, SEND Policy, Equality and Diversity arrangements, Science curriculum and other relevant policies.

1. Purpose and statutory context

The Elms is committed to providing a coherent, age-appropriate and inclusive programme that helps pupils develop the knowledge, vocabulary, skills and attitudes needed to form healthy relationships, keep themselves and others safe, and make informed decisions about their wellbeing.

From 1 September 2026 the revised Department for Education statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education applies. The guidance applies to independent schools in respect of Relationships Education and RSE. Independent schools are not subject to the statutory Health Education requirements in the same way as maintained schools and academies; however, independent schools must continue to provide PSHE under the Independent School Standards and may use the Health Education guidance to inform their curriculum.

The School will have regard to the DfE statutory guidance and will comply with the legal requirements relating to Relationships Education and RSE. Where the School departs from guidance expressed as 'should' or 'should not', it will have a clear educational and/or safeguarding reason for doing so.

The School's provision also supports the Independent School Standards requirements concerning PSHE, preparation for adult life and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, together with relevant equality, safeguarding and SEND duties.

2. Definitions and age range

RSHE is used in this policy as an umbrella term for the School's provision. The statutory elements differ by age and phase:

- Early Years (ages 3–5): RSHE statutory requirements do not apply to EYFS. Provision is instead embedded within the Early Years curriculum, particularly personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, physical development, and safeguarding.
- Primary (Years 1–6): pupils receive statutory Relationships Education. The School also provides age-appropriate health and wellbeing education as part of its PSHE curriculum. Oak's primary RHE programme is the principal planned resource.
- Secondary (Years 7–8): pupils receive statutory RSE. The School also provides health and wellbeing education as part of its broader PSHE curriculum. Oak's KS3 RSHE programme is the principal planned resource.

Sex education is not a statutory subject at primary level. The School's Oak primary RHE programme does not constitute a programme of primary sex education. Biological material required or chosen within Science, including human development, puberty and reproduction, is taught as part of the School's Science curriculum and is not subject to the parental withdrawal right that applies to sex education.

3. Curriculum aims

The School aims to help pupils:

- understand what healthy, respectful and safe relationships look like, both offline and online;
- develop self-respect, empathy, kindness, resilience and confidence;
- recognise boundaries, privacy, consent and unacceptable behaviour in age-appropriate ways;
- understand how to keep themselves and others safe and how to seek help and report concerns;
- develop accurate vocabulary and knowledge about their bodies, health, emotions and development;
- understand the relationship between physical and mental health and develop healthy habits;
- understand relevant law and their rights and responsibilities in age-appropriate ways;

- understand and respect people who are different from themselves, including people with protected characteristics;
- develop the knowledge and skills needed to navigate online relationships, media and online risks;
- prepare progressively for adolescence, adult life and participation in British society.

4. Oak National Academy as the School's core curriculum resource

From September 2026, The Elms will use Oak National Academy's updated RHE/RSHE (PSHE) curriculum as its principal planned resource for Years 1–8. Oak states that its 2026 curriculum has been updated to align with the revised statutory guidance coming into effect in September 2026 and uses a sequenced, flexible and adaptable approach.

The School will use Oak as a curriculum resource, not as a substitute for professional teacher judgement. Teachers will adapt sequencing, examples, language, pace and activities where necessary to meet the age, maturity, prior knowledge, SEND needs, safeguarding context and particular circumstances of pupils.

The School remains responsible for the content and delivery of RSHE. Staff will review Oak materials before use, particularly where content is sensitive, and will ensure that the materials selected fit the School's published curriculum and this policy.

The School will maintain live links to the Oak curriculum and relevant lesson materials through the School's Staff Share / RSHE area. Parents will be able to view representative materials and, on request, the curriculum materials used with their child, subject to copyright and lawful access arrangements.

5. Oak curriculum links

Oak National Academy – Primary RHE/PSHE curriculum and curriculum explainer: [Free Primary RSHE \(PSHE\) Lesson & Curriculum Resources | Oak National Academy](#)

6. Curriculum organisation and sequencing

The curriculum will be planned as a progressive programme rather than a collection of isolated lessons. Oak's curriculum threads provide a useful structure across phases: Community, Relationships, Online Safety, Wellbeing and Growing Up.

The School will ensure continuity from Early Years through Year 8. In primary, relationships and health learning will build knowledge and vocabulary progressively. In Years 7 and 8, the curriculum will develop that foundation into secondary RSE, including more complex relationships, consent, law, online harms, sexual health, health and wellbeing.

Oak's published KS3 curriculum is designed for one lesson per week, with approximately 50–60 minutes per lesson. The School may adjust lesson length, sequence and delivery format to fit its timetable, provided statutory content remains fully and coherently covered.

RSHE will be taught through dedicated lessons and, where appropriate, reinforced through Science, Computing, PE, pastoral provision, assemblies, tutorials and other relevant curriculum areas. The School will avoid unnecessary duplication while ensuring that statutory content is clearly planned and accountable.

RSHE is part of the School's planned curriculum entitlement. Pupils will not routinely be removed from RSHE lessons for unrelated activities such as individual peripatetic music, drama or sports lessons where this would cause them to miss planned RSHE content. Where an unavoidable clash or absence occurs, the School will consider appropriate alternative provision or catch-up.

7. Curriculum content

The School will ensure that all statutory Relationships Education and RSE content is covered by the end of the relevant phase. The precise sequencing is set out in the School's curriculum map and Oak unit sequence.

Primary Relationships Education will include, as appropriate, families and people who care for pupils; caring friendships; respectful relationships; online safety and awareness; and being safe, including boundaries, privacy, body autonomy, recognising abuse, seeking help and reporting concerns.

Primary health and wellbeing provision will include, as appropriate, physical activity, nutrition, sleep, emotions, mental wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, personal hygiene, puberty and other age-appropriate health content. Because Health Education is not statutory for independent schools, the School will use the DfE health content as a framework within its wider PSHE provision rather than representing it as a separate statutory requirement.

Secondary RSE will build on primary learning and include families and stable relationships; respectful relationships; online and media issues; power and abuse in relationships; consent; sexual harassment and violence; harmful sexual behaviour; sexual health; contraception; pregnancy and pregnancy options; STIs and HIV; pornography; online sexual harms; and relevant law, all taught at an age- and stage-appropriate level.

By the end of secondary education the DfE guidance expects teaching about protected characteristics, including sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment, and about equality and respect. The School will teach the facts and the law accurately and sensitively, without endorsing a contested view as fact.

The School will teach relevant law factually when appropriate, including laws concerning consent and sexual offences, domestic abuse, FGM, forced marriage, pornography, online sexual behaviour, image sharing, sexual harassment, exploitation, drugs, alcohol, vaping, gambling, knives/weapons and relevant equality protections.

8. Early Years provision

RSHE statutory requirements do not apply to the EYFS. However, pupils aged 3–5 receive developmentally appropriate teaching that supports personal, social and emotional development and safeguarding.

EYFS provision will support children to develop language for emotions, relationships, kindness, sharing, boundaries, body awareness, personal care, privacy, trusted adults and seeking help. It will be delivered in ways appropriate to young children and consistent with the EYFS statutory framework.

Oak primary RHE materials will not be treated as mandatory EYFS lessons. EYFS staff may draw selectively on appropriate Oak resources where they complement the School's EYFS curriculum and are suitable for the individual children.

9. Equality, inclusion and SEND

RSHE is an entitlement for all pupils. The School will make reasonable and proportionate adjustments so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum and participate meaningfully.

Teachers will consider language, communication needs, processing difficulties, sensory needs, anxiety, prior experience and other individual factors when planning sensitive content. Where appropriate, pupils may receive pre-teaching, additional explanation, visual support, alternative methods of recording or carefully planned small-group support.

The School will teach respect and equality and will not discriminate against or harass pupils on the basis of protected characteristics. Teaching will recognise that pupils and families have different backgrounds, beliefs and circumstances.

The School will avoid stereotypes and will ensure that pupils understand both the importance of treating others with dignity and the relevant facts and law.

10. Safeguarding, disclosure and confidentiality

RSHE can generate safeguarding disclosures. Staff teaching RSHE must be familiar with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and reporting procedures.

Teachers will establish clear ground rules and use distancing techniques, fictional scenarios, question boxes and other appropriate methods to avoid requiring pupils to disclose personal experiences publicly.

No pupil or teacher will be required to answer a personal question. However, staff cannot promise confidentiality where a safeguarding concern is disclosed. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Where a lesson identifies a concern about abuse, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, domestic abuse, online harm or another safeguarding issue, staff will follow the School's safeguarding procedures immediately.

Staff will receive appropriate training and guidance so that they can teach sensitive content safely, recognise possible signs of harm and respond appropriately to disclosures.

11. Teaching sensitive and contested topics

Sensitive content will be introduced in a measured, age-appropriate and non-alarming manner.

Teachers will use accurate language, avoid sensationalism and make clear where pupils should seek further help.

Where topics involve contested issues, the School will distinguish facts, law and differing viewpoints. Pupils will be encouraged to listen respectfully, think critically and express views without bullying, harassment or disrespect.

Teaching about biological sex and gender reassignment will follow the 2026 statutory guidance: pupils will be taught the facts and the law, including the protections provided by the Equality Act, while recognising that there is wider debate and avoiding presenting a contested view as fact.

Staff will not use RSHE to promote personal political, ideological or religious views. The School will respect its community and any religious or philosophical ethos while ensuring that statutory content is taught accurately and sensitively.

12. Parental engagement, policy and curriculum transparency

The School recognises parents as the primary educators of their children in these areas and will proactively engage and consult parents when developing and reviewing this policy.

This policy will be published on the School website and made available free of charge to anyone who requests a copy.

Parents will be given clear information about the content and sequencing of RSHE, including the use of Oak National Academy resources. The School will provide a representative sample of resources and will make curriculum materials used to teach RSHE available to parents on request, subject to copyright and lawful access arrangements.

Parents will be informed in advance about sex education content and about any significant deviation from the published RSHE policy or curriculum.

The School may offer parent information sessions or written guidance to support conversations at home.

13. Parental withdrawal from sex education

Parents have a legal right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. There is no parental right to withdraw a pupil from Relationships Education or from Health Education/PSHE provision, nor from content taught as part of Science.

At primary level, if the School chooses to provide sex education beyond the statutory Science curriculum, the Head will automatically grant a parental request to withdraw the child from that sex education.

At secondary level, the Head may refuse a request only in exceptional circumstances, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or a pupil has a specific vulnerability. Before deciding a request, the Head will normally discuss it with the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil, explain the purpose and benefits of the teaching and consider the potential impact of withdrawal. The decision and rationale will be recorded.

Where a pupil is withdrawn from sex education, the School will provide appropriate and purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

Pupils may opt back into sex education from three terms before their 16th birthday. The School will make pupils aware of this right when relevant.

The withdrawal process does not apply to science teaching, including biological content such as puberty or reproduction.

14. Questions and unexpected issues

Teachers will answer questions within the boundaries of the planned curriculum and their professional competence. Questions which go beyond the planned programme, are inappropriate for the age group, or relate to a pupil's personal circumstances may be deferred and addressed through an appropriate safeguarding, pastoral or parental route.

Where a pupil asks about sex education that the School does not teach in primary, or about content from which they have been withdrawn, staff will provide a safe and age-appropriate response without delivering the withdrawn or unplanned curriculum.

Teachers may use anonymous question boxes or similar approaches to identify common questions and plan appropriate follow-up teaching.

15. External visitors and providers

The School may use external specialists to enhance RSHE, but external provision will not replace the School's responsibility for curriculum content and safeguarding.

Any external provider will be checked for appropriate expertise, credentials, safeguarding arrangements and suitability. The School will see and approve lesson plans and materials in advance and will ensure that provision is consistent with this policy and the statutory guidance.

Visitors will understand the School's safeguarding reporting procedures and confidentiality expectations.

16. Staff training and support

Staff delivering RSHE will receive appropriate training, guidance and access to curriculum materials. Training will include safeguarding, handling disclosures, sensitive-question management, inclusive teaching and the School's RSHE curriculum.

The RSHE Lead will provide guidance on the use of Oak resources and will support staff in adapting lessons appropriately without losing the intended statutory coverage.

Staff will be encouraged to identify professional development needs through monitoring, pupil feedback and curriculum review.

17. Assessment, monitoring and evaluation

Assessment in RSHE will focus on knowledge, understanding, vocabulary, application and the development of relevant skills. It will not require pupils to disclose personal experiences.

Teachers will use Oak checks for understanding and other formative assessment approaches as appropriate. Pupil participation, understanding and misconceptions will inform planning and intervention.

The RSHE Lead will monitor curriculum coverage, lesson delivery, pupil voice, staff confidence, safeguarding issues and parental feedback. The curriculum will be reviewed annually and when significant changes to statutory guidance, law or pupil need occur.

The School will maintain a curriculum map showing how statutory content is covered from Years 1–8 and how it connects with EYFS provision and other subjects.

18. Roles and responsibilities

The Proprietor/Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the School has an appropriate written policy, that it is reviewed and that the School meets its legal and regulatory obligations.

The Head is responsible for overall implementation and for decisions relating to parental withdrawal from sex education.

The RSHE Lead is responsible for curriculum leadership, sequencing, monitoring, staff support, resource management and annual review.

Teachers are responsible for delivering approved content safely, adapting it appropriately, following safeguarding procedures and maintaining professional boundaries.

The DSL retains responsibility for safeguarding concerns arising from RSHE and for ensuring that staff know how to report concerns.

Parents are encouraged to engage with the School, review materials and discuss age-appropriate RSHE learning with their children.

19. Related policies and documents

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Behaviour Policy

Online Safety Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

SEND Policy

Equality and Diversity arrangements

Science Curriculum

PSHE/RSHE curriculum maps

EYFS statutory framework and curriculum documentation

Oak National Academy RHE/RSHE curriculum and lesson materials

20. Policy review and approval

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if there is a material change to legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding practice, curriculum requirements or the School's provision.

The School will consult parents when developing and reviewing the policy. Pupil voice will also inform curriculum development where appropriate.

The final policy will be approved through the School's governance arrangements and published on the School website.

Oak National Academy resources – live links

Primary RHE/PSHE (Years 1–6): [Oak National Academy – Primary RSHE/RHE curriculum](#)

Secondary RSHE/PSHE (Years 7–8): [Oak National Academy – KS3 RSHE curriculum](#)

Oak RSHE curriculum support and 2026 updates: [Oak National Academy – RSHE curriculum information](#)

Appendix I – RSHE Curriculum Map

The table below summarises the School's planned phase progression. The detailed annual sequence and lesson-level coverage are maintained in the School's curriculum planning documents and Staff Share / RSHE resources. Oak's curriculum is used as the principal resource for Years 1–8 and is adapted to the School's context.

Phase / year group	Provision	Core Oak threads / themes	Indicative focus
EYFS (3–5)	School EYFS curriculum; RSHE statutory requirements do not apply	Relationships; Wellbeing; Growing up; Community	Emotions; friendships; kindness; boundaries; body awareness; personal care; trusted adults; seeking help
Year 1	Oak RHE/PSHE	Community; Relationships; Online safety; Wellbeing	Families; friendships; feelings; being safe; online safety; respectful behaviour
Year 2	Oak RHE/PSHE	Community; Relationships; Online safety; Wellbeing	Caring friendships; boundaries; emotions; online behaviour; health and self-care
Year 3	Oak RHE/PSHE	Community; Relationships; Online safety; Wellbeing	Respect; conflict; stereotypes; safety; digital life; physical and mental wellbeing
Year 4	Oak RHE/PSHE	Community; Relationships; Online safety; Wellbeing	Healthy relationships; consent/boundaries in age-appropriate contexts; online harms; puberty preparation
Year 5	Oak RHE/PSHE	Relationships; Online safety; Wellbeing; Growing up	Puberty; menstrual wellbeing; health; risky substances; online/media influence; respectful relationships
Year 6	Oak RHE/PSHE	Community; Relationships; Online safety; Wellbeing; Growing up	Transition; changing body; relationships; safety; online harms; health; preparing for secondary education
Year 7	Oak KS3 RSHE/PSHE	Community; Relationships; Online safety; Wellbeing; Growing up	Families; respectful relationships; online/media; mental wellbeing; internet safety; healthy lifestyles; health and prevention; puberty
Year 8	Oak KS3 RSHE/PSHE	Community; Relationships; Online safety; Wellbeing; Growing up	Stable relationships; bullying; law; online/media influence; mental wellbeing; health; consent; abuse and exploitation; sexual health and related law, as age-appropriate

Appendix II – Parental Withdrawal Procedure

- 1. Parent submits a written request to the Head.
- 2. RSHE Lead identifies the precise lesson/content concerned and confirms whether it is Relationships Education, sex education, Science or wider PSHE/health provision.
- 3. Head discusses the request with the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil; the discussion and decision are recorded.
- 4. If the content is statutory Relationships Education or Science, the School explains that there is no parental withdrawal right.
- 5. If it is primary sex education, the request is granted automatically.
- 6. If it is secondary sex education, the Head considers whether exceptional circumstances justify refusal and records the rationale.
- 7. Where withdrawal is granted, the School provides appropriate and purposeful education during the lesson.
- 8. The School records the arrangement and reviews it if the curriculum or pupil circumstances change.

Appendix III – Key statutory and guidance references

- DfE – Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: statutory guidance for introduction 1 September 2026. [Link](#)
- DfE – Annex A: regulations for Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education. [Link](#)
- DfE – Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. [Link](#)
- DfE – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. [Link](#)
- Oak National Academy – RSHE curriculum, updated for September 2026. [Link](#)