Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Alde Valley Academy • Secondary education • Years 7 to 11

This policy explains what pupils learn about relationships, sex and health, how we teach it, how parents and carers can see teaching materials, and how requests for withdrawal from sex education are considered. It supports our ASPIRE values: Aspire and Achieve, Lead with Kindness and Stronger Together.

Policy record	Details
Version	October 2026 revision for consultation and approval
Status	Draft pending school confirmation, parent consultation and formal approval
Policy owners	Miss Kerry Whatling (PSHE Lead) Ms Libby Isaac (SLT link)
Prepared on	19 October 2026
Approved by and date	

Purpose and aims

We equip pupils to form respectful, safe and fulfilling relationships; understand their bodies and health; make informed decisions; recognise harm; and seek help. Teaching builds confidence, empathy and practical communication skills. It is factual, age and stage appropriate and does not encourage early sexual activity. Pupils learn that abuse is never the victim's fault.

1 Statutory framework and scope

As a secondary academy in England, we must provide relationships and sex education and health education. We have regard to the revised Department for Education statutory guidance published in July 2025 and effective from 1 September 2026. Where the school departs from a "should" or "should not" provision, leaders must be able to explain good reasons.

The framework includes sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017; the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019; and the statutory guidance issued under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 and section 403 of the Education Act 1996. We comply with the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, and applicable duties on political impartiality.

We apply the current Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, the SEND Code of Practice and our trust and school safeguarding procedures. This policy should be read with the child protection, behaviour and anti-bullying, online safety, SEND and accessibility, equality, visiting speaker and complaints policies.

Official references

DfE Relationships and sex education and health education — revised guidance and full secondary outcomes, printed pages 13 to 19 and 25 to 31:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education

DfE academy website publication guidance — Curriculum section:
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online

Current safeguarding guidance:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

2 Content and delivery

RSE forms part of our planned PSHE and ASPIRE personal development curriculum, supported by science, computing, PE and other subjects. Planned PSHE lessons provide the core teaching; assemblies, enrichment and visitors reinforce learning. They do not replace a sequenced programme.

Relationships education covers families, friendships, respectful and romantic relationships, boundaries, equality, consent, online conduct and protection from abuse. Safeguarding teaching may address sexual violence without describing sexual activity. Sex education includes teaching about sexual activity, contraception, safer sex, sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy choices. Health education includes puberty, reproductive health, physical and mental wellbeing and accessing healthcare. Relevant science content is identified separately in planning.

The PSHE Lead will maintain a lesson-level map of all statutory outcomes, the year and term taught, teaching resources, responsible teacher and assessment. Plans must identify sex education content in advance so parents can understand the scope of withdrawal. Appendix 2 retains the existing unit structure and proposes updated coverage; leaders must confirm it against the timetable before adoption.

3 Teaching and inclusion

A safe learning environment

Teachers establish ground rules, including respectful language, no personal questions and no expectation to disclose personal experiences. Pupils can ask questions anonymously and request a private conversation. Fictional scenarios and distancing techniques support discussion. Pupils may pass on a personal contribution while continuing to access the learning. Staff explain confidentiality limits and where help is available.

Teaching uses accurate terminology, reliable evidence and discussion that develops practical skills. It challenges misinformation without exposing pupils to explicit imagery, frightening demonstrations or named harmful influencers. No pornographic material is shown. Boys and girls learn about each other's experiences, including menstruation and menopause. Any separate group teaching must address an identified need and preserve equal access to content.

SEND and individual needs

The PSHE Lead works with the SENCO, pastoral staff and families to make learning accessible. Reasonable adjustments may include accessible language, visual supports, repetition, pre-teaching, additional processing time, adapted scenarios or supported small groups. Support reflects pupils' developmental understanding without assuming that disability removes their need for RSE. Staff recognise heightened vulnerability to exploitation, abuse and difficulties communicating concerns.

Teaching is sensitive to pupils affected by bereavement, separation, trauma, abuse, care experience or caring responsibilities. Staff plan support with the safeguarding team without asking pupils to explain personal circumstances to classmates. Pupils who miss teaching are offered appropriate catch-up learning.

Equality and respectful discussion

We represent different family structures positively, including single parent, same-sex parent, adoptive, foster, kinship and grandparent families. Healthy same-sex relationships and relevant sexual health information are integrated throughout the programme. We challenge sexism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, racism and disability-related prejudice, while avoiding stereotypes that portray boys as inevitable perpetrators or girls as inevitable victims.

Pupils learn the facts and law about biological sex and gender reassignment, including the different legal protections involved, and that everyone must be treated with dignity. Contested views are distinguished from established facts and law. We do not teach as fact that everyone has a gender identity or suggest that social transition is a simple solution to distress. Resources must not reinforce stereotypes, oversimplify this topic or encourage pupils to question their gender. Parents are consulted in advance on external resources on this topic and can view them on request.

Religious and non-religious beliefs are treated respectfully. Staff distinguish faith perspectives from facts and law. Pupils may express different views respectfully, within the law, without harassment or discrimination. Teaching observes applicable political impartiality requirements.

4 Safeguarding and sensitive questions

Any pupil may speak to their teacher, tutor, Head of Year, pastoral team or designated safeguarding lead or deputy. Staff ensure pupils know how to contact these adults and how to seek external support if they do not feel comfortable speaking to school staff. The current safeguarding contacts are published through the school's safeguarding information.

Staff act immediately on welfare concerns under the child protection policy and current safeguarding guidance. They listen, reassure, avoid investigating or asking leading questions, record the pupil's words accurately and report promptly to the designated safeguarding lead or deputy. Staff never promise secrecy and share information only with those who need it. Immediate danger requires emergency action. Statutory reporting duties, including the teacher's personal duty concerning known FGM in an under-18, must be followed alongside school procedures.

Sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour are never dismissed as banter or an inevitable part of growing up. Pupils learn that victims are never to blame and will be supported. Teaching recognises that children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse can be victims in their own right. The safeguarding team coordinates support for pupils affected by harm and those whose behaviour causes concern.

Questions beyond the planned lesson

Teachers answer factual questions sensitively within pupils' age and stage of development. They may defer a question, check an accurate source or arrange a private response with the PSHE Lead or safeguarding team. They do not invite personal sexual disclosures or answer personal questions about themselves. A pupil is never shamed for asking a question.

Where a question concerns sex education from which a pupil has been withdrawn, staff will not use the question to deliver the withdrawn lesson. They will support the pupil, clarify the concern privately, consider referral to a parent or trusted adult where safe, and signpost reliable services. Safeguarding concerns always receive an appropriate response; withdrawal does not prevent safeguarding action or access to health advice.

Mental health and other sensitive health content

Teaching promotes coping strategies, connection, help-seeking and the distinction between ordinary difficult feelings and mental ill health. Before directly teaching suicide prevention, the school will consult mental health professionals and ensure staff receive high-quality, evidence-based training. Timing takes account of pupils' age, maturity, experiences and parents' views.

If teaching about self-harm or eating disorders, staff use specialist advice and reliable resources. Lessons must not include methods, instructions, graphic or emotive content, or language that romanticises harm or eating disorders. Individual concerns are managed through safeguarding procedures and appropriate professional support.

5 Parents and carers

We proactively engage parents and carers when developing and reviewing this policy. Consultation includes access to the draft, a representative sample of teaching materials and an opportunity to raise questions and provide feedback. Leaders record how views have informed the final policy. Consultation informs provision but does not give a veto over statutory content.

The approved policy is published on the school website. A free copy is available to anyone who requests one. The website will provide a current curriculum overview for each year group, explain how to find out more and identify how to contact the PSHE Lead through the school office. Accessible formats and support to understand the information can be requested.

Access to all teaching materials

Parents and carers can ask the school office to refer a request to the PSHE Lead to view any RSHE teaching materials, including slides, worksheets, videos and external provider materials. We respond positively and arrange a suitable viewing route, such as a secure portal, presentation or meeting. If those routes are not accessible, copies can be provided for home viewing with appropriate copyright conditions.

Copyright affects the way resources are shared, not whether parents may see them. We acknowledge authorship and ask parents not to copy or distribute protected content except as authorised by copyright law. We do not accept provider terms that prevent parental access to teaching content. Parents are informed in advance of sex education content and of material changes from this published policy; relevant resources remain available on request.

6 Requests for withdrawal

Parents and carers may request withdrawal from some or all of the sex education delivered within RSE. There is no right to withdraw from relationships education, health education or topics taught as part of the science curriculum, including puberty or sexual reproduction. Safeguarding topics do not become withdrawable simply because they refer to sexual harm.

Requests should be addressed to the headteacher through the school office. Appendix 3 can be used, but staff will help parents make a request if the form is a barrier. The headteacher discusses the request, the intended content, the benefits of participation and possible effects of withdrawal with the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil. In secondary education a request will normally be granted; refusal is possible only in exceptional circumstances, for example a safeguarding concern or specific vulnerability. Reasons and agreed arrangements are recorded and communicated.

From three terms before a pupil turns 16, the pupil can choose to opt back into sex education despite a parental request for withdrawal. The school explains this option and arranges teaching during one of those terms. It does not impose an automatic blanket end to withdrawal regardless of the pupil’s wishes.

Withdrawn pupils receive appropriate, purposeful and supervised education. The school records the exact content affected, duration, review and any catch-up arrangements, and maintains privacy. Concerns about a decision may be raised under the school or trust complaints procedure.

7 Resources and external providers

The school remains responsible for all teaching, including sessions delivered by visitors. The PSHE Lead checks the provider's credentials, intended outcomes, full lesson plan and every resource in advance for accuracy, age and stage suitability, accessibility, balance and alignment with this policy. External provision must complement the planned sequence and allow parental access to materials.

Visitors follow school safeguarding and visitor procedures. Before a session, staff agree how questions, disclosures, photography, personal data and confidentiality will be managed. A teacher remains present, monitors delivery and intervenes or stops the session if required. Providers must not promote partisan political views, discrimination or harmful products. No pupil data or images may be collected outside authorised school arrangements.

8 Responsibilities and staff training

The academy trust retains governance responsibility. The body authorised by the trust's scheme of delegation approves the policy, checks consultation and monitors implementation, accessibility, curriculum coverage and parental information. The headteacher ensures consistent delivery, staff capacity, resources, publication, safeguarding arrangements and the handling of withdrawal requests. The PSHE Lead coordinates sequencing, resource checks, parental communication, assessment and quality assurance. The senior leader responsible for personal development oversees improvement. The designated safeguarding lead advises on local risks and disclosures; the SENCO supports accessibility.

Teachers deliver approved content sensitively, assess understanding, correct misconceptions, follow withdrawal arrangements and report concerns. Staff do not have a general right to opt out of teaching RSE; concerns about confidence or suitability should be discussed with the headteacher. Pupils are expected to treat others respectfully and are supported to ask questions and seek help.

Staff receive induction and continuing development in the curriculum, inclusive teaching, handling sensitive questions, disclosures and safeguarding. Specialist training or advice is obtained before teaching content requiring additional expertise. The PSHE Lead reviews training needs through quality assurance.

9 Monitoring and review

The PSHE Lead and senior leader evaluate teaching through curriculum and resource reviews, lesson visits, work scrutiny, low-stakes assessment and pupil feedback. Pupils' private experiences, sexual behaviour or beliefs are not assessed. Monitoring checks knowledge, application, misconceptions and the ability to seek support, including for pupils with SEND and those who have missed lessons.

Leaders report strengths, gaps and actions to the responsible governance body. Review takes place annually and sooner where guidance, safeguarding information or pupil needs require it. Significant revisions involve proactive parent consultation. Approval and review dates, the curriculum overview and provider information are kept current on the website.

Appendix 1 Secondary statutory coverage

This is a school summary, not a replacement for the full DfE outcomes. The PSHE Lead must map every outcome in the guidance to lesson plans and assessment. R means relationships education, S means sex education and H means health education. Mixed topics must be classified at lesson level for withdrawal purposes.

Families and respectful relationships R

Different committed relationships; marriage and civil partnership and their legal protections; the absence of "common-law marriage"; the illegality of forced marriage and marriage below 18 in England and Wales; family change, separation and bereavement; parenting and early brain development; unsafe relationships and support. Positive relationships include self-respect, independence, trust, kindness, privacy, boundaries, conflict resolution and ending relationships respectfully.

Teach equality and protected characteristics, prejudice and stereotypes, bullying and bystander reporting, misogyny, power imbalances, and respectful communication. Pupils consider how pornography, influencers and incel subcultures can distort relationship expectations. Ethical behaviour requires care and attention to vulnerability and power as well as consent.

Online safety and awareness R with some S content

Rights and responsibilities online; public and private spaces; personal data, privacy and location settings; fake profiles, idealised lives and AI-generated content; scams and sextortion; malicious deepfakes; image sharing and the law, including under-18 and AI-generated sexual images; routes to report and remove harmful content. Pupils learn that they can ask for help without being blamed when an image of them has been shared.

Teach harmful content, pornography and distorted expectations, online conflict, technology-enabled stalking and coercion, data collection and targeted advertising. AI chatbots may create false intimacy or provide harmful advice. Pupils practise evaluating information, identifying manipulation and seeking support.

Being safe R with some S content

Consent and boundaries, including in early relationships; resisting pressure without pressuring others; trustworthy information and personal safety in public spaces. Cover sexual harassment and violence, rape and assault, harmful sexual behaviour, domestic and economic abuse, coercive control, stalking, grooming, sexual, criminal and financial exploitation, forced marriage and support routes.

Teach the harms and law concerning FGM, virginity testing and hymenoplasty, and the danger of strangulation and suffocation, including that pressure to the neck can cause serious injury or death even without visible injury. Address harmful behaviours portrayed in pornography without demonstrating them. Pupils learn how to report harm, obtain medical help and seek support for their own concerning behaviour.

Intimate and sexual relationships S with R and H links

Readiness and the age of consent; the choice to delay sex or have intimacy without sex; positive consensual relationships; consent, capacity and withdrawal of consent; physical and emotional consequences; harmful sexual behaviour; the full range of contraception and effectiveness. Cover impartial, medically and legally accurate pregnancy choices, including parenting, adoption and abortion; STIs including HIV, transmission, prevention, testing, treatment and stigma; PrEP and PEP and access to them; alcohol and drug-related risk; confidential services and countering misinformation.

Appendix 1 Health and wellbeing coverage

Mental wellbeing and wellbeing online H

Accurate emotional vocabulary; normal difficult feelings and loneliness; connection, kindness, community participation, exercise, sleep and time outdoors; coping strategies and overcoming barriers to activities. Teach common mental health conditions without labelling ordinary feelings as illness, and the links between substance use and mental health. Explain gambling harms and help-seeking.

Cover screen time, body comparison, curated online identities, over-reliance on online relationships, bullying, harassment, gambling-like gaming content and debt, targeted advertising, misinformation and conspiracy theories. Address illegal online drug and weapon supply, harmful content promoting violence, self-harm or suicide, safe reporting and support. Direct suicide prevention and any eating disorder or self-harm teaching follow section 4 safeguards.

Physical health and healthy eating H

Healthy activity and weight, cardiovascular health and serious health conditions; exercise as a support for wellbeing; blood, organ and stem cell donation. Balanced diet, dental health, diet-related health risks and the effects of alcohol on diet and weight are taught sensitively, avoiding stigma.

Drugs alcohol tobacco and vaping H

Illegal drugs and the law; potent synthetic substances, contaminated drugs, illicit vapes and counterfeit medicines; misuse of prescription and non-prescription medicines. Teach alcohol-related physical and psychological risks, dependency, adult low-risk drinking guidance, legal sale ages, spiking and poisoning risks. Cover tobacco harms, quitting support, vaping harms for young people and its distinct role in helping adult smokers quit.

Health protection and healthcare H

Hygiene, infection, antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance; dental care; self-care and pharmacists; self-examination and screening; vaccination and immunisation aligned with offers to pupils; sleep and screen-free bedtime routines. Cover pre-conception and pregnancy health, folic acid, pelvic floor health, miscarriage and pregnancy loss and support. Teach how to use GPs, pharmacies, urgent and emergency services, sexual health services and local support, including medical consent, Gillick competence and capacity.

Personal safety and first aid H

Road, rail, level crossing and water safety, including the water safety code; independence in unfamiliar social and work settings; peer pressure and responsible decision-making. Teach grooming and exploitation risks, conflict management, trusted adults, and the law relating to knives and violence, without fear-based teaching or suggesting weapon carrying is normal. Include common injuries, CPR and defibrillators, with practical age-appropriate teaching.

Developing bodies H and science

Male and female puberty, adolescent brain development and physical and emotional change. Menstrual and gynaecological health includes period variation, premenstrual syndrome, heavy bleeding, endometriosis and PCOS and when to seek healthcare. Cover reproductive health, fertility, lifestyle influences and menopause. All pupils learn this content; pupils needing menstrual products or support can ask a trusted member of staff privately.

Appendix 2 Curriculum sequence

Proposed updated coverage within the unit structure supplied by the school. Leaders must confirm lesson allocations and dates before approval. R, S and H are explained in Appendix 1. Safety knowledge is introduced early and revisited; it must not be delayed until Year 11 where pupils need it sooner. Careers and citizenship remain part of wider PSHE but do not replace statutory RSHE.

Year 7

When	Unit	Type	Coverage
Autumn 1	Transition and Belonging	R H	Friendships, kindness, boundaries, families, trusted adults, bullying and reporting.
Autumn 2	Health and Puberty	H	Puberty, menstruation, hygiene, sleep, food, activity and emotional change.
Spring 1	Healthy Relationships	R	Respect, communication, consent to everyday contact, pressure, unsafe relationships and support.
Spring 2	Identity and Diversity	R	Equality, family diversity, stereotypes, respect and prejudice.
Summer 1	Safety and Risk	R H	Privacy, image-sharing risks, grooming, road, rail and water safety, first aid foundations.
Summer 2	Careers and Aspirations	H links	Strengths, belonging, community contribution and wellbeing.

Year 8

When	Unit	Type	Coverage
Autumn 1	Mental Health and Wellbeing	H	Emotions, loneliness, coping, anxiety, connection and seeking support.
Autumn 2	Online Safety and Digital Life	R H	Fake profiles, privacy, digital pressure, AI awareness, harmful content and reporting.
Spring 1	Relationships and Consent	R	Early romantic relationships, boundaries, power, harassment, pressure and ending relationships.
Spring 2	Substance Use and Risk	H	Alcohol, smoking, vaping, medicines, peer pressure and help.
Summer 1	Democracy and Citizenship	R links	Rights, responsibilities, equality, prejudice and respectful disagreement.
Summer 2	Careers and Employability	H links	Confidence, safe choices, trusted adults and wider participation.

Appendix 2 Key Stage 4 and Year 9

Year 9

When	Unit	Type	Coverage
Autumn 1	Media Identity and Influence	R H	Misogyny, influencers, incel narratives, stereotypes, pornography harms and critical thinking.
Autumn 2	Drugs Crime and Exploitation	R H	County lines, sexual and criminal grooming, financial exploitation, knives and support.
Spring 1	RSE and Sexual Health	R S H	Consent and readiness, contraception, STIs and HIV, PrEP and PEP, pregnancy choices and services.
Spring 2	Equality and Society	R	Protected characteristics, biological sex and gender reassignment, rights and respectful relationships.
Summer 1	Mental Health and Resilience	H	Wellbeing, coping, recognising mental ill health and early support.
Summer 2	GCSE Pathways and Futures	H links	Decision-making, aspirations and wellbeing during change.

Year 10

When	Unit	Type	Coverage
Autumn	Healthy Relationships and Abuse Prevention	R	Coercive control, domestic and economic abuse, stalking, sexual violence and public safety.
Spring	Sexual Health and Mental Wellbeing	R S H	Contraception, STIs and services revisited; pregnancy choices; gambling and mental health; any direct suicide prevention only with safeguards.
Summer	Financial Wellbeing and Employability	R H links	Scams, exploitation, gambling debt, work experience safety and managing pressure.

Year 11

When	Unit	Type	Coverage
Autumn 1	Relationships and the Law	R S	Consent, marriage and civil partnership, cohabitation, rights and abuse revisited.
Autumn 2	Harmful Practices	R	FGM, forced marriage, honour-based abuse, virginity testing, hymenoplasty, strangulation and support.
Spring 1	Online Harms and AI	R H	Deepfakes, intimate images, sextortion, coercion, scams, chatbots and reporting.
Spring 2	Adult Health and Wellbeing	H	Healthcare, medical consent, fertility, menopause, pregnancy health and loss, screening and donation.
Summer 1	Independent Living	H	Food, sleep, substances, safe socialising, travel, first aid, CPR and defibrillators.
Summer 2	Post 16 Transition	R H	Support networks, healthy relationships, services and wellbeing before leaving school.

Appendix 3 Withdrawal request form

Use this form to request withdrawal from some or all of sex education within RSE. Return it to the headteacher through the school office. The form starts a discussion; it does not automatically determine the outcome. Relationships education, health education and science content cannot be withdrawn from. See section 6 for the pupil's right to opt back in from three terms before turning 16.

Pupil name and tutor group

_____

Parent or carer name

_____

Contact details

_____

Date of request

_____

Sex education lessons or content covered by this request

_____

Reason for the request and any support or information you would find helpful

_____

_____

Parent or carer signature _____ Date _____

School record

Meeting date and participants

_____

Pupil's views where appropriate and date from which the pupil can opt back in

_____

Decision and reasons including any exceptional circumstances

_____

Specific lessons affected and purposeful supervised alternative education

_____

Support catch up arrangements and review date

_____

Date decision communicated and responsible member of staff

_____

Headteacher signature _____ Date _____

Store securely in the pupil's educational record in line with the school's data protection and retention arrangements. Provide the parent or carer with the written decision and agreed arrangements.