



Relationships and Sex Education Policy

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1. Rationale

At Mabel Prichard School, we believe in enabling every student to discover who they are and to realise their full potential. Our curriculum offers our learners a broad range of opportunities to face challenge; develop independence; prepare for adulthood; discover the world around them; be safe and develop the skills and knowledge to lead a happy, positive and fulfilled life.

We believe education plays a pivotal role in developing students as individuals and we strive to create opportunities for each student to value themselves and each other; develop confidence; communicate their thoughts and ideas and to enjoy discovering their strengths to take forward in their life ahead.

Our Pupils have Complex Needs

Pupils at Mabel Prichard School have profound, severe and complex needs. Many of our pupils have coexisting and compounding disabilities, which do not just include cognitive impairments, but also physical and mental health needs. For example, all our pupils with a diagnosis of ASD, also have a severe learning difficulty and many of these may have an additional diagnosis of ADHD, or a sensory impairment. As our pupils enter the secondary phase of their education, some may develop additional mental health needs. 70% of children with ASD will develop a mental health need during adolescence. (The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 2020).

Our pupils have unique and “spiky” learning profiles.

“They are a wide and varied group of learners ... who do not simply require a differentiated curriculum, or teaching at a slower pace, but who at times, require further adaptation to teaching if they are to make progress.”

(Porter J & Ashdown R. (2002) Pupils with Complex Needs)

Therefore, it is not possible to take standard curriculum models, such as those proposed by the Sex Education Forum and the DfE and apply them wholesale to those with SLD/PMLD, however much they might be differentiated. Our learners require something different.

Our curriculums in school are based on the Equals curriculums, written for learners with profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, Severe learning difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. In Mabel Prichard, our learners follow the pre-formal curriculum (a

curriculum for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the informal curriculum (for learners with complex needs) and the semi-formal curriculum for those learners with severe learning difficulties. Very few learners will access some parts of the formal curriculum for subject based learning.

The Sex Education Forum (SEF) argues that relationships and sex education should be:

- an integral part of lifelong learning
- an entitlement for boys, girls; those who are heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual; those with physical, learning or emotional difficulties; those with a religious or faith tradition
- provided within an holistic context of emotional and social development.

The SEF argues that the purpose of RSE is to help children and young people to be safe, healthy and happy as they grow up and in their future lives, and warns that RSE must always be appropriate to pupils' age and stage of development. We believe that these four elements of safety, health, happiness and appropriateness are absolutely crucial to a successful RSE policy and process,

This policy is also based on Stewart et al's (2015) belief that people with severe learning difficulties have the inalienable rights to:

- be a sexual being
- grow up and achieve adult status
- form and break relationships
- acquire knowledge about sexuality and social behaviour such as they are able to assimilate
- privacy and dignity
- make informed sexual choices
- have opportunities to love and be loved and enjoy as full a range of satisfying human relationships as possible
- legal protection (including protection against exploitation).

In line with both the SEF and the DfE, Equals strongly urge a tripartite responsibility for RSE, which includes as necessary partners (i) the school/college (ii) the school/college's Local Academy board and Trustees (iii) parents and carers.

2. Statutory requirements

As an academy school, we must provide relationships education to all pupils as per section 34 of the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#).

We do not have to follow the National Curriculum, but we are expected to offer all students an appropriate curriculum that includes the elements of sex education contained in the science curriculum.

In teaching RSE, we are required by our funding agreements to have regard to [guidance](#) issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the [Education Act 1996](#).

At Mabel Prichard School we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

For students of secondary age, we must provide RSE to all pupils as per section 34 of the [Children and Social work act 2017](#).

3. Policy development

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

1. Review – a member of the senior leadership team pulled together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance
2. Staff consultation – all school staff were given the opportunity to look at the curriculum and make recommendations
3. Student consultation – where appropriate and possible, class teachers investigated what exactly pupils want from their RSE
4. Parent/stakeholder consultation – parents and any interested parties were invited to read and provide feedback about the policy
5. Ratification – once amendments were made, the policy was shared with governors and ratified

4. Definition

- RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils and involves learning about relationships; sexual health; sexuality; healthy lifestyles; diversity and personal identity.
- RSE involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values.
- RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

5. Curriculum

Our curriculum is set out as per Appendix 1 but we may need to adapt it as and when necessary.

6. Delivery of RSE

RSE is taught as part of personal, social and health education (PSHE).

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see 'Overview of the Curriculum' (p 11)

Equals RSE (the core curriculum) is divided up into six sections, namely:

- Knowing my body
- Knowing me
- Private and public
- Touching and allowing others to touch me
- Forming relationships
- Sexual intimacy with another person

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children or young people based on their home circumstances (families can include single-parent families, LGBTQ+ parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures) along with reflecting sensitively that some children or young people may have a different structure of support around them (for example children we care for or young carers).

7. Our approach

In order to ensure our learners access this learning and develop the understanding they need, we take the following approaches to teaching Relationships and Sex Education:

- **Holistically (elements of this curriculum are taught across all areas)**
- **Using repetition and over learning**
- **Accepting that what is being taught is appropriate to the individual learner's age and developmental level, and that learners do not need to be taught what they do not need to know**
- **Permanently, with special consideration to next educational destinations** (liaising with destinations to share learners knowledge and understanding of areas of the curriculum so far.)
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender - LGBTQ+)**

This is referenced on pages 15 and 26 of England's DfE (2019) Statutory Guidance. The Equals curriculum recognises that 'Both of these issues are tricky for all those with SLD irrespective of ability levels. There has been very little research into either area for those with SLD and certainly none that could give us concrete guidance, but the over-riding experience amongst the authors and the editors of this SoW is that sexual orientation might not be such a complicated issue as it often is for neuro-typical conventionally developing young people and adults, since those with SLD who are inclined to exploring their sexuality with other people are often very open to the prospect of both same sex and other sex relationships. The authors and editors also recognise that whilst gender identification may be an issue for some learners with SLD, it is a subject that is by its nature, both abstract and hypothetical, and is therefore only likely to cause confusion rather than elucidation.'
(*Equals semi-formal curriculum, 2020*)

England's Statutory Guidance suggests that:

All pupils should feel that the content is relevant to them and their developing sexuality. Sexual orientation and gender identity should be explored at a timely point and in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner. When teaching about these topics, it must be recognised that young people may be discovering or understanding their sexual orientation or gender identity. There should be an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships. This should be integrated appropriately into the RSE programme, rather than addressed separately or in only one lesson. (DfE, 12019, p26).

Whilst the issue of same sex relationships should be 'integrated appropriately into the RSE programme', Equals does not recommend teaching gender identification as standard issue to be explored by all pupils with SLD and Mabel Prichard School follows this recommendation.

RSE and the law is referenced on para 78 of the Statutory Guidance, which states that:

Key aspects of the law relating to sex which should be taught include the age of consent, what consent is and is not, the definitions and recognition of rape, sexual assault and harassment, and choices permitted by the law around pregnancy. (DfE, 2019, p26).

Equals **strongly** recommends that a more nuanced approach is taken here, so rather than talking about blanket 'wrongs' such as rape, sexual harassment and sexual assault, our teaching focuses on 'rights', as in what is the right way to form and maintain a sexual relationship. Consent is an issue that features very strongly, but this is much more about seeking and giving consent (to touch) rather than any legal understanding of the term.

- **Safeguarding**
Staff have clear guidance on what they must do if a child or young person makes a disclosure during/ or as a result of an RSE session.
- **Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)** is another area which Equals **strongly** recommends is not covered in the standard scheme of work. The issue of catching and transmitting STDs is relevant for those who are likely to have multiple sexual relationships with other people who are also likely to have multiple sexual relationships. Young people with severe learning difficulties are unlikely to have a single sexual partner by the time they leave school at 19, never mind multiples, and STDs and the fairly horrific pictures and descriptions that go along with this, are only likely to frighten and confuse.
- **Grooming, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour** features in para 79 of England's Statutory Guidance. This states that schools should address the issues '*sensitively and clearly. Schools should*

address the physical and emotional damage caused by female genital mutilation (FGM). (DfE, 2019, p26)

As with the law, gender identification and STDs, we do not teach these elements of what might be considered standard for a mainstream curriculum. Again, these issues are complex, nuanced and abstract and the risk of confusion and a negative view of sexual relations is too great if the issues are not fully understood. Instead, we concentrate on the positive, so we foster a recognition that tenderness, kindness, care and empathy are key components of any relationship, including any sexual relationship and act with another person.

- **Internet safety and pornography.** England's statutory guidance urges that *'internet safety should also be addressed. Pupils should be taught the rules and principles for keeping safe online.* (DfE, 2019, p27)

though this will very much depend upon the ability levels of the learners being worked with. We follow the *Equals* recommendation that an individual watching brief is held here, rather than a blanket lesson plan concept, since there may be some (but certainly not all) learners with SLD who are very comfortable with the concepts of social media and chat rooms, and have sufficient typing and communication skills to be at risk.

The issue of pornography is however very different, because (in England at least) it is openly, easily and freely accessible and has a strong tendency towards the normalisation of male power, male dominance, the denigration of women and the total absence of any concept of relationship within the sexual act. That is, sex is shown as something that is separated from normal life, apart from it rather than a part of it. This can be exceptionally dangerous if access to pornography is freely available. Therefore we share advice about E-safety on our website and draw parents and carers' attention to E-safety in a standing slot in our weekly newsletter.

- **Physical health and mental well-being** are taught through the curriculum areas, *My Physical Well-Being, My Communication, My Play and Leisure, My Independence, My Drama, My Dance, My Music, My Art and My Outdoor School.* *Preformal learners learn about this through the communication, physical development, cognition, independence and social skills areas of their curriculum* *There are however, particular issues with mental well-being, especially sexual well-being, which are likely to impinge much more and much more severely on those with SLD than within pupils and students developing conventionally and neuro-typically, and for our learners this constitutes an extended reflection upon sexual awareness and sexual identity. This is especially pertinent, because unlike the considerable majority of sexually active teenagers, those with SLD are unlikely to form a sexual relationship with another by the time they leave school at 19, and educators will therefore have to be sure that all learners are at least capable of having a satisfactory sexual relationship with themselves (through for example, the medium of masturbation) as much as they are able and should they show the inclination to do so.*

The Key principles of teaching the Curriculum are therefore:

- *recognising and enabling the vital role played by staff and other adults;*
- *enabling and maximising each individual learner's self-realisation, self-expression and self-confidence within any formal or informal programme;*
- *progressing at the learners' pace, so that the teaching is always appropriate to the individual;*
- *accepting that some guided practice in decision making is necessary whilst still accepting the inalienable rights of the individual to make choices.*

And what we might need is:

- *A core curriculum document that is flexible enough to teach according to individual need at any particular time.*
- *One that is capable of revisiting and thereby strengthening previous learning.*
- *One that is also capable of building on previous learning.*

References:

DfE (2019) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers. London. Department for Education. Available on line at www.gov.uk

Imray P and Colley A (2017) Inclusion is Dead: Long Live Inclusion. London. Routledge.

SEF (2018) Curriculum Design Tool for RSE. London. Sex Education Forum.

Stewart D S, Mallett A and Hall T (2015) Sex and relationships education in P Lacey, R Ashdown, P Jones, H Lawson and M Pipe (eds) The Routledge Companion to Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. London. Routledge.

Tissot C (2009) Establishing a sexual identity. Case studies of learners with autism and learning difficulties. *Autism: 13 (6) 551-556*

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The Local Academy Board (LAB)

The local academy board will approve the RSE policy, and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.

8.2 The headteacher

The headteacher 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 (see section 8).

8.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual students
- Responding appropriately to students whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory components of RSE

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 headteacher.

All class teachers and HLTAs will be responsible for teaching aspects of RSE in our school.

8.4 Students

Students are encouraged to engage fully in RSE and treat others with respect and sensitivity.

9. Parents' right to withdraw

Within Primary:

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from relationships education.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-science components of sex education within RSE.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in Appendix 3 of this policy and addressed to the headteacher.

Alternative curriculum activities will be given to students who are withdrawn from sex education.

Within Secondary:

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory components of sex education within RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in Appendix 3 of this policy and addressed to the headteacher.

A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the student's educational record. The headteacher will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action.

Alternative curriculum activities will be given to students who are withdrawn from sex education.

10. Training

Staff are trained on the delivery of RSE as part of their induction and it is included in our continuing professional development calendar.

The headteacher will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE as appropriate.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The delivery of RSE is monitored by the senior leadership team through team meetings, planning activities, recorded evidence of learning activities and learning walks.

Individual student's development in RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems.

This policy will be reviewed by the headteacher annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the local academy board.

11. Overview of the RSE Curriculum

This curriculum enables an individualised approach. All learners experience aspects of the 'Knowing my Body' section but there are also additional areas to draw on depending on physical or emotional development. Types of relationships and healthy relationships are taught throughout the school and areas are revisited multiple times to ensure overlearning of key concepts.

<p>Section 1 Knowing My Body</p> <p>These areas are not taught as part of a key stage approach. Areas such as menstruation and sexual feelings are taught at appropriate points in physical development. Masturbation is only taught if the learner demonstrates an interest.</p> <p>Some subjects are taught in single gender groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body parts • Their functions - what the parts do • Age differences • Gender differences • My clothes – on top and underneath • Menstruation • The physical manifestations of a sexual state • Masturbation
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hygiene.
Section 2 Knowing Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What I like and what I don't like • Who I like and who I don't like • What I am able to do and what I find difficult • Trusting somebody – who can I trust? • Me, you and us • Developing a positive image and high self-esteem.
Section 3 Private and Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where on my body is private? • Where on my body is not private? • Where can I be by myself? • Where can I go to be private? • Where can I spend time with other people? • My room.
Section 4 Touching and Allowing others to Touch Me <p>This section (which is essentially about consent) when taken in conjunction with the previous, Section Three, on Privacy, together form the bedrock of any RSE policy and practice. It is an essential element for all learners who have demonstrated a personal sexual identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where on the body can I touch another person appropriately? • Gaining permission to touch • Where is it inappropriate to touch? • Resisting pressure and saying 'no' • Saying 'yes'? • Making choices.
Section 5 Forming Relationships <p>This section is taught to those who:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does a relationship mean? • Liking somebody and loving somebody

<p>(i) are already in a relationship with another person(s) (whether this is/these are sexual or not) or</p> <p>(ii) indicate that they want to have a relationship with others (whether this is sexual or not).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dating • Having a girlfriend/boyfriend • Same sex relationships • Compliments
<p>Section 6 Sexual Intimacy with another person</p> <p>This section is only taught to those who have demonstrated a sexual persona already AND are in a relationship that is, is likely to be, or may soon become, sexual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sexual act • The recognition that tenderness, care and empathy are key components of any sexual act with another • Safe sex • The possible consequences of unsafe sex.

Appendix 3: Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within RSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS / CARERS			
Name of student		Class	
Name of parent/carer		Date	
Reason for withdrawing from sex education within relationships and sex education			
Any other information you would like the school to consider			
Parent signature			

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL	
Agreed actions from discussion with parents/carers	