



Independent School for Girls Aged 2 to 18
and Boys Aged 2 to 11

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION POLICY

Harrogate Ladies' College family of Schools:

Highfield Pre School, Highfield and College

SLT Responsibility: Joanna Fox

Governor Committee Review: Pupil Welfare

Last Review Date: September 2025

Review Cycle: Annual

PRINCIPAL: Joanna Fox, BA (OU), PGCE (Anglia Ruskin).

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Since 1893

Definition of RSE

Relationships and sex education (RSE) is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It should equip children and young people with the information, skills and positive values to have safe, fulfilling relationships, to enjoy their sexuality and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.

Harrogate Ladies' College takes its responsibility to provide relevant, effective and responsible Relationships and Sex education (RSE) to all its pupils as part of the school's Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education curriculum (PSHE) very seriously and is at the heart of our Flourish Programme. At our school we want parents and pupils to feel assured that relationship & sex education will be delivered at a level appropriate to both age and development of pupils.

This teaching is not intended to replace advice or guidance which is ideally received at home, but to supplement and broaden knowledge and understanding.

This policy is drafted by the Head of PSHE in consultation with the Senior Deputy, PSHE Lead in Highfield, School Nurse, Heads of School and SENCO. Parents are given the opportunity to discuss this policy content at curriculum meetings and Parents' Evenings.

Aims of policy:

RSE is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about teaching sex, sexuality and sexual health in a way that is fully understood and effectively retained by pupils in our care. This includes emphasis on good health, the value of self-esteem in making choices and judgements, the nature of healthy and consensual relationships, and knowledge about how the body works, all within a context of moral issues and values.

RSE will outline the importance of marriage and family life and the raising of children, as well as highlighting the role of marriage and other stable relationships as building blocks for community and society.

We want our pupils to lead a healthy and safe lifestyle and to care for and respect their bodies, and we provide them with the right tools that will enable them to seek information or support, should they need it, both during their school years and after.

Provision:

We follow the Government's 2025 Statutory guidance on *Religious and sex (RSE) and health education* published by the Department for Education. This guidance states 'all secondary schools must have a written policy for relationships and sex education (RSE)'.

Taught PSHE has also been part of the Independent Schools Standards Regulations since 2014. We aim to provide a relevant, broad and balanced curriculum that not just fulfils, but exceeds externally set standards.

The Harrogate Ladies' College curriculum is spiral and flexible, so topics may be re-visited in later years and the curriculum adjusted as need requires. Although the topics below are listed specifically, we treat Relationships and Sex Education as part of the wider PSHE curriculum. We support equal opportunities in education, seeing it as enabling and encouraging all our students to build self-esteem through discussion and activities in a safe environment. Our intention is to equip them with decision-making skills irrespective of gender roles and stereotyping.

The main topics covered in RSE are:

- Establishing healthy relationships

This policy applies to all members of our school community, including boarders and those in our EYFS setting.

- Puberty in girls and boys
- Menstruation
- Unwanted contact and FGM
- Consent and how to communicate this to others
- Contraception
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Understanding our bodies
- Sending nudes and online safety
- Sexual exploitation
- Sex and pornography
- Personal choices

To meet the new guidance (implementation from September 2026), the School has introduced additional topics into the curriculum for this year:

- New safeguarding risks and the rapid technological developments, including AI deepfakes, toxic online influence and subcultures
- Female health – menstrual and gynaecological; endometriosis and PCOS; pregnancy wellbeing; and virginity testing

As part of the PSHE programme, Relationships and Sex Education is taught by our team of PSHE teachers. Lessons are taught in small groups, using a range of activities with materials and support provided by The PSHE Association and other health professionals.

The programme is developed and reviewed in consultation to ensure it meets the needs of the whole school community, including neurodiverse pupils, and supports our LGBTQ+ community. We also ensure RSE is age relevant and appropriate across all year groups; this means ensuring the curriculum develops as our pupils do and meets their needs.

We ensure staff are given regular and ongoing training on issues related to RSE including confidentiality, setting ground rules and establishing positive behaviour, handling controversial issues and responding to questions. The PSHE teachers receive regular updates about policy changes, and understand the school policy and guidance relating to relationships and sex education. We ensure their personal beliefs and attitudes will not prevent them from providing balanced RSE in school.

Terminology:

Pupils will be taught the anatomically correct names for body parts, but slang and everyday terms used in social situations will also be discussed; this will form part of the discussion about what is and what is not acceptable language. We recognise the correct language used for body parts can be a key part in helping young people protect themselves from sexual assault.

Ground rules are essential when discussing sensitive subject matter and staff will use strategies to enable pupils to feel comfortable to ask questions. If controversial questions are asked, the teacher will use professional judgement about how to answer them and pupils will be allowed to raise anonymous questions if preferred.

We recognise that, because of the nature of the subject, sensitive and controversial issues are likely to arise. These may include, for example: abortion, emerging gender identity, sexuality and sexual abuse. These are dealt with within the framework of the aims of the school and of the Relationships and Sex Education policy as a whole. Any cause for concern will be dealt with in accordance with our pastoral systems and safeguarding arrangements.

Guest speakers:

We sometimes use outside speakers to complement our teaching of this content, who are asked to work within the framework of the school's Relationship and Sex Education Policy and adhere to the policy for Visiting Speakers. A teacher will be present throughout these lessons to ensure the safeguarding of our pupils.

Withdrawal from RSE:

The school aims to keep parents informed about all aspects of the RSE curriculum and urges parents to review this policy. RSE is a vital part of the school curriculum and supports the whole development of the child. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex education. Any parents considering withdrawing their child from RSE should contact the Senior Deputy to discuss their concerns. According to Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance paragraph 41-43 pupils can opt into sex education from three terms before their 16th birthday.

When a pupil is three terms away from turning 16 and has the right to opt back into sex education if they wish, the Head of PSHE will arrange a meeting with the pupil to discuss their personal preference, review the forthcoming RSE topics and encourage full participation with the other pupils in their class. This will be at least half a term prior to the RSE lessons commencing.

Those pupils withdrawn from RSE are invited to extend their learning by completing additional prep related to their chosen subjects and/or PSHE related topics.

Monitoring, evaluation and review:

We will ensure RSE is matched to the needs of our pupils by reviewing the results of the "Growing up in North Yorkshire" surveys, discussions with pastoral leads and gathering feedback from our pupils. The educational and personal needs of our pupils develop in line with varying societal pressures and other changes.

For this reason, we monitor, evaluate and regularly review our RSE curriculum.

We consult our parents when developing and reviewing the RSE Policy at our annual PSHE Parents' Meeting. This open invitation is supported by a questionnaire, providing our parents with the opportunity to share their thoughts on the scheme of work and help, to ensure our RSE learning supports the wellbeing of all pupils.

In addition to this formal consultation, we encourage ongoing discussion throughout the year. This might be at our Parents' Meetings, Heads of School drop-ins or through direct contact with the PSHE team. This enables our parents to raise any concerns or suggest areas where they feel further support may be beneficial for their children.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and following any government updates or changes to guidance.

Version Control

Date of last review of this policy	September 2025
Date for next review of this policy	September 2026
Policy Author	Head of PSHE

This policy applies to all members of our school community, including boarders and those in our EYFS setting.

Policy owner (SLT)	Joanna Fox
Policy owner (Proprietor)	Dame Francine Holroyd