

Relationships and Health Education Policy

May 2023

Hipsburn Primary School



Our School Vision:

“The most valuable gift we can give a learner is to enable them to think for themselves, to care for others and thereby acquire a sense of self-worth and confidence which can be used to benefit both society and the individual.”

Approved by: Mr. Moloney **Date:** 28/4/20

Last reviewed on: May 2023

Next review due by: May 2024

Contents

1. Aims.....	3
2. Statutory requirements	3
3. Policy development.....	3
4. Definition.....	4
5. Curriculum	6
6. Delivery of Relationships and Health Education	6
7. Roles and responsibilities	9
8. Parents' right to withdraw	10
9. Training.....	11
10. Monitoring arrangements.....	12
Appendix 1: By the end of primary school pupils should know	14
Appendix 2: Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within Relationship and Health Education.....	17

1. Aims

The aims of relationships and health education at our school are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- Prepare pupils for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies

2. Statutory requirements

As a maintained primary school, we must provide relationships education to all pupils as per section 34 of the [Children and Social work act 2017](#).

However, we are not required to provide sex education but we do need to teach the elements of sex education contained in the science curriculum. See the National Curriculum for further information.

In teaching Relationship and Health Education, we must have regard to [guidance](#) issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the [Education Act 1996](#).

At Hipsburn Primary School we teach Relationship and Health Education as set out in this policy.

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 staff or working group 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 policy and make recommendations
3. Parent / stakeholder have been sent a copy and have been invited to share views / comments about the policy
4. Discussions took place between the headteacher and the governor – Catherine Whyte who is responsible for this area of the curriculum.
5. Ratification – once amendments were made, the policy was shared with governors and ratified.

4. Definition

The Department for Education defines relationship education as, teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships and relationships with other peers and adults.

However, we believe comprehensive relationship education is designed to help children to develop the skills to recognise and manage healthy relationships both online and in the real world. It is designed to build self-esteem and to explore personal identity.

It is about helping children understand and make sense of the world they are growing up in; to recognise the differences and similarities between their peers and their families; to understand the fact every human being is unique and has the right to be respected. There are many different family structures and all children have the right to feel safe.

Comprehensive relationship education has been shown to help keep children safe by allowing them to understand appropriate and inappropriate touching, to realise that their body is fantastic and belongs to them. It is about building the foundations of an understanding of consent and personal boundaries; in that no one has the right to touch you in a way you don't like but also the difference between public and private behaviours.

It is important for children to know the names and functions of their body and to be reassured it is natural to be curious about them. Indeed, by teaching children the correct terms for their private parts, children are proven to be safer from abuse.

In addition, we believe comprehensive relationship education helps children to develop their vocabulary and emotional literacy to enable them to talk about and manage their feelings. It

helps children build their own support networks and the confidence to ask for help when they feel unsafe. This is a required element of the Health Education Guidance.

Defining Relationships and Health Education at Primary School:

Although The Relationships Education, Relationship & Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made relationship education compulsory in all primary schools, sex education is currently not compulsory. However, the Department for Education continues to recommend that all primary schools should have a sex education programme tailored to the age and maturity of the pupils.

As set out in the guidance it is up to individual schools to determine whether they need to cover any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of their pupils. We, like many other schools, already choose to teach some aspects of sex education and will continue to do so.

We recognise that some parents may be uncomfortable with the thought of their children receiving sex education in primary school. Equally, we recognise it is completely natural for children to have questions about sex, their bodies and to be curious about where they came from. In the age of information where children in primary school have access to the internet through mobile technology we believe it is better that children receive age appropriate answers from us than it being left to their peers or the internet.

In our school sex education is an opportunity to answer children's questions about where they came from, an opportunity to explore their own stories and to be clear about how a baby is conceived and formed in the human life cycle, as set out in the National Curriculum's programmes of study for science. Furthermore, it should ensure that all children are prepared for both the physical and emotional changes of puberty including menstruation. Children need to understand how both girls' and boys' bodies function and change as they grow into adults.

We believe that sex education should allow children a safe space to ask the questions they may have without shame or judgement. Evidence states that a graduated age-appropriate curriculum is the best way of preventing the topics of sex, reproduction and private body parts of becoming taboo and children from becoming embarrassed by the topic.

We believe it is the duty of our school to give our young people the learning that will enable them to live safe, fulfilled and healthy lives. This includes ensuring that they have the skills to keep themselves safe from harm and develop positive and healthy relationships, free from exploitation, pressure or abuse.

In teaching Relationships Education, we must have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996

5. Curriculum

Our curriculum is set out as per the RSE coverage in PSHE units but we may need to adapt it as and when necessary.

We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, taking into account the age, needs and feelings of pupils. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so they are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

6. Delivery of Relationships and Health Education

Relationships Education is taught within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Biological aspects of Relationship and Health Education are taught within the science curriculum, and other aspects are included in religious education (RE). In addition to this, opportunities to develop the principles of Relationship Education are taken whenever they arise, for example in the playground and through the values we promote in school.

Pupils receive stand-alone sex education sessions in Year 5 and Year 6, delivered by the class teacher which focus on:

1. Preparing boys and girls for the changes that adolescence brings
2. Teaching the importance of healthy hygiene as their bodies change

Relationship education focuses on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships including:

- Families and people who care for me
- Caring friendships
- Respectful relationships
- Online relationships
- Being safe

These areas of learning 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 sensitivity that some children may have a different structure of support around them (e.g. Looked after children or young carers. As a school we do not use Relationships Education as a means of promoting any form of sexual orientation.

Health education gives children the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, to recognise issues in themselves and others and seek support if issues arise.

Answering Children's Questions:

We are aware that children are likely to have many questions that may occur at any time. Children tend to ask whatever is on their mind. We see this as a positive point and a sign that we have created a safe environment where children feel empowered to feed their natural curiosity and learn about themselves, their bodies and the world around them. However, we acknowledge that some parents may feel uncomfortable about how particular questions may be dealt with in class.

We believe children are better off receiving honest, open answers from safe adults in their lives, rather than it being left to the internet or older children with a smart phone. In the age of information, where children in primary have access to tablets, smart phones and the internet (often unsupervised) it is essential that we help children to recognise they are able to ask questions without judgement rather than searching for answers on the internet.

By tackling the topic in a matter of fact manner, without embarrassment means that we take the mystic allure out of the topic, making sex no longer the secret taboo. However uncomfortable a proposition that maybe it is far better than the alternative. For children these questions are not rude, they are simply signs of a healthy and natural curiosity. We can stop the topic becoming taboo and embarrassing and removing the stigma before it has had chance to form.

We believe that if children ask a question they deserve an answer. If ignored they merely build unnecessary barriers, making children think they have done something wrong; they are unlikely to ask again, and are instead left to seek their answers from less reliable or child friendly sources, due to shame. However uncomfortable the question may be, the thought is already in their head. It is much better we, as safe adults, take responsibility and tackle the question safely and age appropriately.

Staff at Hipsburn will deal with children's questions age appropriately. This will be done consistently across the school as follows:

- Children will be praised for asking questions. We wish to encourage children to seek answers from safe adults.
- If a question is relevant to the whole class, we will answer it to the whole group.
- However, as with any other subject, there may occasionally be the need to differentiate depending on children's knowledge and experience. Some children may need additional information or support compared to others.
- If a child asks a question that is not necessarily suitable for the entire class, we will respond, by saying: "that is fantastic question, hold that thought, I am going to set everyone some work and I will come and talk to you and answer your question in a minute when everyone else is working."
- If the member of staff doesn't have an answer or doesn't know, they will say so. There is no shame in not knowing the answer but the member of staff should try to help the child to find the answer later.
- If the member of staff is not sure how best to answer a particularly tricky question, our suggested response is: "That is a brilliant question, I would like to give you an equally brilliant answer, so let me have a think about it and once I know the best way to explain it clearly I will come back to you". This will allow teaching staff time to think, seek help, advice or support from colleagues, or to speak to senior management.
- If a child asks a question we know parents may be uncomfortable with, staff may choose to delay answering the question (as above) until they have spoken to the parent/carer if possible to talk through their response.
- Teachers will answer questions openly, honestly, scientifically and factually without relying on their own personal beliefs. Teachers will not be expected to answer personal questions about themselves or to ask direct personal questions of their students that could make either party vulnerable.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The governing body

The governing board will approve the Relationship and Health Education policy, and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.

7.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that Relationships and Health Education is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory/non-science components. (see section 8).

7.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering Relationships Education in a sensitive and age appropriate way
- Modelling positive attitudes to Relationships Education
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory components

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching Relationships Education. Staff who have concerns about teaching Relationships Education are encouraged to discuss this with the headteacher.

7.4 Pupils

Pupils are expected to engage fully in Relationships and Health Education and, when discussing issues related to Relationship and Health Education, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

7.5 Parents

We believe that the primary role in children's Relationship Education lies with parents and carers. We wish to build a positive and supportive relationship with the parents of children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and collaboration.

In promoting this objective, we:

1. Inform parents about the school's Relationship and Health Education policy and practice
2. Answer any questions that parents may have about the Relationship and Health Education of their child
3. Take seriously any issues that parents raise with teachers or governors about this policy or the arrangements for Relationships and Health Education in the school.

8. Parents' right to withdraw

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from Relationships Education. Parents do have the right to withdraw their child from the non-statutory / non-science components of sex education (Year 5 onwards). The science curriculum also includes content on human development, including reproduction, which there is no right to withdraw from.

If parents do decide to withdraw their child, they should inform the head who will find other provision for the child to engage in during the lesson. Currently, head teachers must comply with requests to withdraw from any non-statutory lessons in the programme.

Alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education.

9. Policy on Menstruation:

We recognise that the onset of menstruation can be a confusing or distressing time for children if they are not prepared. As a school we acknowledge we have a responsibility to prepare children for menstruation and make adequate and sensitive arrangements to help children manage their period. Especially children whose family may not be able to afford or will not provide sanitary products.

We recognise that period poverty exists in the UK and that some children are forced to avoid attending school if they are on their period, when they are unable to manage it sensitively. We do not want that to be the case in our school and will make every reasonable effort to support children to access their education and enjoy school.

Puberty is occurring earlier than ever before, and it is now not uncommon for children to start their periods whilst in primary school even in year 4. For this reason, we deliver puberty lessons to all children in year 5 and 6.

As part of these lessons girls will be told about menstruation and there will be discussion of what periods are, explanation of other symptoms associated with periods, how they can be managed hygienically and sensitively.

Menstruation is a healthy biological function for 50% of our school. It should not be something that a person is made to feel embarrassed, shameful or be teased about. As a school we need to treat each other with respect and empathy and this includes changes that take place during puberty such as menstruation.

During lessons where puberty and menstruation are discussed, we will take the opportunity to highlight the location of sanitary bins available in school, and how these are to be used.

When school trips or residential visits are arranged for years 5 and 6 (for example Dukeshouse Wood and London) provisions to deal with a child's period need to be considered and added to the risk assessment and planned for.

10. Training

Staff have access to support from Northumberland Local Authority and as a school we are members of the PSHE Association. Staff will be permitted to attend training provided by the Local Authority. It is included in our continuing professional development calendar.

The headteacher will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching Relationship and Health Education.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The delivery of Relationships and Health Education is monitored by the headteacher through:

Curriculum Overviews (shared on the website), monitoring arrangements, such as planning scrutinies, learning walks, etc.

Pupils' development in Relationship and Health Education is monitored by class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems.

This policy will be reviewed by the headteacher on an annual basis. At every review, the policy will be approved by the strategic subcommittee of the governing body.

12. Safeguarding Children

When teaching any sensitive topic, such as Relationships and Health Education which deals with family life, safe and appropriate touching, personal body parts and healthy relationships, we recognise the potential to uncover incidents of abuse through children's disclosures.

All members of staff who deliver any of our Relationships and Health Education Programme have statutory training around safeguarding children and are all aware of our school's safeguarding policy and procedures in the case of a disclosure or suspicion of a safeguarding concern.

It is our practice to review safeguarding procedures in team meetings before either programmes are delivered. Furthermore, if relevant, there may be conversations around protecting and supporting children for whom some of this work may make them vulnerable due to previous safeguarding concerns, past child protection investigations, ongoing concerns or changes in family or living situations if these may be triggered by scenarios or topics in their planned lessons.

Our school is able to access specialist support if we have any concerns around delivering the All About Me programme to vulnerable children.

We recognise that for children who may be vulnerable due to past or present abuse or changes in family situations, this type of work, whilst it may be sensitive, may need to be adapted and / or additional support is offered. It is also a protective factor in preventing further abuse, to help them make sense of their experiences and essential to help them develop skills and resilience to keep them safe in future.

Appendix 1: By the end of primary school pupils should know

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Families and people who care about me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • 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 represents 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Respectful relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Online relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Being safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 confidence needed to do so• Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources

Appendix 2: Parent form: withdrawal from sex education (Year 5 and Year 6)

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS			
Name of child		Class	
Name of parent		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	