



# St Mary's CE Primary School



## RSE Policy

**2025-2026**

*'... there is something **extraordinary** and **wondrous** in everybody as **unique creations of God**. We **value** all our children as **children of God** and **celebrate difference and diversity** within a **safe, encouraging** Christian school environment in which all **flourish**.*

*Therefore, all will aspire with God's strength to reach  
for the stars. "I can do all things through him who  
**strengthens me.**"*

*Philippians 4:13*

### **Definition:**

The Sex Education Forum defines RSE as 'learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health'.

The aim of RSE at St Mary's is to equip children and young people with the information, skills and values to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships, and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being. This is why we refer to RSE with the children as 'Relationships Education'.

Misunderstanding about what RSE really involves can be a barrier for parents, governors and school staff. At St Mary's, we focus upon:

- Safe relationships and who to turn to if you need help
- Physical development, for example how our reproductive systems work
- Emotional development, for example how to manage feelings
- Social development, such as the positive and negative influences from friends.

### **Does our school need to have an RSE policy?**

Maintained primary and secondary schools are legally obliged to have an up-to-date RSE policy that describes the content and organisation of RSE taught outside Science in the National Curriculum. In primary schools if the decision is taken not to teach RSE beyond the National Curriculum this should also be documented in the policy. The policy should be made available to parents on request. It is the school governors' responsibility to ensure that the policy is developed and implemented.

This policy also needs to be read in conjunction with the school's PHSE and Online Safety Policy. Both of these can be made available to parents upon request.

### **Why our policy and programme of learning needs to be regularly updated?**

Ofsted has found that RSE needed improvement in over a third of the primary and secondary schools they inspected to inform their report

'Not yet good enough; personal, social, health and economic education in schools' (2013). In primary schools this was because too much emphasis was placed on friendships and relationships, leaving pupils ill- prepared for physical and emotional changes during puberty, which many begin to experience before they reach secondary school. Some primary schools failed to teach correct terms for sexual parts of the body.

The revised RSE curriculum provides new statutory guidance published in July 2025. Therefore, our school policy has been revised in September 2025, stating the curriculum content and will be revised again in July 2026 to finalise key changes to our adapted RSE curriculum. Following this, all changes will be fully implemented from September 2026.

## **Rationale**

National and international research shows that good quality RSE has a protective function as young people who have had good RSE are more likely to choose to have sex for the first time later and it equips them with the personal and social skills they need to stay safe and value themselves.

To ensure its effectiveness RSE must start in primary school and be taught in an age-appropriate manner, starting with topics such as personal safety and friendships. There is no evidence that RSE hastens the first experience of sex. These findings are confirmed by three separate evidence reviews: Kirby 2007, UNESCO 2009 and NICE 2010.

The evidence from Finland shows that applying a clear policy on RSE at the national level can impact directly on teenage sexual behaviour. In 2006 the 'Health' topic was introduced in schools and has been compulsory in primary and secondary schools. Year groups must have a minimum of 20 hours teaching in the subject and teachers are now given training. The trend in teenage sexual behaviour has now reversed; girls are starting to have sex at an older age and more are using contraception. The rate of teenage abortions has also dropped and there is a decline in teenage births (Apter 2009)

## **What aspects of RSE are compulsory?**

The sex education contained in National Curriculum science (Key Stages 1–4) is compulsory in maintained schools.

All state-funded schools must have 'due regard' to the Secretary of State's guidance on RSE (DfEE, 2000). This states that:

- 'All children, including those who develop earlier than average, need to know about puberty before they experience the onset of physical changes' (1.13)
- Children should learn 'how a baby is conceived and born' before they leave primary school (1.16)

## **Relationship education: content to be covered before the end of primary**

**Relationship education** is covered in the following areas:

- Families and people who care for me
- Caring friendships
- Respectful, kind relationships
- Online safety and awareness

- Being safe

### **Primary health and wellbeing: content to be covered by the end of primary**

**Primary health and well being** is covered in the following areas:

- General wellbeing
- Wellbeing online
- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Drug, alcohol, tobacco and vaping
- Health protection and prevention (including sun exposure, oral health, hand-washing)
- Personal safety (including road and water safety)
- Basic first aid
- Developing bodies

### **What parents can withdraw their child from:**

- Parents can exercise their right to withdraw their children from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE taught outside National Curriculum Science.

### **What parents cannot withdraw their child from:**

- Relationships Education, which covers topics like family, friendship, and safety.
- Health Education.
- Sex education taught as part of the science curriculum.

### **How does RSE link to other curriculum requirements?**

Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which:

- Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society
- Prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Safeguarding RSE plays a very important part in fulfilling the statutory duties all schools have to meet. RSE helps children understand the difference between safe and abusive relationships and equips them with the skills to get help if they need it. State-funded schools have responsibilities for safeguarding and a legal duty to promote pupil well-being.

The Equality Act 2010 covers the way the curriculum is delivered, as schools and other education providers must ensure that issues are taught in a way that does not subject pupils to discrimination. Inclusive RSE at St Mary's will foster good relations between pupils, tackle all types of prejudice – including homophobia – and promote understanding and respect.

### **How RSE is provided (and by whom):**

Sufficient time must be put aside in all year groups in each term to ensure that coverage and balance is adequately met.

At St Mary's, as our pupils are primary pupils, we do not refer to lessons as 'Sex and Relationships (RSE)' lessons. We use the phrase 'Relationships education' to refer to RSE. This helps to remove some of the taboos.

One of the reasons for this is that RSE is an integral element of a broader developmental personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme at St Mary's where it also covers emotional health and well-being, drugs, healthy eating and physical activity, citizenship and safety. There are links between areas of knowledge and understanding in PSHE and RSE, for example in relation to alcohol and drugs and emotional health. There are also links to other areas of the curriculum such as computing (staying safe online), citizenship and religious education.

### **Values and attitudes**

At St Mary's, RSE promotes the core values of love, respect, pride and endeavour. We also provide the opportunity for children to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs and those of their peers and others. The process of values, clarification and development is common across the broader subject of PSHE.

## **Privacy**

Pupils', families' and teachers' privacy is protected by us following a number of other school policies (e.g. Confidentiality, Safeguarding, Acceptable Use) and setting very clear ground rules for learning.

## **Behaviour**

It is hoped that children will see our 'Relationships Education' lessons as safe places to learn but it is recognised that the human instinct to feel uncomfortable in such situations may manifest themselves in behaviour that needs to be challenged. The school's Behaviour Policy will be followed in these circumstances and such occurrences should be unlikely if the class sets ground rules prior to embarking upon potentially challenging subject matters. All pupils at St Mary's will be aware of the need to use the correct terminology for body parts and especially reproductive organs.

During RSE lessons all classes have a 'question box' that pupils can anonymously post questions to. In turn, the teacher will try to answer the questions (as appropriate) whilst retaining the child's anonymity.

## **What we teach and when:**

RSE starts early in St Mary's Primary School so that children learn about their bodies, can recognise if other people make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe, and can report abuse and get help. Lots of children start puberty before they leave primary school so it is important that all pupils know what to expect before it happens. This is why we have some RSE in every year of our primary school as it helps pupils to learn progressively as they mature and revisit the subject on a regular basis, to reinforce learning and provide opportunities to ask further questions.

Below is a description of what is taught in each year group at St Mary's. There is RSE specific content and references to the National Curriculum also. Maintained primary and secondary schools must teach the National Curriculum, which includes some sex education within Science. The EYFS Curriculum and the National Curriculum for Key Stages 1–2 applies at St Mary's from September 2014. Science at St Mary's includes pupils learning about parts of the body, growth, reproduction, life cycles and ageing; they should also learn about the changes experienced in puberty (in year 5). The programmes of study are set out year by year, but content may be introduced earlier if relevant to the pupils' needs.

## **Science Specifics in Year 5 and 6**

Children should be taught to identify how plants and animals, including humans, resemble their parents in many features

Pupils should be introduced to the idea that characteristics are passed from parents to their offspring. Note: At this stage, pupils are not expected to understand how genes and chromosomes work.

Children should be taught to describe the life cycles common to a variety of animals, including humans (birth, growth, development, reproduction, death), and to a variety of plants (growth, reproduction and death).

Children should be taught to describe the life process of reproduction in some plants and animals, describe the changes as humans develop from birth to old age, recognise the impact of diet, exercise, drugs and lifestyle on the way their bodies function.

They should find out about different types of reproduction, including sexual and asexual reproduction in plants and sexual reproduction in animals Recognise that living things produce offspring of the same kind, but normally offspring vary and are not identical to their parents

They should be introduced to the idea that variation in offspring over time can make animals more or less able to survive in particular environments and lead to evolutionary change. Pupils might find out about Charles Darwin's work on evolution.

## **Ground rules**

Before any RSE (Relationships Education) sessions, the teacher must ensure that the ground rules have been set with the children in that class.

For younger pupils, a circle time activities can be used to develop the ground rules. For example, pupils are asked to name a game they like to play and then imagining an alien has landed on earth. How would the alien know how to play the game and what rules apply? Go round the circle naming rules from the game, and then discuss what it feels like when someone does not follow the rules. Why are rules helpful? This then leads into ground rules for when the children are learning together in Relationships Education lessons. Once a working agreement has been made by the class, it should be referred back to and displayed during the Personal Development lessons. An effective working agreement or set of ground rules will contain the elements shown below – in language that is age appropriate and formulated (as far as possible) as positive behaviours.

Example of a working agreement. We will try:

- To be kind to each other; To listen to each other;
- To respect our rights to share different views;

- To take care with information we share about ourselves;
- To remember that we can always ask about things in private with an adult in school, but the adult may have to share information if they are worried about our safety
- Not to ask personal questions
- Older pupils may suggest 'confidentiality' as part of the ground rules, proposing that 'what is said in the class should stay in the class'. In reality, this is not feasible. Instead, teachers talk to pupils about personal boundaries, what information is private and how to protect their own and others' privacy.

### **Language and terminology**

RSE at St Mary's has a vital role to play in helping children develop a vocabulary they can use to communicate comfortably, respectfully and accurately about the human body, growing up, sex and relationships. This is only possible if adults teaching RSE are able and willing to model use of this type of vocabulary.

We always use medically correct terms for genitalia and sexual parts of the body, for example, vulva, vagina, penis and testicles. Ofsted provides full support for this approach (2013) and have raised concerns that some primary schools have, in the past, failed to teach this vocabulary. As a barrier to safeguarding, this leaves children unable to describe abusive behaviours.

The use of respectful language which challenges sexism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice should be established in RSE at St Mary's. We hope that this will have benefits for the whole school community – both in and out of lessons. Ofsted found that casual use of homophobic language in schools is often unchallenged. Children and all adults at St Mary's need to know that using such language is wrong and will not be tolerated.

### **Resources**

Teachers use a range of resources e.g. images, 3-D models, stories and games to enhance and enrich RSE. Resources should support inclusion in terms of the range of people and relationships they portray and must contain medically correct facts.

Teachers should work through the following questions when choosing and using resources:

- Individual resources may not meet all the above criteria but the programme should aim to use resources which, used together, promote inclusive RSE
- Is the resource consistent with the values set out in the school RSE policy?
- Is it factually correct and up-to-date?
- Does it encourage active and participatory learning?

- Is the resource contemporary in terms of the realities of children and young people's lives?
- Does the resource portray positive images of a range of children and young people?
- Does the resource show positive role models for girls and boys / women and men and avoid stereotypes relating to gender and sexual orientation?
- Is the resource inclusive on the basis of home and family circumstance, gender, sexuality, race, faith, culture and disability?
- Is it appropriate for the age, ability and maturity of the children and young people? Is it necessary for parents and carers to be consulted about the resources?
- Are teachers confident about using the resource?

### **Using a resource**

- Will the resource be used in its entirety or will it be more appropriate to adapt it and select from it?
- Does use of the resource fit into a planned and developmental programme of RSE?
- Is there a range of types of resource being used across the RSE programme including a variety of formats such as video, audio, visual, games and models?

### **External Visitors**

An external visitor should not be used as a substitute for a teacher. They should also comply with the school policy on confidentiality.

### **How Parents and Pupils are consulted**

The government guidance on RSE emphasises the importance of schools working in partnership with parents. Under current legislation, schools should enable parents to exercise their right to withdraw their children from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE taught outside National Curriculum Science. This applies to maintained primary and secondary schools and includes pupils attending a sixth form that is part of a school. At St Mary's, if parents wish to exercise their right to withdraw their child from any RSE taught outside of the Science National Curriculum, they should do so by writing to the Head teacher.

Parents have a legal right to see the school RSE policy and to be given a copy of it. Parents should also be aware that schools are legally required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Sex and relationships topics can arise incidentally

in other subjects and it is not possible to withdraw pupils from these relatively limited and often unplanned discussions. At St Mary's, teachers will exercise due caution bearing in mind their knowledge of the pupils in their class. If parents do 'opt-out' we will offer further dialogue, either by letter or at a meeting. Parents will be encouraged to provide RSE at home if they choose to withdraw their child. In such cases, we will offer to parents the materials used within school if they wish to use them at home.

### **Disclosures – linked to Safeguarding Policy**

Any disclosures or concerns that arise from RSE lessons will be dealt within line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

### **How RSE is assessed, monitored and evaluated**

#### **Assessment**

Assessment has a particular function which is to indicate the existing knowledge and skills of pupils. This enables a teacher to plan a programme that is relevant to the group and builds on prior learning. It also serves as a baseline against which future progress may be assessed.

At the end of a unit of learning, pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and the progress they have made by asking some of the following questions:

- What new information have I learnt?
- What do I now think and believe?
- Has listening to the views of others changed my views and/or beliefs?
- Did I learn anything I did not expect to?
- How will it change my behaviour in the future?
- How did I feel about what I found out?
- What feelings did I have during the session? What do I now need/want to learn?
- Is there anyone else I need to talk to about this?

Individual responses could be recorded or it may be that pupils are merely encouraged to internalise their thoughts and responses as part of self-assessment/reflection.ith pupils in school if they wish to use them at home.

## **Monitoring**

Monitoring is a leadership activity (carried out by members of the SLT , Governor with responsibility for RSE and the teacher who coordinates RSE). It is an ongoing process that checks the degree to which the RSE Policy and programme is being effectively implemented. Monitoring answers the questions:

- Is the programme effectively managed and are staff clear about their roles and responsibilities?
- Does the planned programme reflect national guidance, local priorities and pupils' needs?
- Are all pupils being taught the programme as planned?
- Is the quality of teaching consistent across all classes and does it exemplify best practice?

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation is what the teachers do in response to the teaching. It is the process that measures whether the lesson or unit of work is effective and worthwhile. It should be used as a means of improving provision and raising standards. Evaluation helps to identify issues for development and can prompt a review process and this may result in changes to the RSE programme or policy. Teachers are encouraged to feed such findings back to the Head teacher and PHSE coordinator.

## **Meeting the needs of girls who are menstruating**

On the very few previous occasions when these requirements have been needed to be met we have been approached by a parent with the child. Reassurance is always given and the facility to use the disabled toilets where there is a disposal unit. In the past, it has been expected that the families will provide their own supplies but that they can be stored in the disabled toilet.

## **Role of the School Nurse**

The extent to which the school nurse contributes to RSE will depend, in part, on capacity and local resources; in recent times, this support has dwindled. However, we will always try to employ the services of the school nurse for Year 5 (and 6) pupils for specific support for boys' and girls' understanding of the changes associated with puberty.

Other ways in which the School Nurses can effectively support RSE are by:

- Introducing themselves in person to all pupils, for example by visiting a Key Stage assembly or specific RSE lesson;
- Supporting teachers with suitable vocabulary and resources;
- Checking that sexual health information is up-to-date, medically accurate and comprehensive;
- Informing curriculum planning by feeding back (anonymously) the common questions and concerns raised by pupils one-to-one with the school nurse.

### **Communication**

This policy will be shared with parents when requested.

### **Equality Statement**

At St Mary's Primary School, we actively seek to encourage equity and equality through our teaching. As such, we seek to advance the equality of opportunity between people who share any of the following characteristics:

- gender;
- ethnicity;
- disability;
- religion or belief;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy or maternity.

The use of stereotypes under any of the above headings will always be challenged.

### **Inclusion**

Our school is an inclusive school. We aim to make all pupils feel included in all our activities. We try to make all our teaching fully inclusive. We recognise the entitlement of all pupils to a balanced, broadly-based curriculum. We have systems in place for early identification of barriers to their learning and participation so that they can engage in school activities with all other pupils. We acknowledge the need for high expectations and suitable targets for all children.