MARY ELLIOT ACADEMY

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

Last date ratified & signed by the Board of Trustees	**Date: November 2026**
To be reviewed annually:	**Date: November 2027**

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1. Aims

1.1. Through our PSHE/RSE curriculum, we aim that our students will:

- Have the appropriate tailored experiences, skills and knowledge to prepare them for life after Mary Elliot.
- Develop strong foundation skills based upon self-awareness, physical and mental well-being and societal skills.
- Develop learners' positive mental health through engaging and fulfilling experiences that assist their cultural capital.
- To develop their understanding of feeling safe and nurtured and to be able to communicate how they are feeling and when they are not feeling safe.
- Learn to make informed choices;
- Be participants in a positive, democratic society;
- To experience, form and maintain positive relationships;
- Understand and manage their emotions;
- Use the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies and are prepared for puberty;
- Have opportunities to consider issues which may affect their own lives and/or the lives of others;
- Acquire a wide and varied range of developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills that promote the three key themes of family, friendship, and safety.

2. Statutory Requirements

2.1. As a Secondary academy we must provide relationships and sex education to all students under section 34 of the Children and Social work act 2017.

2.2. We do not have to follow the National Curriculum but we are expected to offer all students a curriculum that is similar to the National Curriculum including requirements to teach science which would include the elements of sex education contained in the science curriculum.

2.3. At Mary Elliot Academy we tailor the curriculum content to the student's individual needs and developmental stages. From 1 September 2026, we have regard to the revised Department for Education statutory guidance, Relationships Education,

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education. Teaching is age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate, accessible and responsive to students' needs

2.4. In teaching RSE, we have regard to the revised statutory guidance issued under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 and section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

2.5. The revised statutory guidance confirms that teaching must be developed so that RSHE is accessible for pupils with SEND and prepares them for adulthood. Schools should recognise that pupils with SEND may be more vulnerable to harmful sexual behaviour, sexual abuse, exploitation and violence, bullying and other harms; this is particularly relevant for pupils with learning disabilities.

2.6. We must also have regard to our legal duties set out in:

- Sections 406 and 407 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 6, chapter 1 of the Equality Act 2010

2.7. The Public Sector Equality Duty (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

2.8. At Mary Elliot Academy we teach RSE/PSHE as set out in this policy.

3. Policy Development

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

a) Review - a member of staff pulled together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance.

b) Staff consultation - all school staff were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations.

c) Parental/Stakeholderconsultation the academy will proactively engage and consult parents/carers when developing and reviewing the RSE policy. Parents/carers will be informed about what is taught, including sensitive content, and will be able to view curriculum materials in line with the arrangements set out in this policy.

d) Ratification - once amendments were made, the policy was shared with the Board of Trustees and ratified.

4. Definition

4.1. At Mary Elliot Academy PSHE/RSE is about the emotional, social, and cultural development of students, and involves learning about relationships, 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

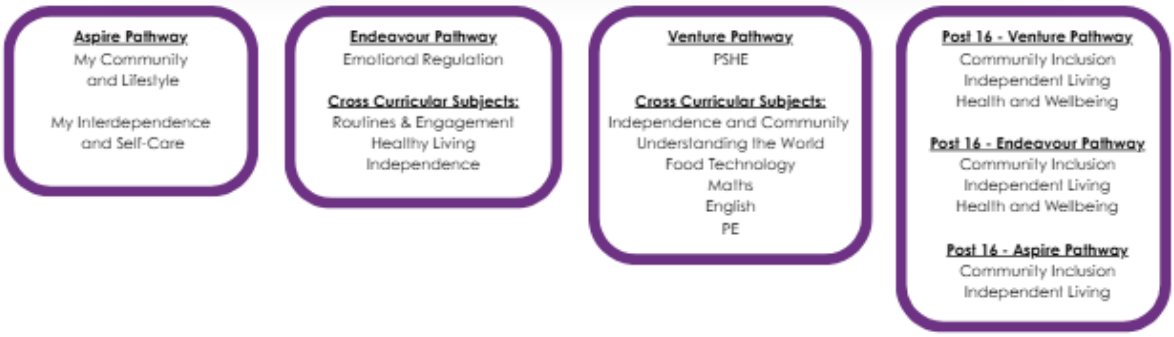
5.1. The PSHE Curriculum is designed to give every student in each curriculum pathway the essential skills and experiences to develop awareness of themselves, their unique identity and their understanding of the world around them. These personalised skills are built upon during students time at Mary Elliot to ensure that they are 'prepared for life' when they leave.

5.2. We will proactively make parents/carers aware of what is taught in RSHE, show a representative sample of planned resources where appropriate, and make all curriculum materials used to teach RSHE available to parents/carers on request, subject to copyright arrangements. Copyright will not be used as a reason to refuse access to materials.

6. Delivery of PSHE/RSE

6.1. Mary Elliot Academy uses personalised teaching strategies to deliver PSHE and RSE to our students. It is taught overtly through our Personal, Social Health and Economic Education (PSHE) curriculum. PSHE is delivered through various pathway subjects. The learning opportunities align with students EHCP outcomes and supports progress and a strong focus on preparing for adulthood.

6.2. The RSHE curriculum will be inclusive, carefully sequenced and informed by meaningful engagement with students. Content will be taught before it is likely to be needed, where possible, to help students build positive relationships, recognise risks and prevent harm. Teaching will be participative and interactive where appropriate and will support, rather than alarm, students.



6.3. Where students are able to access the information we will ensure that they are made aware of aspects of law that relate to sexual activity. Relationships and Sex will be taught in the context of celebrating diversity. All teaching resources shall be scrutinised by the Subject Lead and Extended Leadership Team.

6.4. RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds including:

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online and media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

6.5. In line with the 2026 statutory guidance, teaching will also address, where developmentally appropriate: consent and healthy boundaries; coercive and controlling behaviour; sexual harassment and sexual violence; harmful sexual behaviour; domestic abuse and stalking; online safety and harms, including pornography, grooming, sextortion, AI-generated sexual imagery/deepfakes and the sharing of nude or semi-nude images; misogyny and harmful stereotypes; and how to seek help and report concerns.

6.6. These skills are taught within the context of family life, taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures) along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example: looked after children).

6.7. We will also be mindful of the law and legal requirements, taking care not to condone or encourage illegal political activity, such as violent action against people, criminal damage to property, hate crime, terrorism or the illegal use of drugs.

6.8. Relevant law will be taught factually and at an appropriate developmental level, including where relevant the age of consent, marriage and forced marriage, sexual offences, the Online Safety Act, drugs/alcohol/vaping, gambling, weapons, criminal exploitation/county lines, hate crime, extremism/radicalisation, medical consent and the age of criminal responsibility.

7. Inclusivity

7.1. We will teach about these topics in a manner that:

- Considers how a diverse range of students will relate to them
- Is sensitive to all students' experiences
- During lessons, makes students feel:
    - Safe and supported
    - Able to engage with the key messages

7.2. We will also:

Make sure that students learn about these topics in an environment that's appropriate for them, for example in:

- A whole-class setting
- Small groups or targeted sessions
- 1-to-1 discussions
- Digital formats

7.3. Make reasonable adjustments and carefully consider the adaptations needed so that content is accessible and meaningful for all students, including those with SEND, while maintaining ambitious long-term outcomes and preparation for adulthood.

7.4. Recognise the risk of abuse, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, bullying and online harms, and ensure teaching explicitly develops communication, consent, boundaries, recognition of unsafe situations and help-seeking skills.

8. Use of Resources

8.1. We **will** consider whether any resources we plan to use:

a) Are aligned with the teaching requirements set out in the statutory RSE guidance

b) Would support students in applying their knowledge in different contexts and settings

c) Are age-appropriate, given the age, developmental stage and background of our students

d) Are evidence-based and contain robust facts and statistics

e) Fit into our curriculum plan

f) Are from credible sources

g) Are compatible with effective teaching approaches

h) Are sensitive to students' experiences and won't provoke distress

9. The Use of External Organisations and Materials

9.1. We will make sure that an agency and any materials used are appropriate and in line with our legal duties around political impartiality.

9.2. The school remains responsible for what is said to students. This includes making sure that any speakers, tools and resources used don't undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

9.3. We **will**:

Make appropriate checks and engage with external agencies to make sure that their approach to teaching about PSHE and RSE is balanced, and it and the resources they intend to use:

- Are age-appropriate
- Are in line with students' developmental stage

9.4. Comply with:

This policy:

- The Teachers' Standards
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Education Act 1996

9.5. Only work with external agencies where we have full confidence in the agency, its approach and the resources it uses

9.6. Make sure that any speakers and resources meet the intended outcome of the relevant part of the curriculum

9.7. Review any case study materials and look for feedback from other people the agency has worked with

9.8. Be clear on:

- What they're going to say
- Their position on the issues to be discussed

9.9. Ask to see in advance any materials that the agency may use

9.10. Confirm that external providers understand the academy's expectations on parental transparency, accessibility for SEND and safeguarding, including how any disclosure or concern arising during a session will be reported immediately

9.11. Know the named individuals who will be there, and follow our usual safeguarding procedures for these people

9.12. Conduct a basic online search and address anything that may be of concern to us, or to parents and carers

9.13. Check the agency's protocol for taking pictures or using any personal data they might get from a session

9.14. Remind teachers that they can say "no" or, in extreme cases, stop a session

9.15. Make sure that the teacher is in the room during any sessions with external speakers

9.16. We **won't**, under any circumstances:

- Work with external agencies that take or promote extreme political positions
- Use materials produced by such agencies, even if the material itself is not extreme

10. Role and Responsibilities

10.1. **The Subject Lead, SLT and ELT have the following responsibilities:**

- To lead the review of the PSHE policy:
- To ensure that the resources used are relevant and appropriate to the needs of the students;
- To lead an evaluation of the PSHE policy and curriculum;
- To ensure that staff have the necessary skills, confidence, knowledge and resources in order to deliver effective PSHE;
- To develop and maintain an effective assessment and monitoring system.

10.2. **The head teacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for the overall implementation of this policy and for ensuring that PSHE and RSHE are delivered in accordance with statutory requirements.

10.3. **The board of trustees**

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the strategic oversight of PSHE and RSHE across the Trust. Trustees will:

- approve and review this policy;
- ensure appropriate governance arrangements are in place to support compliance with statutory requirements;
- receive assurance that the policy is being implemented effectively;
- ensure responsibilities for monitoring and quality assurance are appropriately delegated;
- hold school leaders to account through established reporting and governance processes.

10.4. **Teachers have the following responsibilities:**

- To ensure that they, or anyone working in their classroom to deliver/support PSHE, is doing so in line with the school's PSHE policy, curriculum and other relevant school policies;
- Delivering PSHE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to PSHE/RSE
- To contribute to the evaluation of the programme;
- To assess student's progress against the agreed learning outcomes;
- Responding to the needs of individual students
- Monitoring progress
- To communicate with parents when appropriate/necessary.

11. Working with Parents/Carers

11.1. We recognise that parents/carers are key partners in our delivery of a comprehensive PSHE and RSE programme for our students at the school. The PSHE and RSE curriculum we deliver is designed to support the important role of parents in this area.

11.2. Parents/carers have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. The right does not apply to relationships education, health education, or content taught as part of the science curriculum. From three terms before a student turns 16, the student may choose to opt back into sex education and the academy will make arrangements for this.

11.3. Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the Headteacher. Before a decision is made, it is good practice for the Headteacher to discuss this request with parents/carers and, where appropriate, the student, explaining the nature and purpose of the curriculum and any potential impact of withdrawal. In secondary education, a request may be refused in exceptional circumstances, for example, where there are safeguarding concerns or a student has a specific vulnerability. The discussion and decision will be documented.

11.4. Students who are withdrawn from sex education will receive appropriate and purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

11.5. Parents/carers can discuss the RSE programme with school staff or the PSHE Subject Lead and may request to view all RSHE curriculum materials. The academy will respond positively to such requests and will manage access in a way that respects copyright, for example, through a presentation or supervised viewing. Parents/carers do not have a veto over statutory curriculum content.

11.6. Difficult questions: Students may ask questions that go beyond planned content or relate to sex education from which they have been withdrawn. Staff will respond in a way that supports the student, is appropriate to their developmental understanding and safeguarding needs, and avoids leaving them to seek information from unsafe or inappropriate sources. Staff may defer a question, consult with PSHE Subject Lead/DSL, encourage discussions with a parent/carer or trusted adult, and signpost to appropriate support where needed.

12. Training

12.1. Staff are trained on the delivery of PSHE and RSE. It is included in our continuing professional development calendar. The Subject Lead will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE, with agreement from the headteacher.

12.2. Training will include safeguarding and responding to disclosures, the handling of difficult or unexpected questions, and the confident delivery of sensitive content. Staff will understand that sensitive RSHE teaching can increase the likelihood of safeguarding disclosures.

13. Monitoring arrangements

13.1. The delivery of RSE is monitored by the Senior Leadership team alongside PSHE Subject Lead through; planning scrutiny, curriculum quality assurance processes, summative data and evidence recorded on Evidence for Learning.

13.2. Monitoring will consider the quality, sequencing, accessibility and impact of RSHE, including whether students benefit from appropriate adaptations and whether all students can demonstrate relevant knowledge and skills for safety, wellbeing, relationships and preparation for adulthood. This reflects the Ofsted state-funded school inspection toolkit in use from September 2026, which considers inclusive personal development and wellbeing and access to suitable RSHE.

13.3. Students ' development in PSHE and RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems.

13.4. The Senior Leadership Team and Extended Leadership Team will support colleagues in the teaching of PSHE and RSE by giving information about current developments in the subject and providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in school.

13.5. All staff will be responsible for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and indicating areas for further improvement.

13.6. This policy will be reviewed by the PSHE subject lead annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Board of Trustees.

14. Confidentiality and Safeguarding

14.1. Although PSHE and RSE is not about personal disclosures and personal issues, it is possible that a student may disclose personal information or there may be times when a pupil wishes to confide in a member of staff. Staff understand that they cannot promise students absolute confidentiality, and students need to be aware that school staff cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality.

14.2. We recognise that because effective RSE may alert children to what is appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour, there is an increased possibility that a disclosure relating to abuse may be made.

14.3. All Mary Elliot Academy staff will follow the academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. Any concern about a student's welfare, abuse, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour or risk of harm must be acted on immediately and reported in accordance with safeguarding procedures, including to the DSL or deputy as appropriate. Staff must not promise confidentiality and should explain, in an accessible way, how information may need to be shared to keep a student safe. Information will only be shared with those who need to know.

14.4. Students will be taught how and where to report concerns and seek help, including external sources of support where appropriate. Where an external agency delivers a session, safeguarding and confidentiality arrangements will be agreed in advance.

14.5. A disclosure that a student is sexually active or considering sexual activity will be considered in context, including the student's age, capacity/understanding, age of the other person, consent, coercion, exploitation and any other indicators of risk. Staff will seek advice from the DSL and follow safeguarding procedures rather than treating every disclosure as automatically indicating abuse.

14.6. Please refer to Mary Elliot Academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for further information.

15. Ethnic and Cultural Groups

15.1. Our PSHE and RSE work responds to the needs of individual students and takes students faiths, and cultures into consideration. We intend our policy to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic groups and we will respond to parental and/or students queries in order to allay any concerns that may exist about the RSE curriculum.

16. Equal Opportunities

16.1. The academy will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty when teaching RSHE. Teaching will not discriminate against or harass students and will support students to understand equality, respect and the protected characteristics in a way that is accessible and developmentally appropriate.

16.2. Where teaching covers biological sex and gender reassignment, it will present the facts and the law accurately, distinguish these from areas of significant debate, avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes, and ensure that all students are treated with respect and dignity.

16.3. Every effort is made to ensure that self-esteem and respect are fostered in staff, students and their families.

17. Changes

Description	Date	Page	Section
Amended Policy and Curriculum Aims	September 2025	3	1
Updated Curriculum Intent	September 2025	5	5
Updated – Delivery of PSHE/RSE	September 2025	5	6
Updated to revised DfE RSHE statutory guidance, KCSIE 2026 and Ofsted inspection toolkit	September 2026	1 3 4 5 6 7 9 11 12 13	Title 2.3 2.4 2.5 3.1 (c) 5.2 6.2 6.5 6.8 7.3 7.4 9.10 11.2 11.3 11.4 11.5 11.6 12.2 13.2 14.3 14.4 14.5 16.1

			16.2