MAT Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Principles

(To be read in conjunction with the school's RSE Policy.)



Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education
(Updated for statutory guidance effective September 2026)

To embrace the challenges of creating a happy, healthy and successful adult life, pupils need accurate, age-appropriate knowledge that enables them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships. Through Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), and Health Education, pupils are supported to build self-efficacy, resilience and confidence, and to apply their learning when faced with risks, challenges and complex situations.

These subjects equip young people with the skills to recognise and manage difficult situations, to understand how and when to ask for help and to know where and how to access appropriate support. This includes developing emotional literacy, positive mental wellbeing and an understanding of personal safety, both offline and online.

Our approach to Relationships Education

In The Rivers CofE Academy Trust schools, the focus is on teaching the **fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive, healthy relationships**. Particular emphasis is placed on friendships, family relationships and relationships with peers and trusted adults.

From the earliest stages of education, building on the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils are taught:

- what relationships are and why they matter;
- what friendship means, including kindness, cooperation and mutual respect;
- what family means, recognising that families may take many forms;
- who the trusted adults and support networks in their lives are.

As pupils progress through primary education, they are taught to:

- take turns and resolve disagreements respectfully;
- treat others with kindness, consideration and respect;
- understand the importance of honesty and truthfulness;
- recognise personal boundaries, including permission-seeking and giving;
- understand the concept of personal privacy and bodily autonomy;

- use correct terminology for body parts in an age-appropriate way to support safeguarding and personal safety;
- recognise unsafe situations and know how to seek help.

Teaching is carefully sequenced and age-appropriate and takes account of pupils' maturity, developmental needs and lived experiences.

Health education and wellbeing

Health education supports pupils to understand physical and mental wellbeing, including:

- how to maintain good mental health and emotional wellbeing;
- how to recognise feelings such as anxiety, grief or loss and how to seek help;
- the importance of healthy routines, self-care and positive coping strategies;
- how to keep themselves safe, including in online environments;
- how to recognise potential risks, including those that may arise online, and to develop the confidence and skills to make safe, informed choices.

Working in partnership with parents and carers

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust recognises that **parents and carers have a primary role in supporting their children's relationships and personal development**. We are committed to building positive, respectful and trusting relationships with parents and carers through openness, communication and cooperation.

In promoting this partnership, we:

- inform parents and carers about the school's Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education Policy and curriculum;
- make teaching materials available for parents to view on request;
- provide opportunities for parents to ask questions and raise concerns;
- take seriously any issues raised with teachers, senior leaders or trustees regarding the policy or its implementation.

Parental right to withdraw

In line with statutory guidance:

- **Relationships Education and Health Education are compulsory** and parents do **not** have the right to withdraw their child from these elements.
- Parents **do have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from sex education**, where this is taught as part of RSE and goes beyond the statutory requirements of Relationships and Health Education.
  If a parent wishes to request withdrawal from sex education, they should discuss this with the headteacher. The request should clearly identify which aspects of sex education they do not wish their child to participate in. Schools within The Rivers CofE Academy Trust will always act in accordance with statutory requirements and will respect parental requests where the law allows.

Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)