

Relationships, Sex and Health and Education (RSHE) Policy (Secondary School Version)

Connaught Special School

Introduction

Relationships Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is a statutory part of the secondary school curriculum and reflects our commitment to delivering high-quality learning opportunities that support students' wellbeing and helps to keep them safe. In secondary education, RSHE builds on the statutory learning delivered in primary schools and responds to the increasingly complex social, emotional and physical experiences of adolescence. This includes learning about: relationships and intimacy; consent and the law; exploitation and abuse; online behaviour; mental wellbeing; substance use; and physical health; alongside the development of the knowledge, language and skills needed to manage risk, seek help and make informed decisions.

This policy reflects the [RSE and Health Education Statutory Guidance \(2025\)](#) and has been shaped through consultation with stakeholders to ensure the curriculum is relevant, inclusive and responsive to the needs of our community

Aims

We aim to deliver high-quality Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) in order to support the personal development, wellbeing and future success of all students.

Our RSHE provision aims to:

- provide high-quality, age-appropriate RSHE that meets statutory requirements;
- promote respect for the law and for the diverse communities that make up our community, fostering understanding, inclusion and mutual respect;
- help students to develop a secure understanding of themselves, their relationships and the world in which they live;
- help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy and to cultivate positive characteristics such as kindness and integrity;
- equip students with the knowledge, skills and language they need to make informed, responsible and healthy choices;
- support students to stay safe, including understanding how to recognise risk, seek help and protect their physical and emotional wellbeing;
- prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and challenges of adulthood, in a world that is complex and sometimes difficult to navigate; and
- establish RSHE as a central and valued part of the curriculum, contributing to students' lifelong learning and personal development and wellbeing.

RSHE Curriculum

By law, RSHE must be taught during secondary education in accordance with the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 and the [RSE and Health Education Statutory Guidance \(2025\)](#). This makes clear that RSHE should be delivered through a whole-school approach, should be responsive to local safeguarding priorities, and should be taught by staff who are appropriately trained and supported. Teaching should be factual, age-appropriate and sensitive, and should provide students with opportunities to ask questions in a safe environment. We have developed the RSHE curriculum taking into account the age, developmental stage, needs and feelings of our pupils. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so that pupils are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

RSHE at Connaught Special School is delivered through a planned programme of learning, carefully mapped to ensure that statutory content is fully covered, learning is coherently sequenced and safeguarding messages are reinforced consistently. The curriculum for RSHE is based on PSHE Association planning framework for SEND (Appendix 1) and sets out in which year group each aspect of the curriculum will be taught.

We amend our curriculum content to respond to the needs and context of our pupils, to discuss issues affecting them in an age-appropriate manner. We will inform parents and carers of any deviation from our published policy in advance, and share any relevant materials on request. Learning is personalised for the needs of our young people through social stories, visuals and in-task schedules.

A summary of the different elements of RSHE is provided below.

1. Relationships Education

Relationships Education builds on statutory learning in primary school and supports students to deepen their understanding of a wide range of relationships, including friendships, family relationships, peer relationships and intimate relationships. Teaching focuses on the characteristics of nurturing, healthy, respectful and unsafe relationships, enabling students to recognise positive behaviours such as trust, mutual respect, kindness, honesty and support, as well as behaviours that may indicate concern or abuse.

Students are taught the knowledge and skills needed to form and maintain respectful relationships. This includes developing effective communication skills, understanding how to negotiate boundaries, managing conflict constructively, and recognising the influence of peer pressure, power imbalance and manipulation. Teaching supports students to understand how unhealthy dynamics may develop gradually and how harmful influence can present in both overt and subtle ways.

Relationships Education explicitly addresses the impact of the digital world on relationships. Students learn how online interactions, social media and messaging can increase risk, blur boundaries and reduce inhibitions. Teaching reinforces that the same expectations of respectful, lawful behaviour apply online as well as offline, and supports students to recognise online harassment, coercion, exploitation and controlling behaviour.

A central safeguarding focus of Relationships Education is enabling students to recognise coercive, controlling or abusive behaviour, including emotional abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence. Students are taught about consent as an ongoing, freely given agreement, and about personal boundaries across different types of relationships. Teaching ensures that students know how and where to seek help for themselves or others, including within school and through appropriate external support services.

There is no right for parents and carers to withdraw their child from Relationships Education.

2. Sex Education

Sex Education in secondary schools builds on the learning from primary education and the science curriculum, and provides students with accurate knowledge about human reproduction and fertility, puberty and sexual development, contraception and protection from sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and choices, intimate relationships, sexual consent, the law and where to seek help and support if needed.

Teaching is factual, objective and non-judgemental, and is delivered in a way that is sensitive to students' age, maturity and lived experience. Sex Education reflects the diversity of relationships and families in

modern Britain while remaining respectful of students' religious and cultural backgrounds and clear about safeguarding responsibilities and relevant legal frameworks.

Sex Education does not promote early sexual activity. Students are supported to understand that delaying sexual activity is a valid and positive choice and that intimacy, closeness and affection do not have to involve sex. Teaching creates structured opportunities for students to reflect on a range of personal, family and cultural values relating to relationships, intimacy and sexual behaviour, and to consider how these values may influence decisions about if, when and how to engage in sexual activity.

A strong safeguarding focus runs throughout Sex Education. Students are taught how to recognise sexual pressure, coercion and exploitation, including situations involving imbalance of power, intoxication or online interaction. Teaching makes clear the legal context around sexual activity, consent and sexual offences and reinforces that responsibility for abuse always lies with the perpetrator, not the victim.

Students are also taught how to access appropriate support and advice. This includes understanding how to seek help safely and confidentially from trusted adults, school staff and relevant sexual and reproductive health services, and how to support peers appropriately by sharing concerns with adults rather than attempting to manage risk alone.

3. Health Education

Health Education equips students with the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to make informed decisions about their physical health, mental wellbeing and personal safety. Teaching supports students to recognise what is typical and healthy, to identify when something may be wrong in themselves or others, and to understand how and when to seek help.

This includes learning about mental wellbeing and emotional literacy, including stress, anxiety, low mood and resilience. Students are taught about the importance of positive coping strategies, healthy routines and help-seeking, and about the links between mental wellbeing, physical health and lifestyle choices.

Health Education also includes physical health and fitness, healthy eating and nutrition, body image, substance use (including alcohol, tobacco and drugs), online harms and screen use, sleep and self-care, first aid and emergency response, puberty and adolescent development. Teaching addresses both short and long-term health impacts and supports students to develop critical awareness of risk.

Teaching is designed to reduce stigma, particularly around mental health and sexual health, and to promote early help. Students are taught how to access reliable information and appropriate support, how to recognise when they or others may need additional help, and how to seek support from trusted adults, school staff and professional services.

Health Education supports students to take increasing responsibility for their own health and wellbeing as they move towards adulthood, recognising the importance of support networks and professional guidance.

There is no right for parents and carers to withdraw their child from Health Education.

Online Safety and Digital Relationships

Online safety is an integral part of the RSHE curriculum. Teaching recognises that digital technology, social media and online communication shape many aspects of young people's relationships, identity, wellbeing and risk, and that online experiences can both mirror and amplify offline behaviours. Students are taught how online environments can increase vulnerability by reducing inhibition, blurring boundaries and facilitating anonymity. The curriculum will also teach the age of criminal responsibility. Learning supports

students to understand that expectations of respectful, safe and lawful behaviour apply equally online and offline, and that online actions can have real-world consequences.

Relationships Education: Within Relationships Education, students learn how online interactions can affect friendships, peer relationships and intimate relationships. Teaching addresses issues such as online harassment, bullying, coercion, controlling behaviour, and the misuse of digital communication to exert pressure or influence. Students are supported to recognise warning signs, to set and maintain boundaries, and to understand how power imbalance and manipulation may present in digital contexts.

Sex Education: Within Sex Education, students learn about online sexual risk, including pressure to share sexual images, image-based abuse, grooming, and exposure to explicit or harmful content. Teaching makes clear the legal context around the creation, sharing and possession of sexual images, including that young people can be both victims and perpetrators under the law. Students are taught how to recognise sexual pressure or exploitation in online contexts, how to respond safely, and how to seek help. Teaching reinforces that responsibility for abuse or exploitation lies with the perpetrator and not with the individual targeted.

Health Education: Within Health Education, students learn about the impact of online activity on mental wellbeing, self-esteem, body image, sleep and emotional health. Teaching supports students to develop critical awareness of online content, including unrealistic portrayals of bodies, relationships and lifestyles, and to understand how social media and screen use can affect mood, concentration and self-worth. Students are encouraged to reflect on healthy online habits, balance screen use with offline activity, and recognise when online experiences may be contributing to stress, anxiety or low mood.

Online Misinformation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Harmful Online Influences

RSHE recognises that developments in digital technology, including AI, have increased the scale, sophistication and reach of online risk. Teaching therefore aims to support students to develop the knowledge and critical understanding needed to navigate online content safely, recognise misinformation and manipulation, and to protect themselves and others from harm. We reinforce the importance of seeking trusted information and support and encourage students to discuss concerns with trusted adults rather than engaging with or sharing harmful material.

LBGTQ+

RSHE is delivered through an integrated curriculum that focuses on shared principles of equality, respect and safety. Learning related to sexual orientation and gender reassignment is embedded within this broader framework and approached alongside other aspects of equality education. For example, learning about homophobic or transphobic bullying is addressed together with other forms of prejudice and discrimination, including racism, religious discrimination, disability discrimination and sexism. This ensures that all protected characteristics are considered consistently and proportionately, in line with the law.

RSHE is designed to support a broad and diverse student population and is delivered in a way that recognises the wide range of life experiences, family backgrounds and perspectives that students bring to the classroom. Teaching and resources are selected and structured carefully so that all students are able to engage meaningfully with learning, feel represented within the curriculum, and experience a sense of belonging within a safe and respectful learning environment. This inclusive approach supports high-quality learning and is a key element of effective safeguarding.

This approach recognises that students may come from a wide range of family backgrounds and experiences, including families with same-sex parents or carers, as well as students who may be questioning aspects of

their identity. RSHE is therefore designed to support safeguarding and wellbeing for all students, without promoting or endorsing any particular belief, identity or viewpoint.

Teaching and Learning

RSHE is taught in a positive, safe, respectful and supportive learning environment that enables students to engage confidently with sensitive and sometimes complex topics. Teaching contributes directly to the school's personal development provision by supporting students to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to stay safe, to build healthy relationships, to manage risk and to make informed, responsible decisions.

Lessons are carefully planned to build on prior learning and to revisit and deepen key concepts over time, particularly those linked to safeguarding, consent, the law, wellbeing and respectful behaviour. Teaching avoids sensationalism and does not rely on explicit or inappropriate materials. Resources are selected carefully to ensure they are age-appropriate, culturally sensitive and suitable for the school community.

Teachers establish clear ground rules that promote respectful dialogue and emotional safety. A range of teaching strategies are used to support engagement and inclusion, including structured discussion, carefully selected scenarios and opportunities for students to ask questions. This supports a positive learning culture in which students feel safe to learn, while ensuring that lessons remain focused on curriculum content and safeguarding messages.

External visitors may be used to enhance learning in RSHE where appropriate. Any such input is planned in advance, aligned with the RSHE curriculum and the school's safeguarding procedures and we will make sure that any agency and any materials used are accurate, appropriate and unbiased and in line with our legal duties around political impartiality. External visitors are supervised at all times by a member of school staff.

Communication with Parents and Carers

The school works in partnership with parents and carers, and RSHE is intended to complement and build on the values, guidance and education provided at home, rather than to replace them. The school is committed to working openly and constructively with families to ensure that RSHE is delivered in a way that is transparent, respectful and appropriate to the school community.

This policy ensures that parents and carers are provided with clear, timely and accessible information about the RSHE curriculum, including what is taught and when it is taught. In line with statutory guidance, when requested, parents and carers are offered opportunities to view a representative sample of RSHE teaching materials or to view specific resources in advance of their use. The school recognises that some RSHE topics may be sensitive and is committed to explaining how these are taught carefully, factually and in a student-sensitive way, with safeguarding and the law at the forefront.

Parents and carers are encouraged to raise questions or concerns and to engage in dialogue with the school about RSHE provision. Where concerns arise, these are considered thoughtfully and responded to respectfully, with reference to statutory requirements, the law, safeguarding responsibilities and the needs of all students. The school aims to maintain a constructive and trusting relationship with families, recognising that open communication is central to effective RSHE and to students' wellbeing and safety.

Parents and carers have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all of Sex Education delivered as part of statutory RSHE up to three terms before the student turns 16. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education, Health Education or the National Curriculum for Science. Requests for withdrawal from Sex Education must be made in writing to the Head Teacher. A meeting will be offered to ensure that parents or carers have full and accurate information about the curriculum content and the

implications of withdrawal, and to support informed decision-making. The outcome of the request is recorded in writing.

Where withdrawal is agreed, the school will make appropriate alternative supervised provision for the student during the relevant lessons. From three terms before a student's 16th birthday, the decision about whether to receive sex education rests with the young person, and the school will support students to exercise this right.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are among the most vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and unhealthy relationships. High-quality RSHE is therefore particularly important and acts as a key protective factor. RSHE is made accessible through careful planning and adaptation, including differentiated resources and teaching approaches appropriate to students' developmental stage and communication needs. Teaching is also sensitive to all pupils' experiences and during lessons staff ensure that all pupils feel safe and supported and able to engage with the key messages. Where appropriate, additional support may be provided through targeted intervention and careful consideration is given to the level of support needed.

Safeguarding

Students' learning in RSHE makes a significant contribution to safeguarding and is a key element of preventative education. Through RSHE, students develop the knowledge, language and confidence to recognise risk, understand boundaries and consent, and seek help at the earliest opportunity. Safeguarding is embedded throughout the RSHE curriculum and reflects the school's safeguarding priorities. This includes learning, where appropriate, about sexual exploitation, online abuse, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation and criminal exploitation, as well as risks associated with the online environment. Staff will report any safeguarding concerns or disclosures that pupils may make as a result of the subject content to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and any such issues will be dealt with in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Teaching and learning in RSHE is monitored by the PSHE Subject Leader and the Senior Leadership Team.

Training is provided annually to ensure that staff know how to answer questions and teach RSHE topics in an age-appropriate way, with a particular focus on the teaching of sensitive topics.

When RSHE is taught effectively, students will develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to form positive, respectful relationships, make informed choices about their health and wellbeing, and keep themselves and others safe. Over time, this also contributes to improved emotional literacy, resilience and behaviour, as well as increased confidence in seeking help and support when needed.

Appendix 1:

RSHE Curriculum Map

The RSHE curriculum map is provided below and can be found in the curriculum section of our website.

Words in blue are new topics for 26/27

Key Stage 3	A,C	Personal Strengths	Feeling unwell, Emergency situations - access to healthcare services	Self esteem and unkind comments	Diversity / rights and responsibilities	Friendship Healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviour	Elements of a healthy lifestyle Healthy Eating Physical activity Sleep Medication/ drugs
	B,D	Skills for learning, Managing pressure	Public and private	Strong and romantic feelings	Managing online information	Puberty	Mental wellbeing Body image
Key Stage 4	A,C	Prejudice and discrimination	Accidents and risk Feeling frightened	Strong feelings	Managing finances Taking care of the environment	Intimate relationships, consent and contraception	People who help us - Keeping healthy and safe Personal hygiene
	B,D	Managing pressure	Keeping safe online Gambling	Romantic feelings and sexual attraction	Preparing for adulthood	Long-term relationships / parenthood	Medicinal drugs Drugs, alcohol and tobacco

Appendix 2: Consultation Summary

School consultation 2026

As part of the development of our RSHE policy, we have undertaken a formal consultation process in line with statutory guidance. Its purpose was to ensure that RSHE reflects the needs of our students, is appropriate to the context of our school community, and is informed by the views of key stakeholders. Consultation outcomes were used to inform the final version of the RSHE policy and curriculum.

Stakeholders and Methods

We consulted with key stakeholder groups using a range of appropriate methods designed to ensure accessibility and meaningful engagement.

RSHE Consultation Summary Table

Stakeholder group	Method of consultation	Number of respondents	Key themes from feedback	Impact on policy and curriculum
Parents and carers	<i>In person consultation</i>	4	How to support their young people going through puberty and hormonal changes Supporting teaching of boundaries/consent	Sharing personalised resources with parents
Staff	<i>Staff meeting</i>	9	<i>More communication with parents. Specialist training</i>	<i>Planning for CPD opportunities</i>
Governors	<i>LGB meeting</i>	3	<i>Governors noted the changes to the curriculum.</i>	<i>No changes</i>