

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

1. Context and statutory framework

Malvern College is committed to providing high-quality, age-appropriate and evidence-informed Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) which helps pupils to develop healthy, respectful relationships, understand how to keep themselves and others safe, and make informed decisions as they progress towards adulthood.

This policy has been developed with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance:

- *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory Guidance for introduction from 1 September 2026* (DfE);
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE), as amended from time to time;
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children*;
- the *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019*;
- the *Education Act 1996*;
- the *Children and Social Work Act 2017*;
- the *Equality Act 2010*; and
- the *SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years*.

As an independent school, Malvern College is required to teach Relationships Education and RSE and to have regard to the DfE statutory guidance. The statutory requirements relating to Health Education do not apply to independent schools, although the College provides health education as part of its wider PSHE/Life Skills curriculum and in meeting the requirements of the Independent School Standards.

This policy should be read alongside the College's:

- Safeguarding Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Mental Health Problems Policy;
- Promoting Good Behaviour and Discipline Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Online Safety Policy;
- Equality and Diversity Policy;
- Pupil Concerns and Complaints Policy; and
- Promotion of Democratic (British) Values Policy.

The College will ensure that RSE contributes to its wider safeguarding responsibilities and to a culture in which pupils feel able to speak up when they, or someone they know, may be experiencing harm.

2. What is Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)?

RSE is a planned programme of education about relationships, sexuality, sexual health, consent, safety and the law. It forms part of the College's wider Life Skills curriculum and is complemented by teaching in subjects including Science and Religious Studies/Ethics.

RSE is intended to equip pupils with the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to:

- develop healthy, respectful and mutually supportive relationships;
- understand and respect personal boundaries;
- understand consent and recognise when consent has not been given or has been withdrawn;
- recognise unhealthy, abusive, exploitative or coercive relationships;
- understand the physical, emotional and social dimensions of sexual health;
- understand relevant aspects of the law;
- recognise risks associated with online behaviour and harmful sexual content;
- understand the risks associated with pornography and the distorted expectations it can create;
- understand the risks associated with sharing sexualised images or material online;
- resist unwanted pressure and avoid applying pressure to others;
- challenge sexism, misogyny, prejudice and harmful stereotypes;
- understand where and how to seek advice and support; and
- develop the confidence, self-respect and resilience needed to make safe and responsible decisions.

RSE is not simply the transmission of biological information. It is concerned with helping pupils understand relationships, respect, responsibility, safety and wellbeing, while providing accurate information about sexual health and the law.

3. Principles of RSE at Malvern

RSE at Malvern will:

- recognise parents and carers as having a vital role in the development of their children's understanding of relationships and sexuality, and work in partnership with them;
- be age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate and sensitive to pupils' individual circumstances;
- be inclusive and accessible to all pupils, including pupils with SEND;
- reflect the needs of the College's pupils and the context in which they live and learn;
- recognise that pupils' lives take place both online and offline;
- provide accurate, factual and medically accurate information where appropriate;
- teach the law clearly and impartially;
- promote respect, dignity, equality and personal responsibility;
- challenge prejudice, discrimination, sexism, misogyny and harmful stereotypes;
- provide a safe environment in which pupils can ask questions without embarrassment or stigma;
- support pupils to recognise when something is wrong and to seek help;
- complement, rather than replace, conversations between pupils and their parents or carers;
- use appropriately trained staff and, where beneficial, carefully selected external professionals; and
- be informed by pupil voice, including feedback gathered through Pupil Thrive meetings and other appropriate mechanisms.

The College recognises that pupils may hold different personal, cultural, religious and philosophical views about relationships and sexuality. Teaching will respect lawful differences of opinion while ensuring that pupils receive the knowledge required by the statutory guidance and understand the law.

4. Aims and intended outcomes

The overall aim of RSE is to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

By the end of their secondary education, pupils should have developed an understanding of:

Healthy relationships

- the characteristics of healthy and respectful friendships and relationships;
- trust, honesty, kindness, generosity, loyalty and respect;
- personal boundaries and privacy;
- communication and conflict resolution;
- how relationships may develop, change and end;
- how to recognise when a relationship is unhealthy or unsafe;
- the importance of self-respect and self-worth; and
- different types of committed and stable relationships and families.

Consent and personal safety

- the meaning of consent;
- that consent must be freely given and can be withdrawn;
- how to communicate and recognise consent;
- that consent applies in online as well as face-to-face contexts;
- sexual pressure, coercion and manipulation;
- sexual harassment and sexual violence;
- grooming and sexual exploitation;
- domestic abuse and coercive control;
- forced marriage and honour-based violence;
- FGM (female genital mutilation);
- how to recognise warning signs and seek help; and
- that abuse is never the fault of the person experiencing it.

Sexual health and relationships

- human reproduction and fertility;
- puberty and physical development;
- contraception and its effectiveness;
- safer sex and condom use;
- sexually transmitted infections and testing;
- pregnancy and miscarriage;
- the legal and medical context surrounding pregnancy and abortion;
- the physical and emotional consequences of sexual activity;
- the role of alcohol and drugs in increasing vulnerability to unsafe sexual behaviour; and
- how to access appropriate health advice and support.

Online safety and media

Pupils will learn:

- that the same standards of respectful behaviour apply online and offline;
- about online relationships and communication;
- about harmful sexual content and pornography;
- that pornography presents a distorted representation of sexual relationships and may contribute to unrealistic or harmful expectations;
- about the risks associated with sharing intimate or sexualised images;
- that sharing or possessing indecent images of children, including images created by children themselves, can be a criminal offence;
- about the permanence and potential consequences of digital material;
- how online platforms collect, use and share personal data;
- how to report harmful content and seek help; and

- how technology, including emerging technologies and AI-generated content, can create new risks in relationships and sexual behaviour.

Equality and respect

Pupils will learn:

- about equality and respect;
- about the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010;
- how stereotypes relating to sex, gender, race, religion, disability and sexual orientation can cause harm;
- that sexual harassment and sexual violence are never acceptable;
- to challenge prejudice and discriminatory behaviour;
- about different forms of family and relationship;
- about sexual orientation and gender identity in a factual, age-appropriate and respectful manner; and
- that people may hold different lawful beliefs and opinions and that these should be treated respectfully.

5. Curriculum and organisation

RSE is delivered primarily through Life Skills, with relevant content reinforced and developed through Science and Religious Studies. The programme is sequenced from the Foundation Year through to the Sixth Form so that knowledge and understanding develop progressively as pupils mature. The curriculum will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it reflects:

- the DfE statutory guidance;
- pupils' developmental needs;
- emerging safeguarding risks;
- relevant changes in law;
- pupil voice;
- the experiences and needs of the College community; and
- evidence concerning effective RSE practice.

The College will ensure that the statutory RSE content is covered by the end of secondary education. The curriculum will not artificially separate relationships education from sex education where an integrated approach provides the most effective learning.

A detailed curriculum map identifying the content, year group, subject and term in which topics are taught will be maintained by the Head of Life Skills and made available to parents.

6. Teaching and learning

RSE will be delivered through a range of age-appropriate teaching methods, including:

- structured classroom discussion;
- case studies and scenarios;
- reflection and discussion;
- carefully selected digital resources;
- question boxes or anonymous questions;
- expert visitors and external providers where appropriate; and
- opportunities to practise communication, decision-making and help-seeking skills.

Teachers will establish clear ground rules for respectful discussion. Pupils will not normally be required to disclose personal experiences during lessons.

Teachers will use professional judgement when responding to questions. Where a question is too personal, developmentally inappropriate or better addressed privately, the teacher may respond individually after the lesson or refer the pupil to an appropriate member of staff.

Questions or disclosures which raise safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in accordance with the College's safeguarding procedures.

Teaching should be interactive and skills-based wherever appropriate, rather than relying solely on the transmission of information. The College will use resources which are age-appropriate, accessible, evidence-informed and, where relevant, medically accurate.

7. Safeguarding and confidentiality

RSE is an important component of the College's preventative safeguarding education. Staff must not promise pupils absolute confidentiality. Pupils should understand that information may need to be shared where there is a concern about their safety or the safety of another person. If a pupil discloses abuse, exploitation, sexual violence, sexual harassment, grooming, coercion or another safeguarding concern, the member of staff must follow the College's safeguarding procedures and report the concern promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or their deputy.

Staff should:

- listen calmly and non-judgementally;
- avoid leading questions;
- avoid investigating the matter themselves;
- avoid making promises of confidentiality;
- explain that information may need to be shared to keep the pupil or another person safe; and
- make a prompt and accurate record in accordance with College procedures.

A pupil's age, maturity, circumstances and the nature of the information disclosed will be considered when determining the appropriate safeguarding response. A disclosure concerning sexual activity should not automatically be treated as evidence of wrongdoing; however, sexual activity involving children may raise safeguarding concerns depending on the circumstances.

Particular care will be taken where there are indicators of coercion, exploitation, a significant age or power imbalance, abuse, grooming, violence, trafficking, or other circumstances suggesting that a pupil may not be safe.

8. Inclusion and SEND

RSE is for every pupil. The College will make reasonable adjustments and adapt teaching where necessary to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. This may include differentiated resources, additional explanation, alternative methods of communication, smaller-group teaching or additional adult support. Teachers will consider pupils' developmental stage as well as their chronological age.

The College recognises that some pupils with SEND may be particularly vulnerable to bullying, exploitation or abuse. RSE will therefore support pupils to understand boundaries, consent, relationships, personal safety and help-seeking in ways which are meaningful and accessible to them. Teaching will also take account of pupils' religious, cultural and family backgrounds while ensuring that the curriculum meets statutory requirements and promotes equality and respect.

9. Sexual orientation, gender identity and equality

The College will ensure that pupils receive factual, age-appropriate and respectful teaching about sexuality and gender identity as required by the DfE guidance.

Teaching will:

- promote equality and respect;
- reflect the legal framework;
- avoid stereotyping;
- recognise that pupils may be developing their understanding of their own sexuality or identity;
- enable pupils to understand the importance of respectful and healthy relationships;
- provide appropriate opportunities to understand different types of relationships; and
- ensure that pupils are not subject to bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Where topics are contested, the College will teach relevant facts and the law accurately and impartially. Pupils may encounter different views and perspectives and should be supported to engage with these respectfully.

10. External providers

External professionals may contribute to RSE where they provide expertise or a perspective which complements the College's curriculum.

Before an external provider is used, the College will:

- check the provider's credentials and suitability;
- review the content and resources in advance;
- ensure that the session is age-appropriate and accessible;
- ensure that the content is consistent with this policy and the College's curriculum;
- agree arrangements for managing questions and disclosures; and
- evaluate the contribution following delivery.

The College remains responsible for the education provided by external organisations.

11. Staff training and development

The College recognises that effective RSE depends on staff having the knowledge, confidence and skills to deliver sensitive topics appropriately and to recognise when a pupil may require additional support.

Staff involved in delivering Life Skills and RSE receive ongoing training and professional development through:

- regular departmental meetings, which provide opportunities to share good practice, discuss emerging issues and review curriculum content and delivery;
- access to and discussion of PSHE and RSE resources, including guidance and teaching materials which support staff in delivering accurate, age-appropriate and engaging lessons;
- attendance at talks and sessions delivered by external speakers and specialist providers, which provide valuable continuing professional development and enable staff to develop their knowledge of current issues affecting young people; and
- appropriate safeguarding training and updates, ensuring that staff understand their responsibilities when concerns or disclosures arise during RSE teaching.

External speakers and specialist providers are therefore regarded not only as a valuable resource for pupils but also as an important source of CPD for staff. Where appropriate, staff will attend relevant sessions alongside pupils so that they can understand the content being delivered and use it to inform subsequent teaching and pastoral support.

The Head of Life Skills will keep staff training needs under review and will identify additional training where changes in legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding concerns, curriculum developments or pupil needs indicate that this would be beneficial.

12. Parental engagement and information

Parents and carers have a vital role in supporting their children's understanding of relationships, health and wellbeing. The College therefore seeks to work openly and constructively with parents and carers and to provide clear information about the Life Skills curriculum, including RSE. Information about the Life Skills curriculum, including an overview of RSE content and the topics covered by each year group, is available to parents through the MyMalvern Parent Portal.

The College provides a number of additional opportunities for parents to understand and engage with the Life Skills curriculum:

- The Head of Life Skills presents annually to the Parents Forum, providing an overview of the curriculum and creating an opportunity for parents to ask questions and provide feedback.
- The Head of Life Skills speaks to each year group before Parents' Meetings, explaining the Life Skills curriculum and key areas of learning for that particular year group. This enables parents to understand what their children are being taught and provides useful context for discussions at Parents' Meetings.
- Life Skills updates and relevant curriculum information are communicated to parents through College newsletters throughout the year.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the Head of Life Skills or Deputy Head if they have questions or concerns about any aspect of the curriculum.

The College will also consult parents when developing or reviewing this policy and will take account of parental feedback when evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of RSE provision.

Right to withdraw

Parents and carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education, nor from other curriculum content which does not constitute sex education.

Before making a decision, the Deputy Head or Head of Life Skills will normally discuss the request with the parent or carer and, where appropriate, with the pupil. This discussion will explain:

- the nature and purpose of the relevant teaching;
- the benefits of receiving the education;
- any potential impact of withdrawal; and
- the arrangements that will be made if the request is granted.

The College will keep a record of discussions and decisions concerning withdrawal.

A pupil may opt to receive sex education if they wish during the period beginning three terms before they turn 16. Where this occurs, the College will make appropriate arrangements for the pupil to receive the relevant education.

Where a pupil is withdrawn, the College will provide appropriate and purposeful education for the pupil during the period of withdrawal.

Requests for withdrawal should be made in writing to the Deputy Head.

13. Support for pupils and signposting

An important part of the Life Skills curriculum, including RSE, is ensuring that pupils know where and how to access appropriate information, advice and support. Teaching does not simply provide pupils with knowledge; it also helps them to develop the confidence and understanding needed to seek help when they have concerns about their health, wellbeing, relationships or personal safety.

Throughout the Life Skills curriculum, pupils are signposted to appropriate sources of information and support, including reliable websites and other carefully selected resources. Where appropriate, pupils are also made aware of sources of confidential advice and support available to them both within and beyond the College.

Within the College, pupils can seek advice, guidance and support from:

- the nurses and other staff in the Medical Centre, including access to confidential medical advice where appropriate;
- the College counsellors;
- the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy DSLs and wider Safeguarding Team;
- their House staff, including Housemasters and Housemistresses, Deputy Housemasters and Deputy Housemistresses, House Assistants and Tutors;
- the Pastoral Team;
- the Chaplain; and
- appropriate pupil-led support and affinity groups.

Pupils are regularly reminded that they can speak to a trusted adult if they are worried about relationships, sexuality, sexual health, online behaviour, pressure, harassment, abuse or exploitation, or if they are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of another person.

The College seeks to develop a culture in which asking for help is seen as a strength. Pupils are encouraged to speak up, seek advice at an early stage and understand that they will be listened to and supported. Where a concern raises a safeguarding issue, staff will respond in accordance with the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

14. Pupil voice

The College will seek pupils' views about RSE through appropriate mechanisms, including Pupil Thrive meetings, pupil surveys, focus groups and feedback following lessons or programmes.

Pupil voice will be used to:

- identify gaps in knowledge;
- identify emerging concerns;
- evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of teaching;
- identify topics which pupils feel need greater depth or earlier treatment; and
- inform future curriculum development.

Pupil feedback will not replace professional judgement or statutory requirements but will be an important source of evidence in evaluating provision.

15. Monitoring and evaluation

The Head of Life Skills is responsible for the day-to-day oversight of RSE provision.

The Heads of relevant academic departments, including Science and Religious Studies, are responsible for ensuring that RSE-related content within their subjects is accurate and appropriately sequenced. The Deputy Head has overall responsibility for implementation of this policy.

Monitoring will consider:

- curriculum coverage and sequencing;
- lesson observations and work scrutiny where appropriate;

- pupil voice;
- staff feedback;
- parental feedback;
- safeguarding themes and emerging risks;
- the suitability and effectiveness of external providers;
- accessibility for pupils with SEND;
- changes to legislation and statutory guidance; and
- the effectiveness of pupils' knowledge, understanding and help-seeking skills.

The policy and curriculum will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner where changes in legislation, statutory guidance or the College's safeguarding context make this necessary.

16. Information for pupils

Pupils should understand that RSE is intended to help them:

- understand themselves and their relationships;
- recognise what healthy relationships look like;
- understand consent and personal boundaries;
- make informed and responsible decisions;
- recognise pressure, coercion, harassment and abuse;
- stay safe online and offline;
- understand the law;
- challenge disrespectful or harmful behaviour; and
- know where to seek help.

No one has the right to pressure, manipulate, threaten or coerce another person into sexual activity or any other behaviour with which they are not comfortable.

Pupils should also understand that if they are worried about something that has happened to them or to a friend, they should speak to a trusted adult. It is never their fault if they experience abuse or exploitation.

17. Information for parents and carers

The College recognises that parents and carers have a central role in helping young people develop healthy attitudes towards relationships and sexuality.

Parents and carers are encouraged to:

- talk openly with their children about relationships and wellbeing;
- reinforce the principles of respect, consent and personal responsibility;
- discuss online safety and the risks associated with sharing personal or intimate material;
- encourage their children to seek help when they are worried;
- make use of the information provided by the College about the RSE curriculum; and
- contact the College if they have questions or concerns about RSE provision.

The College welcomes constructive dialogue with parents and carers and will provide information about the curriculum and resources used where appropriate.