Cobham Montessori School

Education for life

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

NB: This policy was subject to stakeholder consultation which took place in September 2026

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1.0 What is Relationship and Sex Education (RSE)?

RSE is lifelong learning about physical, sexual, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care, for family life. It involves acquiring information, developing skills and forming positive beliefs, values and attitudes.

To embrace the challenges of creating a happy and successful adult life, pupils need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships and to build their self-efficacy. Pupils can also put this knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts. Everyone faces difficult situations in their lives. These subjects can support young people to develop resilience, to know how and when to ask for help, and to know where to access support.

All schools (including Independent Schools) are required to teach Relationships Education as part of the personal, social, health, economic (PSHE) curriculum. Relationships and Sex Education is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. Some aspects are taught in science, and others are taught as part of Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE).

A comprehensive programme of RSE provides accurate information about the body; reproduction; sex, and sexual health. It also gives children and young people essential skills for building positive, meaningful and non-exploitative relationships that are based on respect, care and empathy. We want children to be able to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives. We want children to have knowledge, skills and understanding to keep themselves and others safe both on and offline.

1.1 Policy Framework and Statutory Basis

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), which must be followed from September 2026. It also reflects the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026.

The policy was developed in consultation with parents, carers, staff, and other stakeholders in February 2025, and will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current with statutory requirements and best meets the needs of our school community.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

Our RSE and PHSE education programmes help pupils to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes they need to live confident, healthy, independent lives now and in the future. RSE contributes to PSHE and Citizenship education by ensuring that all children:

- develop confidence in talking, listening and thinking about their feelings and relationships
- are supported through their physical, emotional and moral development
- are able to name parts of the body and describe how the body works
- are helped to deal with difficult moral and social questions.
- respect themselves and others and move with confidence from childhood through adolescence to adulthood.
- learn how to avoid and not initiate exploitation and abuse e.g. bullying
- learn to make choices and have an awareness of consequences based on an appreciation of difference and absence of prejudice

- learn how to participate in positive relationships in a considerate and sensitive way, valuing respect and care for self and others
- learn how to cope with loss at the end of relationships
- explore individual and moral issues and develop decision making skills based upon critical thinking
- learn and understand physical and emotional development at appropriate stages
- understand human sexuality, reproduction and sexual health
- can protect themselves and ask for help and support; and
- are prepared for puberty

Principles

- RSE is a partnership between home and school
- starts early and is relevant to pupils at each stage in their development and maturity
- effective RSE is essential if young people are to make responsible and well-informed decisions.

3.0 Statutory RSE content

Some aspects of Relationships Education are statutory - therefore, children cannot be withdrawn from these sessions. The content below reflects the statutory requirements that came into force in September 2026.

Statutory content of Relationships Education:

Families and people who care for me

- That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability
- The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives
- That others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care. **This includes same-sex parents/carers**
- That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up
- That marriage and civil partnership represent a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong
- How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed

Caring friendships

- How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends
- The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties
- That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded
- That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right
- How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed

Respectful relationships

- The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs
- Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships
- The conventions of courtesy and manners
- The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness
- That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority
- About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help
- What a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive. **Staff will actively challenge everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes**
- The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults

Online relationships and online safety

- That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not
- That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous
- The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them
- How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met
- How information and data is shared and used online
- **The characteristics of social media, including that some social media accounts are fake, and/or may post things which aren't real/have been created with AI**
- **About the prevalence of deepfakes including videos and photos, how deepfakes can be used maliciously as well as for entertainment, the harms that can be caused by deepfakes and how to identify them**
- **That AI chatbots are an example of how AI is rapidly developing, and that these can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice. It is important to be able to critically think about new types of technology as they appear online and how they might pose a risk**

Being safe

- What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context)
- About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe
- That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact
- How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know
- How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult
- How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard
- How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so
- Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources

Making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes (including AI-generated images)
Children will be taught age-appropriate content about:

- **That keeping or forwarding indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime, even if the photo is of themselves or of someone who has consented, and even if the image was created by the child and/or using AI-generated imagery**
- **The serious risks of sending material to others, and that once an image is shared online, there is no way of deleting it everywhere and no control over where it ends up**
- **That pupils should understand the potentially serious consequences of acquiring or generating indecent or sexual images of someone under 18, including the potential for criminal charges**
- **How to seek support and that they will not be in trouble for asking for help, either at school or with the police, if an image of themselves has been shared**
- **The prevalence of AI-generated sexual imagery and 'deepfakes' and the harms these can cause**

All incidents involving the making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes will be treated as safeguarding matters and handled in accordance with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
Meeting these objectives is delivered through a graduated, age-appropriate programme of Relationships Education. Children of the same age may be developmentally at different stages, leading to differing types of questions or behaviours. Teaching takes account of these differences (including when they are due to specific special educational needs or disabilities) and the potential for discussion on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.
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3.1 Teaching about LGBTQ+ Content
Our RSHE curriculum is inclusive and reflects the diversity of our society. In line with statutory guidance, our teaching will:
Include the facts and the law:

- Teach the "facts and the law" about biological sex and gender reassignment, recognising that people have legal rights by virtue of their biological sex which are different from the rights of those of the opposite sex with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment
- Teach that all people with protected characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender reassignment, have protection from discrimination
- Include same-sex parents/carers when discussing families
- Teach about healthy loving relationships, which includes same-sex relationships

Maintain a balanced approach:
Beyond the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment there is significant debate. With this in mind, we will:

- Not endorse any particular view or teach it as a fact. For example, we will not teach as fact that all people have a gender identity
- Avoid language and activities which repeat or enforce gender stereotypes
- Avoid any suggestion that social transition is a simple solution to feelings of distress or discomfort
- Encourage pupils to consider how to express their views while remaining respectful of the opinions of others
- Be clear that bullying or disrespectful language or behaviour is never appropriate

When selecting resources:
If we use external resources, we will avoid materials that:

- Use cartoons or diagrams that oversimplify this topic
- Perpetuate stereotypes
- Encourage pupils to question their gender

Creating an inclusive environment:

We are committed to creating an inclusive classroom where all pupils feel safe, respected and valued. Staff will actively challenge all forms of prejudice, including homophobia, and will ensure that LGBTQ+ content is integrated naturally throughout our curriculum rather than taught as a standalone topic.

4.0 Delivery of RSE

In consultation with parents and carers, RSE will be delivered through:

- The science curriculum as part of Cosmic Education
- The Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) Curriculum

Refer to Appendix 2 for further details.

Delivery of Content beyond the Statutory Requirements

We work closely in partnership with parents to ensure that information we share is deeply respectful of the approach each family wishes to take with their child.

The child's teacher will deliver the sessions and do their best to answer all questions with sensitivity and care. By the end of Elementary, through individual planning, we ensure that all children know how babies are born, what menstruation is, and how it affects women. We present this with due regard for the emotional development of each child.

We will be available to speak to parents and carers of children, if they would like to, in order to support the programme of lessons, explain what the issues are and how they are taught, and to see the materials the school uses in its teaching.

Parents and carers of children joining Elementary are welcome to come and meet their child's teacher to discuss the correct scientific terminology used when teaching the biological differences between male and female children.

Sharing curriculum materials with parents and carers

We are committed to transparency and partnership with parents and carers. We will:

- Make parents/carers aware of what we're teaching in RSHE, including through invitations to school to discuss the curriculum and the importance of RSHE
- Show parents a representative sample of the resources we plan to use, giving them a good idea of the kinds of resources we use
- Allow parents to view all curriculum materials used to teach RSHE if they request them

Parents/carers are not able to veto what we're teaching, but we welcome their engagement and will always listen to their views.

We can share materials from external providers: If our materials come from an external provider (e.g. a publisher of schemes of work), we are legally obliged to share all content with parents/carers upon request. We will do our best to comply with copyright law (e.g. acknowledge that resources come from an external provider when we share them), but copyright will never stop us from sharing materials with parents and carers.

The DfE suggests several ways we can share materials:

- Via an online 'parent portal'
- Through a presentation at a parent meeting
- By providing paper copies to take home (though parents/carers should abide by copyright law and agree to not copy or share the material further)

Responding to children's diverse learning needs

There is a great need for sensitivity in the approach to relationship and sex education. This will include sensitivity to:

- Religious and cultural diversity
- Differing needs of boys and girls
- Diverse sexuality of young people
- Homophobic bullying and behaviour

- All forms of prejudice including sexism and misogyny

Inclusive RSE will foster good relations between pupils, tackle all types of prejudice and promote understanding and respect. There will be an equality of opportunity for boys and girls and teachers will ensure that there is no stigmatisation of pupils based on home circumstances. Teaching that is differentiated and personalised will be the starting point to ensure accessibility for all. The school is mindful of preparing for adulthood outcomes as set out in the SEND code of practice, when teaching these subjects to those with Special Educational Needs and disabilities (SEND).

Ground rules

A safe respectful climate is necessary for certain lessons which is consistent with the standards of behaviour expected in all group discussions. These rules, which are developed with the children, typically incorporate the following:

- We listen to each other (treat everyone with respect)
- We do not say or do anything that would hurt another person
- We signal when we want to say something (take turns)
- We may say pass if we do not wish to say anything
- If a game is being played, we may sit and watch before making a decision to join in

Where appropriate, specific additional rules are negotiated at the beginning of the lesson between the teacher and children. In addition to the normal classroom rules it would be appropriate for the class teacher to develop a set of rules for lessons and discussions related to some topics in Relationships and Sex Education. For example:

- No one (teacher or pupil) will have to answer a personal question
- We will refer to parents any questions outside of what we can answer
- No one will be forced to take part in a discussion
- Only correct names of body parts will be used; The meaning of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way

Children are encouraged to talk at home about what they have done in the lesson.

Managing Disclosure

Teachers are aware of their responsibility to minimise the chance of pupils making disclosures in the class by using ground rules, distancing techniques and other recognised methods. Distancing techniques depersonalise the situations under discussion. Being in a role, empathising with a character or speaking in response to the actions of others (real or imaginary) allows pupils to explore their feelings about issues safely, because they are not speaking or acting as themselves. Distancing techniques may avoid embarrassment and protect pupils' privacy. Depersonalising discussion, appropriate videos and TV extracts, case studies with invented characters can all help pupils discuss sensitive issues that develop their decision-making skills in a safe environment.

5.0 Roles and responsibilities

The Head of School

The head of school is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory components of RSE.

Staff

All teaching staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- **Actively challenging everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes**
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils, providing high quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised to ensure accessibility

- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory components of RSE

It is the role of the teacher to ensure that children with learning difficulties and special needs are properly included and their developmental needs met.
Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSE are encouraged to discuss this with the Head of School.

The role of parents/carers
The school believes that the primary role in children's RSE lies with the parents and carers. We wish to build a positive and supporting relationship with the parents of the children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective we:

- Have consulted with parents and other stakeholders about this RSE policy
- Proactively engage with parents/carers when we develop and review our RSE policy
- Inform parents/carers about the school's approach to its teaching of RSE
- Make parents/carers aware of what we're teaching in RSHE, including through invitations to school to discuss the curriculum and the importance of RSHE
- Show parents a representative sample of the resources we plan to use
- Allow parents to view all curriculum materials used to teach RSHE if they request them
- Answer any questions that parents/carers may have about the RSE of their child
- Take seriously any issues that parents/carers raise with teachers about this policy or the arrangements for RSE within the school
- Inform parents/carers about the best practice known with regard to RSE so that the teaching in school supports the key messages that parents/carers give to children at home. We believe that, through this mutual exchange of knowledge and information, children will benefit from being given consistent messages about their changing body and their increasing responsibilities
- Develop a whole school programme and all children from EYFS to the end of Elementary will be taking part in these lessons. The lessons are differentiated according to each child's needs

Pupils
Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

6.0 Right of withdrawal

The Relationships Education guidance set out by the DfE is compulsory for all schools including independent schools and children cannot be withdrawn from this teaching.
Parents and carers cannot withdraw their child from:

- Relationships education
- Health education
- Content that's taught as part of the science curriculum (e.g. puberty)

For sex education, parents or carers have a legal right to withdraw their children from part or all of sex education lessons (see form at Appendix 1).
The class teacher will consult with parents or carers to discuss the reasons why they wish to withdraw their child, to discuss the impact of withdrawal, and to ensure they understand what their child will miss. The DfE provides an information leaflet for parents who do withdraw their children, available here:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907638/RSE_primary_schools_guide_for_parents.pdf
We must honour parents'/carers' request to withdraw their child, even if they don't want to discuss it.

However, parents who do withdraw their children should be alerted to possible consequences such as:

- The child may hear a version of the content from other children and only hear their version
- The child may feel stigmatised and left out
- The child may use the internet to research the questions themselves
- The child may ask friends, potentially gaining incorrect information

Our arrangements for pupils withdrawn from sex education are:

- Working in another area with appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal
- Parents who withdraw children from Sex Education lessons will be provided with the material from the lessons

7.0 Monitoring arrangements

The effectiveness of the RSE is programme monitored by each class teacher through formative assessment methods in line with our Planning and Assessment policy.

This policy will be evaluated and reviewed by the Head of School after 12 months following its adoption.

8.0 Confidentiality

Please refer to Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. (updated annually). Teachers conduct RSE lessons in a sensitive manner and in confidence. It is the policy of the school to answer children's questions as they arise in an honest and caring manner, encouraging the use of correct physiological terms as appropriate to the age and needs of the individual child. If a question is deemed inappropriate for the age and understanding of the child, the child will be referred to their parents.

However, if a child refers to being involved, or likely to be involved in sexual activity, then the teacher will take the matter seriously and deal with it as a matter of child protection. Teachers will respond in a similar way if a child indicates that they may have been a victim of abuse. In these circumstances, the teacher will follow the procedures in the school's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

The designated safeguarding lead will deal with the matter in accordance with the school's policy.

9.0 Equal Opportunities

We will do all we can to ensure that this policy does not discriminate, directly or indirectly. We shall do this through regular monitoring and evaluation of our policies. On review, we shall assess and consult relevant stakeholders on the likely impact of changes to our policies on the promotion of all aspects of equality, as laid down in the Equality Act (2010).

10.0 Complaints

Parents will be consulted on the contents of this policy. Once the policy has been implemented, an individual wishing to make a complaint about anything relating to this policy should refer to the Complaint Policy published on the school's Website.

Appendix 1

Parent form: Withdrawal from sex education within RSE

Request to Withdraw a Child from Sex Education lessons		
Name of Child		
Name of Parent	**1.**	**2.**
Date of Request		
Reason for withdrawing your child from sex education within RSE		
Any other information you would like the school to consider		
Parent Signature		
To be completed by the school		
Agreed actions following discussion with parents		

Appendix 2

Relationships and Sex Education programme outlined by age

Community	Content	Approach
Infant Community	Being in relationships	The emphasis for the youngest children is on the modelling of loving, caring relationships between the adults and between adults and the children. Families and People who Care for Me are the focal point, including same-sex parents/carers. [No Infant Community children attend at present.]
Children's House	Relationships with peers Grace & Courtesy Body boundaries and safety	Caring friendships and respectful relationships are introduced as the expectation for developing social interactions. The emphasis for the 3-6 year olds is on what it means to consider the needs of others. Practical exercises in 'Grace & Courtesy' give them the opportunity to receive in a neutral way what are responsive lessons in how to conduct oneself in relation to others. Emotional self-regulation is supported on an individual basis as the situation warrants. In conjunction with parents, the notion of private parts of our bodies is introduced using the NSPCC PANTS resources and Body Boundaries. Children learn that their body belongs to them and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate contact.
Elementary	Community meetings Working with peers	An awareness of relationships in the wider world is developed alongside tools and guidance for staying safe and understanding boundaries in relationships. The holding structure is the community meeting, where interactions are resolved in an atmosphere of friendship and solidarity. Working relationships are forged between peers of different ages and personalities in order to allow traits of flexibility and adaptability to develop.

Community	Content	Approach
	Managing emotions	Conversations about fixed- and growth-mindset are had directly or indirectly on an ongoing basis. A metaphor for managing emotions called 'RULER' is used consistently through the 6-years.
	Respectful relationships and challenging prejudice	Staff actively challenge everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes. Children learn what stereotypes are and how they can be unfair, negative or destructive.
	Staying safe online including AI risks	**Online relationships and safety:** Children learn about Internet Safety and possible harms, including: - How people may behave differently online, including pretending to be someone else - That some social media accounts are fake and may post things created with AI - About deepfakes (videos and photos), how they can be used maliciously, the harms they can cause and how to identify them - That AI chatbots can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice - How to critically think about new types of technology and how they might pose a risk - How to report concerns and where to get help
	Making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes	**Making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes:** Children learn age-appropriate content about: - That sharing indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime, even if created by the child or using AI - The serious risks of sending material to others and that once shared, it cannot be fully deleted - How to seek support and that they won't be in trouble for asking for help - The prevalence and harms of AI-generated sexual imagery
	Puberty in boys and girls including Reproduction	**Sexual reproduction** is explored in biology for a variety of living organisms including human beings. On approaching puberty boys and girls are introduced together and separately to the normal and natural processes of growing up. The narrative we hold is about the body beginning to be ready to participate in the miracle of life. The goal is to understand this is a natural process, to feel excited about it, and to be aware of, watching for and accepting those changes in their body.

Community	Content	Approach
	Peer on peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour	If primary age children ask questions that go beyond the content covered in the course of their RSE curriculum the adult acknowledges the validity of the question and responds in an age-appropriate way, knowing that unanswered questions may lead the child to seeking information from other and inappropriate sources. **Harmful sexual behaviour and peer on peer abuse:** In an age-appropriate way, and in parallel with discussions on behaviour and bullying, children are helped create appropriate boundaries in relationships, to understand what kinds of behaviour may constitute peer on peer abuse (including harmful sexual behaviour), and how to seek support. They learn that harmful sexual behaviour exists on a continuum and can escalate, and that all concerning behaviour should be reported to a trusted adult.