Relationship & sex education (RSE) policy

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1. Aims

This section sets out the content of the PSHE Curriculum at Phoenix Bay School, with particular reference to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

This section will:

- define Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and its place within PSHE.
- set out the subject content, how it is taught and who is responsible for teaching it.
- describe how the subject is monitored and evaluated.
- explain how Phoenix Bay School uses the Medway Public Health Directorate RSE curriculum as its core RSE scheme.
- set out the progression of the Medway RSE curriculum across Years 1–11.
- explain how the Medway scheme is adapted for Phoenix Bay pupils, including pupils with SEND and pupils who require a trauma-informed approach.
- include information about a parent's/carer's right to request withdrawal from sex education within RSE at secondary level, including the legal limits of that right.
- confirm how safeguarding, disclosures, confidentiality and difficult questions are managed.

2. Definition of Relationships and Sex Education

PSHE is Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education. It encompasses the knowledge, understanding, attributes and skills that children and young people need to live healthy, safe, respectful and successful lives.

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education sit within the wider PSHE/personal development curriculum. Phoenix Bay School delivers these areas as a planned continuum from primary through secondary education, alongside the statutory National Curriculum science content where applicable.

Relationships Education teaches children about positive relationships with family, friends and others; respect, kindness, boundaries, privacy, safety and help-seeking. RSE builds on this at secondary level and includes healthy intimate relationships, consent, sexual health, reproductive health, contraception, pregnancy, online sexual harms and related knowledge and skills.

Sex education is not a curriculum about teaching children how to have sex. It provides factual, age- and developmentally appropriate knowledge about sexual relationships, sexual health and reproduction, with an emphasis on safety, consent, mutual respect, informed decision-making and access to appropriate help.

Phoenix Bay School does not promote early sexual activity or any particular sexual orientation. Teaching is factual, respectful, impartial and consistent with the law, the statutory RSHE guidance and the Equality Act 2010.

3. PSHE Subject Content

PSHE is a core subject at Phoenix Bay School. We follow a thematic approach which provides a continuum and ensures students receive an appropriate and balanced education.

The PSHE curriculum is organised around the school's established themes:

SKILLS

- Relationships
- Living in the wider world
- Health and wellbeing

KNOWLEDGE

- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)
- Living in the Wider Community
- Health and Wellbeing

The central goal is for our learners to have the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to achieve personal wellbeing and participate safely in their communities.

PSHE is taught and embedded throughout the curriculum at all Key Stages. There is one discrete session each week as well as person-centred learning throughout the curriculum. RSE is taught as a planned part of the curriculum, particularly during the summer term, while relationships, health, safety and wellbeing are reinforced throughout the year.

Phoenix Bay School uses the Medway Public Health Directorate RSE resources as its core RSE scheme. The Medway scheme provides a structured sequence of age-related lessons, which Phoenix Bay School maps against the current DfE statutory RSHE requirements. The school adds or adapts content where required to ensure full statutory coverage.

The Medway RSE sequence used by Phoenix Bay School is summarised in Appendix 1.

4. Relationships and Sex Education Subject Content

Children and young people learn in trusting relationships, and Phoenix Bay School has a strong safeguarding culture where students know that staff are there to keep them safe and protect them from harm.

At Primary

Relationships Education is compulsory. Phoenix Bay School teaches children about relationships, families, friendships, respectful behaviour, appropriate and inappropriate touch, privacy, body terminology, boundaries, feelings, online safety and help-seeking.

The curriculum also includes age- and developmentally appropriate teaching about body changes and puberty. Any sex education beyond compulsory science is identified separately and is subject to the withdrawal arrangements in this policy.

Relationships Education from Key Stage 1 onwards includes:

- different types of family, including families who care for children through birth, adoption, fostering and other caring arrangements.
- the roles of parents and carers and the characteristics of positive family relationships.
- friendships, kindness, respectful behaviour and strategies for resolving disagreements.
- recognising when others are being treated unkindly and responding to bullying or hurtful behaviour.
- accurate language to name body parts and understanding that some parts of the body are private.
- personal space, boundaries, privacy and seeking help from trusted adults.
- the difference between friendship, liking someone and romantic feelings, taught in an age-appropriate way.
- safe and respectful online relationships and knowing what to do if something online makes a pupil uncomfortable or unsafe.

At Secondary

RSE builds on primary learning and includes:

- the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, including mutual respect, consent, trust, loyalty, shared interests and friendship.
- how choices in relationships and sex can affect physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing.
- reproductive health, fertility, lifestyle factors affecting fertility and menopause.
- strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others.
- the right to delay sex and to enjoy intimacy without sex.
- facts about pregnancy, including miscarriage and stillbirth.
- the relationship between alcohol/drugs and increased risk-taking in sexual or relationship contexts.
- how and where to access reliable, confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.
- sexual harassment, sexual violence, exploitation, abuse and coercive/control behaviour.

- online sexual harms, grooming, image-sharing, pornography and manipulated/deepfake sexual imagery.
- respect for difference and equality, with balanced, evidence-based and age-appropriate teaching on contested matters in line with current statutory guidance.

Gender Questioning, Sex and Gender Identity

No pupil will be bullied, harassed or humiliated because they are questioning their gender, because of their sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or any other protected characteristic. Equally, staff and pupils will not be required to adopt a particular contested belief. The school will address discriminatory or abusive behaviour through its behaviour, anti-bullying and safeguarding procedures.

Single-sex facilities, changing arrangements, residential arrangements, PE and sport will be managed in accordance with current KCSIE, the Equality Act 2010, safeguarding duties and the school's other relevant policies.

Teaching about sex, biological sex, gender reassignment and related legal matters will be factual, age- and developmentally appropriate, evidence-informed and consistent with the Equality Act 2010 and current DfE statutory guidance. The school will not present contested views about gender identity as established fact. Teaching will avoid stereotyping and will promote dignity, respect and protection from bullying or abuse.

The school will involve parents/carers in decision-making wherever possible and appropriate, while recognising that safeguarding concerns may affect how and when information is shared. The DSL will be consulted where there are safeguarding, abuse, exploitation, mental health or other welfare concerns.

Where a child or parent/carer asks the school to support social transition, including a request relating to a name, pronouns or uniform, the school will not initiate social transition itself. Staff will not make changes relating to social transition unless the school has considered the request through its safeguarding and leadership processes and reached a decision with appropriate parental/carer involvement, except where safeguarding duties require a different response.

The school will consider each situation individually and in the best interests of the child. Staff will consider the child's age and developmental stage, wellbeing, mental health and psychosocial needs, relationships, any safeguarding concerns and the potential impact of decisions on the child and the wider school community.

Phoenix Bay School recognises that some children and young people may question their sex, gender or gender identity. Staff will respond sensitively, respectfully and without shaming a pupil. At the same time, the school will follow the statutory safeguarding framework and will not treat a child's request or disclosure as requiring an immediate or predetermined outcome.

5. Aspects of Relationships and Sex Education which we define as 'Sex Education'

At Phoenix Bay School, we use the Medway RSE resources. The following content is treated as sex education for the purposes of parental withdrawal, where it is additional to compulsory science and other compulsory curriculum content.

- the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available.
- medically and legally accurate, impartial information about pregnancy choices, including continuing a pregnancy, adoption and abortion, and where to obtain further help.
- how sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, are transmitted.
- how risk can be reduced through safer sex, including condom use, and the importance of testing.
- the prevalence and possible impact of STIs and key facts about treatment.
- the meaning of consent and sexual consent where the lesson goes beyond the statutory relationship's education requirements and compulsory science.
- other additional sexual-health or sexual-relationship content identified by the school as sex education rather than relationships education, health education or science.

Compulsory science content is not subject to parental withdrawal. Relationships Education and Health Education are also compulsory. The school will explain the status of content to parents/carers when considering a withdrawal request.

6. How the subject is taught and who is responsible for teaching it

PSHE is taught and embedded throughout the curriculum at all Key Stages. There is one discrete session each week as well as person-centred learning throughout the curriculum. During the summer term, RSE is taught as a planned curriculum area.

We tailor content and teaching to meet the specific needs of students at different developmental stages.

Usually, the Knowledge Frameworks will be taught termly:

Term	Primary emphasis	Secondary emphasis
Autumn Term	Health and Wellbeing	Health and Wellbeing
Spring Term	Living in the Wider Community	Living in the Wider Community
Summer Term	Relationships and Sex Education	Relationships and Sex Education

We adapt and react to the needs of our students. In some cases, students may need tailored support around relationships and sex education. This will be developed in partnership with parents/carers, social workers and other professionals as appropriate, while maintaining the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

Students at Phoenix Bay School of the same age may be developmentally at different stages, leading to differing types of questions or behaviours. Teaching methods will take account of these differences and ensure there is potential for discussion on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.

Teaching is trauma-informed. Staff avoid requiring personal disclosure, establish predictable routines and ground rules, use clear and non-shaming language, and provide appropriate support when content may be emotionally difficult.

Teachers are responsible for teaching the content of the PSHE/RSE curricula, supported by Wellbeing Mentors and other appropriate staff. The RSHE/PSHE Lead is responsible for curriculum coordination and quality assurance. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) provides safeguarding advice and oversight.

7. How we manage difficult questions

Students may ask teachers or other adults questions pertaining to sex, sexuality, relationships, bodies, puberty or gender which go beyond the curriculum content.

Students will have the opportunity to write or record questions and place them anonymously in a ‘questions box’ if they do not want to ask in front of others.

If a teacher or Wellbeing Mentor is asked a question which they do not feel is appropriate to answer, which is outside the curriculum, or which they cannot answer accurately, they will use professional judgement to:

- acknowledge the question without shaming the student.
- explain that it is not appropriate to discuss the question in front of the group if that is the case.
- provide an accurate answer at the appropriate level where it is within the curriculum.
- offer to speak to the student privately with another adult present where appropriate.
- consult the RSHE Lead or DSL if the question raises safeguarding concerns.
- inform the parent/carer where appropriate and in line with safeguarding, confidentiality and information-sharing procedures.

Staff must not promise confidentiality where a safeguarding concern may be present.

Staff should not initiate discussions or actions intended to socially transition a pupil. Where a pupil or parent/carer raises the issue, the school will consider the request carefully, involve parents/carers wherever possible, and record significant decisions and the rationale for them in accordance with school procedures.

8. How the subject is monitored and evaluated

The Teaching and Learning Lead / RSHE Lead will monitor the teaching of PSHE by:

- holding professional conversations with class teachers.
- discussing PSHE/RSE with individual students.
- monitoring Evidence for Learning and other appropriate assessment information.
- checking curriculum coverage against the Medway scheme and the current DfE statutory requirements.
- sampling lesson plans, resources and pupil work.
- observing and feeding back on discrete teaching sessions informally, where appropriate.
- reviewing pupil voice, parent/carer feedback and relevant safeguarding themes.
- reviewing the accessibility and effectiveness of adaptations for pupils with SEND.

The annual review will identify any gaps in statutory coverage and any additional content required because of local safeguarding concerns, emerging online risks or the needs of Phoenix Bay pupils.

9. Parent/carer involvement

The parent/carer representative will remain the ‘first port of call’ for parent/carers who want to influence decision-making at Phoenix Bay School.

Parent/carers will be invited to comment on the PSHE Policy (incorporating Relationships and Sex Education) in a consultative capacity, working towards participation.

Parent/carer involvement may include:

- reviewing the PSHE/RSE policy.
- reviewing information about the Relationships Education and RSE curriculum.
- reviewing suggested session content and resources as presented by the PSHE Lead and class teachers, where appropriate.
- sharing information about a child's developmental, communication or safeguarding needs.
- raising questions or concerns through the school's normal communication routes.
- participating in discussions about individual adaptations where appropriate.

10. Student involvement

Teachers will work with individual students to determine the most appropriate teaching methods and resources, taking account of communication, cognition, sensory, emotional and developmental needs.

Students will be given appropriate opportunities to contribute to the development and evaluation of the curriculum. This may include anonymous questions, discussion, pupil voice and accessible evaluation activities.

Where appropriate, there will be an evaluation for students when they have finished a course or unit, administered by the teacher, which will assess confidence and understanding of each aspect of the curriculum.

Students will not be asked to disclose personal sexual or relationship experiences as an assessment activity.

11. 'Right to Withdraw' at Primary

There is no parental right to withdraw a child from Relationships Education or Health Education. These are compulsory parts of the curriculum.

Parents/carers cannot withdraw a child from compulsory science content.

Where the school provides additional sex education at primary level beyond compulsory science, the school will identify that content clearly and will apply the statutory withdrawal arrangements applicable to that content.

At Phoenix Bay School, the Medway primary programme primarily supports Relationships Education, health, puberty and preparation for secondary learning.

12. 'Right to Withdraw' at Secondary

Parents/carers have a legal right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all sex education delivered as part of RSE, except where the content forms part of compulsory science or another compulsory curriculum entitlement.

Relationships Education and Health Education remain compulsory and are not subject to parental withdrawal. The school is responsible for identifying whether particular content is sex education for withdrawal purposes.

Any request to withdraw must be made to the Principal. The Principal/RSHE Lead will discuss the request with the parent/carer and, where appropriate, the student, explaining the nature and purpose of the curriculum and the possible benefits and implications of withdrawal.

Where withdrawal is agreed, the school will make appropriate alternative supervised provision. The arrangement will be recorded.

In accordance with the statutory guidance, a pupil may have a right to opt into sex education from three terms before their 16th birthday; the school will follow the current statutory process.

Phoenix Bay School encourages parents/carers to engage with the school before making a decision and hopes that families will support students to learn these important facts. However, the school will respect lawful withdrawal requests and will not stigmatise or penalise a student because a withdrawal request has been made.

13. Appendix 1 – Medway RSE Curriculum

Medway RSE curriculum used by Phoenix Bay School – year-group overview

Phoenix Bay School uses the Medway Public Health Directorate RSE resources as its core RSE scheme. The Medway materials provide a structured sequence of age-related lessons and are mapped against the current DfE statutory RSHE requirements.

Phoenix Bay School adapts the Medway programme where necessary to meet the developmental, SEND, trauma-informed and safeguarding needs of individual students.

Primary / KS1 and KS2

Year group	Medway content / Phoenix Bay School focus
Year 1	**My Special People** – people who care for us, belonging, positive relationships and identifying trusted/special people.
Year 2	**Human Life Cycle and Everybody's Body** – body terminology, understanding bodies, privacy and respect. Changes to the body and age-appropriate preparation for puberty are reinforced.
Year 3	**What Makes a Good Friend? and Falling Out with Friends** – positive friendships, managing disagreements, loneliness, kindness and recognising unsafe or unhappy friendship behaviour.
Year 4	**Time to Change** – physical changes during puberty, including menstruation and wet dreams, personal hygiene, emotional changes and help-seeking.
Year 5	**Emotions and Feelings During Puberty** – revisiting physical changes and developing understanding of emotional changes, self-esteem and preparation for adolescence.
Year 6	**Positive and Healthy Relationships; Puberty, Change and Becoming Independent; How a Baby is Made/Human Reproduction** – compulsory science content is distinguished from additional sex education for withdrawal purposes.

Secondary / KS3 and KS4

Phoenix Bay year group	Medway content / Phoenix Bay School focus
Year 7	Puberty; menstrual wellbeing; healthy relationships; managing conflict;

	introduction to consent and respectful boundaries.
Year 8	Relationship values; influences on relationship expectations; sexual orientation and gender identity; consent and avoiding assumptions; introduction to contraception.
Year 9	Respectful relationship behaviours; freedom and capacity to consent; sexual health; contraception; managing the ending of relationships.
Year 10	Intimacy and pleasure; pornography and its potential harms; pressure, persuasion and coercion; relationship conflict and break-ups; relationship abuse.
Year 11	Family conflict; long-term commitments; sexual health, fertility and routes to parenthood; pregnancy outcomes; pregnancy choices including abortion.

Adaptation of the Medway Programme

Where Medway resources use terminology or examples that require updating to reflect current statutory guidance, Phoenix Bay School will use the underlying learning objective while adapting the lesson content.

The school will supplement the Medway scheme where required to cover current expectations concerning online sexual harms, pornography, image-based abuse, AI/deepfakes, sexual harassment and violence, reproductive health, access to support and other statutory requirements.

Safeguarding and Delivery Expectations

- Teachers will not require pupils to disclose personal sexual, relationship or trauma experiences.
- Sensitive lessons will have clear ground rules and a planned route for support.
- Questions may be submitted anonymously where appropriate.
- Any disclosure or safeguarding concern will be managed under the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- Lessons will be differentiated for pupils with SEND and adapted for communication, sensory, cognitive and emotional needs.
- Assessment will focus on knowledge, understanding and practical skills rather than personal experience.
- Teachers will check the withdrawal status of each relevant lesson before delivery.
- External providers must be appropriately vetted, briefed and supervised and the teacher remains responsible for the lesson.