



The NEST
alternative
provision
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Relationships & Sex Education

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Policy aims

Relationships education and sex education are a crucial and rich element of social, emotional and physical development for young people. It is our role as educators, and as adults of influence, to ensure we are equipping learners with the knowledge to understand their own developing bodies and with tools to engage in relationships and develop connections (familial, romantic, sexual, friendship) in safe and mutually respectful ways, and to find trusted information and help when needed. While a learner's primary education provider will hold responsibility for ensuring the national RSE curriculum is delivered, the NEST recognises the attendance and engagement difficulties many of our learners' experience. We take seriously our responsibility for scaffolding this learning and for filling gaps in understanding where material has been missed due to absences. We will work with commissioners, caregivers and learners to establish expectations around RSE content during a learner's time with us.

We take an intentional opportunistic approach to teaching about relational and personal safety, relationship diversity and wellbeing. As with matters of social responsibility and anti-discrimination, we embed elements throughout project work and discussions. We will respond to emergent questions that arise in response to current affairs, social media, issues arising personally, locally or nationally. Where there are significant gaps in learner understanding we will arrange for specialist age-appropriate training. This policy outlines the responsibilities and expectations around ensuring we:

- Establish an environment in which these conversations can take place in a meaningful and engaging way
- Take an inclusive and celebratory decolonised approach to gender, sexuality and relationship diversity, ensuring anti-discrimination is central to all discussions
- Respond to emergent curiosities in a way that encourages compassionate and respectful engagement
- Explain puberty, bodily development and reproductive biology in a way that does not stigmatise
- Equip learners with appropriate vocabulary to describe their anatomy
- Emphasise emotional and physical health and good self-esteem
- Support learners to understand bodily autonomy and consent and develop safe relationships and sexual practices
- Teach the importance of safe sexual practices and an understanding of the potential risks, such as STIs and pregnancy
- Signpost to appropriate support services, information and guidance
- Teach safe internet use

- Role model respectful compassionate communication and healthy boundary setting
- Explain how the law applies to sexual relationships

Links to legislation and guidance

This policy has been written in compliance with the following legislation and guidance:

- [The Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years 2015](#)
- [Promoting Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing: A whole school or college approach 2015](#)
- [Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017](#)
- [Domestic Abuse 2022](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)
- [Behaviour in Schools 2024](#)
- [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education 2025](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025](#)
- [Teaching Online Safety in Schools](#)
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission Advice and Guidance](#)
- [Alternative Provision 2025](#)

Associated policies and further reading

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following associated policies and documents:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Community Contract
- Community Contract – Staff
- Complaints Policy
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- e-safety Policy
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Definitions

Consent (sexual consent) – sexual activities in which all parties involved are knowingly and enthusiastically choosing to engage.

Gender – is a biopsychosocially constructed phenomenon that is a combination of expression, identity, roles and responsibilities. There are multiple varied genders, greatly influenced by culture and colonialism, and genders can be a fluid throughout someone's lifetime. Sometimes gender influences someone's sexuality.

Note: We are aware of the non-statutory guidance for schools and colleges around gender questioning children ([Gender Questioning Children: Non-statutory guidance for schools and college in England](#)). Until this becomes statutory, we will maintain a decolonising ethos of inclusion that respects gender diversity, recognises the criticisms of the Cass Report (both academic and lived experience), the risks of transphobia, and the robust evidence base that supports the assertion that a gender-affirming approach is the primary protective factor for gender questioning young people.

Relationship – the way in which two or more people are connected. There are many forms of relationship including family relationships, romantic relationships, sexual relationships, friendships, professional relationships, online relationships, teacher/student relationships, faith-based relationships, relationships with animals and the wider natural world.

Sex (activity) – in this learning context we recognise that 'sex' is defined subjectively and dependant on experience and perspective. Sex would generally involve genital stimulation and can include penetration (oral, vaginal, anal) and what can be described as non-penetrative sexual acts. It is important to check common understanding of terminology.

Sex (biological descriptor) – biological sex comprises a set of features, including anatomy, genetics, and hormones, that are mostly grouped into two categories – male and female – though it is also recognised that there is a great variation in biological sex, including intersex states.

Sexuality – one's state of being sexual, sexually active, sexually interested. It is also a description of sexual attraction based most often on gender. Sexualities include asexual (ace), bisexual (bi), gay, lesbian, pansexual (pan), straight.

Roles and Responsibilities

Directors

Directors are responsible for ensuring the necessary measures are in place at the NEST to support learners to develop a respectful and empowered understanding of relationships, gender and sexuality and of themselves in those contexts. It is the responsibility of the directors to:

- Implement this policy and review it according to new information and guidance as it becomes available
- Collaborate with referrers to establish the gaps in a learner knowledge
- Be familiar with the national RSE curriculum
- Ensure discussions around identity, biology and relationships are normalised and that we work towards destigmatisation
- Support staff to develop knowledge and confidence in these areas and include pertinent topics in staff training plans
- Include activities and opportunities in the curriculum that equip learners with the skills and attitudes to support knowledge acquisition and confidence around safety and who they could go to for help
- Scaffold the development of critical thinking skills in learners
- Emphasise and implement the e-safety Policy
- Recognise when external expertise is required to support learner knowledge
- Ensure due diligence is carried out in vetting external materials
- Share RSE content with caregivers and respond constructively and supportively around caregiver feedback or concerns
- Ensure caregivers are aware of their right to request withdrawal from sex education
- Ensure caregivers are aware of our routes to raise concerns including complaints, whistleblowing and safeguarding routes

See Appendix A – National secondary RSE curriculum for more information.

Staff

Staff are expected to be aware of their responsibilities around ensuring an anti-discriminatory environment that promotes mutual respect and safety. It is their responsibility to:

- Cultivate an environment where learners feel like they can have these conversations
- Have discussions in an age-appropriate way
- Support development of critical thinking skills to support learner decision making and self-awareness
- Be aware of own comfort levels with these topics and communicate concerns with directors honestly
- Ensure the signs of sexual abuse are recognisable
- Be alert for the often-insidious signs of gender-based violence and potentially harmful attitudes around the protected characteristics
- Be familiar with the various routes to raise concerns including the safeguarding, whistleblowing and LADO contact routes

- Reinforce the NEST e-safety Policy and safe internet use

Learners

Learners are expected to engage with material in a respectful and conscientious manner. It is their responsibility to:

- Comply with the behavioural expectations outlined in their Community Contract
- Not behave in a discriminatory way towards other learners or other members of the NEST community
- Be respectful to other learners during these conversations
- Follow the NEST e-safety Policy

Caregivers

Caregivers are informed of RSE content delivery and pertinent ad hoc conversations around RSE. We recognise the central role of the family in continued learning and development and work collaboratively with caregivers to ensure the most appropriate support is given to their young person. It is the responsibility of caregivers to:

- Engage with resources we share that support young people's safety online
- Share constructive criticism with the NEST directors when there are any concerns about RSE content or delivery
- Be aware of their right to request withdrawal from some elements of sex education
- Be aware of our feedback routes including complaints, whistleblowing and raising safeguarding concerns
- Engage with our e-safety Policy

External providers

Work with external providers may be required for specialist content delivery. Collaboration with external providers is carefully considered, flexible and responsive to learner needs and staff skillsets. It is the responsibility of external providers to:

- Communicate transparently and in a timely manner
- Share learning materials during the consultation period as a prerequisite to consideration for booking
- Evidence anti-discriminatory practice

Community voice

We value lived experience at the NEST, and we believe that centring the voice of lived experience is a route to better care. The insight of learners, caregivers,

staff and collaborators are invaluable in shaping an environment of trust, collaboration and co-ownership. Intentionally prioritising the perspective of learners and caregivers supports educator understanding of learner needs and can empower learners to contribute to meaningful decision making and to take an active role in their learning. Valuing staff and collaborator feedback can facilitate closer co-working and productive communication.

It is important to carefully consider the range of comfort/discomfort people can experience when it comes to topics like anatomy, development, sex, sexuality and relationships. We work closely with learners and caregivers to ensure we are establishing and maintaining a safe environment. We seek input and feedback and work closely with learners and caregivers when designing content and delivery that is appropriate, safe and responsive to emerging needs. Learners and caregivers will be involved in reviewing this policy in conjunction with our Behaviour Policy. We make multiple feedback routes available, including anonymous routes, and close feedback loops in ways that are meaningful and actionable.

Processes

Cultivating a respectfully curious environment

The NEST team are committed to cultivating an identity-affirming environment of mutual respect where diversity is celebrated. We are dedicated to scaffolding trusted relationships with and among learners and role modelling appropriate boundary setting and challenging inappropriate, unkind and harmful behaviours and attitudes. These are some conscientious measures, as outlined in our Staff Community Contract, taken to establish an environment where conversation around relationships, sex and intimate partnerships can take place organically and in a way that reduces shame and stigma. We support the development of critical thinking skills which is embedded across our curriculum and opportunistically honed through discussions and scenario setting. These measures, in conjunction with our Behaviour Policy and the learner Community Contract, set the standard for all interactions at the NEST. The aim being that this respectful and curious communication can maintain as conversation meanders across topics of varying degrees of sensitivity such as those pertinent to RSE content. It is important to normalise and demystify sex and relationships and the appropriate associated lexicon.

Content delivery

RSE is not delivered in isolation but is firmly embedded across the NEST activities. Delivery is usually in mixed gender groups unless there is an

appropriate reason to divide groups. Content is delivered through conscientious ad hoc conversations that are navigated according to these ground rules:

- Engagement in these discussions must be consensual – nobody will be forced to have them
- Nobody is expected to answer personal questions – asking overly personal questions is discouraged
- Correct anatomical names for body parts will be used – avoid euphemistic language
- Words will be explained without judgement or criticism for not knowing or for asking – emphasise there is no such thing as a stupid question
- Questions will be answered in an age-appropriate way – sometimes this might include signposting to further information or support, discussing the topic one-on-one rather than in a group or suggesting discussing with a family member
- No one ideal of a family or relationship will be held up as ‘normal’ or optimal – diversity is to be emphasised and celebrated
- Ensure legality is understood – including age of consent, measures around youth produced pornographic material
- Emphasise critical thinking – to scaffold safety and decision making
- Role-model mutually respectful interactions and healthy boundary setting

Where it is apparent there are significant gaps in learner knowledge the decision will be made to engage an external expert to deliver bespoke age-appropriate content. This will be done in active response to diverse groups of learners with varied needs and knowledge gaps.

Caregivers right to request withdrawal

Caregivers have the right to withdraw their young person from the non-statutory components of sex education within RSE up to 3 terms before the young person turns 16. After this point, if the learner wishes to receive sex education this can be arranged. There is not the same right to withdraw a learner from the relationships elements of RSE.

Requests for withdrawal should be submitted in writing to directors by submitting a Withdrawal Request Form (Appendix B). This will be recorded in our Learner Records. Caregivers that make such a request will be invited to meet with directors to discuss concerns. Caregivers are not obliged to attend.

Training

Staff training, learning and development are highly encouraged and facilitated by the NEST. All staff are expected to complete minimum training requirements

as outlined in our Staff Training Plan and additional learning and related continued professional development are strongly supported.

All staff receive induction training delivered both internally and externally. Induction training includes the following sex and relationship elements:

- KCSIE part 1: Safeguarding information for all staff
- KCSIE part 5: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Misogyny & INCEL subculture training
- e-safety training

The Pastoral Care Lead will also complete additional training pertinent to the role:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Child-on-child abuse and harassment
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- FGM

All staff training is logged and stored in our staff records. Refresher courses are facilitated according to best practice.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually at a minimum. Updated policies will be made available locally and on our website (www.thenest-ed.uk). Ad hoc amendments will be made as new information becomes available and to align with any legislative changes as they arise. Stakeholder feedback, particularly that of learners and caregivers, will be invited and incorporated as much as is practicable. Where quantitative data are available these will be analysed and embedded in policies updates.

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with new statutory guidance as it is released. We will incorporate feedback and update training requirements in response to emerging concerns and patterns of gaps in knowledge, in both learners and staff.

Appendices

Appendix A – National secondary RSE curriculum

Schools should continue to develop knowledge of topics specified for primary as required and in addition cover the following content by the end of secondary:

Families

1. That there are different types of committed stable relationships.
2. How these relationships might contribute to wellbeing, and their importance for bringing up children.
3. Why marriage or civil partnership is an important relationship choice for many couples. The legal status of marriage and civil partnership, including that they carry legal rights, benefits and protections that are not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have, for example, undergone a non-legally binding religious ceremony.
4. That ‘common-law marriage’ is a myth, and cohabitants do not obtain marriage-like status or rights from living together or by having children.
5. That forced marriage and marrying before the age of 18 are illegal.
6. How families and relationships change over time, including through birth, death, separation and new relationships.
7. The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting and the importance of the early years of a child’s life for brain development.
8. How to judge when a relationship is unsafe and where to seek help when needed, including when pupils are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust.

Respectful relationships

1. The characteristics of positive relationships of all kinds, online and offline, including romantic relationships. For example, pupils should understand the role of consent, trust, mutual respect, honesty, kindness, loyalty, shared interests and outlooks, generosity, boundaries, tolerance, privacy, and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships.
2. How to evaluate their impact on other people and treat others with kindness and respect, including in public spaces and including strangers. Pupils should understand the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, and that everyone is unique and equal.

3. The importance of self-esteem, independence and having a positive relationship with oneself, and how these characteristics support healthy relationships with others. This includes developing one's own interests, hobbies, friendship groups, and skills. Pupils should understand what it means to be treated with respect by others.
4. What tolerance requires, including the importance of tolerance of other people's beliefs.
5. The practical steps pupils can take and skills they can develop to support respectful and kind relationships. This includes skills for communicating respectfully within relationships and with strangers, including in situations of conflict.
6. The different types of bullying (including online bullying), the impact of bullying, the responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help.
7. Skills for ending relationships or friendships with kindness and managing the difficult feelings that endings might bring, including disappointment, hurt or frustration.
8. The role of consent, including in romantic and sexual relationships. Pupils should understand that ethical behaviour goes beyond consent and involves kindness, care, attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of the other person, as well as an awareness of power dynamics. Pupils should understand that just because someone says yes to doing something, that doesn't automatically make it ethically ok.
9. How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender reassignment, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). Pupils should be equipped to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice.
10. How inequalities of power can impact behaviour within relationships, including sexual relationships. For example, how people who are disempowered can feel they are not entitled to be treated with respect by others or how those who enjoy an unequal amount of power might, with or without realising it, impose their preferences on others.
11. How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, including by normalising harmful sexual behaviours and by disempowering some people, especially women, to feel a sense of autonomy over their own body

and providing some people with a sense of sexual entitlement to the bodies of others.

12. Pupils should have an opportunity to discuss how some sub-cultures might influence our understanding of sexual ethics, including the sexual norms endorsed by so-called “involuntary celibates” (incels) or online influencers.

Online safety and awareness

1. Rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online.

2. Online risks, including the importance of being cautious about sharing personal information online and of using privacy and location settings appropriately to protect information online. Pupils should also understand the difference between public and private online spaces and related safety issues.

3. The characteristics of social media, including that some social media accounts are fake, and / or may post things which aren't real / have been created with AI. That social media users may say things in more extreme ways than they might in face-to-face situations, and that some users present highly exaggerated or idealised profiles of themselves online.

4. Not to provide material to others that they would not want to be distributed further and not to pass on personal material which is sent to them. Pupils should understand that any material provided online might be circulated, and that once this has happened there is no way of controlling where it ends up. Pupils should understand the serious risks of sending material to others, including the law concerning the sharing of images.

5. That keeping or forwarding indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime, even if the photo is of themselves or of someone who has consented, and even if the image was created by the child and/or using AI generated imagery. Pupils should understand the potentially serious consequences of acquiring or generating indecent or sexual images of someone under 18, including the potential for criminal charges and severe penalties including imprisonment. Pupils should know how to seek support and should understand that they will not be in trouble for asking for help, either at school or with the police, if an image of themselves has been shared. Pupils should also understand that sharing indecent images of people over 18 without consent is a crime.

6. What to do and how to report when they are concerned about material that has been circulated, including personal information, images or videos, and how to manage issues online.

7. About the prevalence of deepfakes including videos and photos, how deepfakes can be used maliciously as well as for entertainment, the harms that can be caused by deepfakes and how to identify them.
8. That the internet contains inappropriate and upsetting content, some of which is illegal, including unacceptable content that encourages misogyny, violence or use of weapons. Pupils should be taught where to go for advice and support about something they have seen online. Pupils should understand that online content can present a distorted picture of the world and normalise or glamorise behaviours which are unhealthy and wrong.
9. That social media can lead to escalations in conflicts, how to avoid these escalations and where to go for help and advice.
10. How to identify when technology and social media is used as part of bullying, harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and other forms of abusive and/or illegal behaviour and how to seek support about concerns.
11. That pornography, and other online content, often presents a distorted picture of people and their sexual behaviours and can negatively affect how people behave towards sexual partners. This can affect pupils who see pornographic content accidentally as well as those who see it deliberately. Pornography can also portray misogynistic behaviours and attitudes which can negatively influence those who see it.
12. How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online.
13. That websites may share personal data about their users, and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes (e.g. to enable targeted advertising).
14. That criminals can operate online scams, for example using fake websites or emails to extort money or valuable personal information. This information can be used to the detriment of the person or wider society. About risks of sextortion, how to identify online scams relating to sex, and how to seek support if they have been scammed or involved in sextortion.
15. That AI chatbots are an example of how AI is rapidly developing, and that these can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice. It is important to be able to critically think about new types of technology as they appear online and how they might pose a risk.

Being Safe

1. How to recognise, respect and communicate consent and boundaries in relationships, including in early romantic relationships (in all contexts,

including online) and early sexual relationships that might involve kissing or touching. That kindness and care for others requires more than just consent.

2. That there are a range of strategies for identifying, resisting and understanding pressure in relationships from peers or others, including sexual pressure, and how to avoid putting pressure on others.

3. How to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, how to judge when a relationship is unsafe (and recognise this in the relationships of others); how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.

4. How to increase their personal safety in public spaces, including when socialising with friends, family, the wider community or strangers. Pupils should learn ways of seeking help when needed and how to report harmful behaviour. Pupils should understand that there are strategies they can use to increase their safety, and that this does not mean they will be blamed if they are victims of harmful behaviour. Pupils might reflect on the importance of trusting their instincts when something doesn't feel right and should understand that in some situations a person might appear trustworthy but have harmful intentions.

5. What constitutes sexual harassment or sexual violence, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it.

6. That sexual harassment includes unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching, taking and/or sharing intimate or sexual images without consent, public sexual harassment, pressuring other people to do sexual things, and upskirting.

7. The concepts and laws relating to sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault.

8. The concepts and laws relating to harmful sexual behaviour, which includes all types of sexual harassment and sexual violence among young people but also includes other forms of concerning behaviour like using age-inappropriate sexual language.

9. The concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour.

10. That fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviours can be criminal, and where to get help if needed.

11. The concepts and laws relating to harms which are exploitative, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and abuse, grooming, and financial exploitation.
12. The concepts and laws relating to forced marriage.
13. The physical and emotional damage which can be caused by female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty, where to find support, and the law around these areas. This should include that it is a criminal offence for anyone to perform or assist in the performance of FGM, virginity testing or hymenoplasty, in the UK or abroad, or to fail to protect a person under 16 for whom they are responsible.
14. That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences, and that strangulation (applying pressure to the neck) is an offence, regardless of whether it causes injury. That any activity that involves applying force or pressure to someone's neck or covering someone's mouth and nose is dangerous and can lead to serious injury or death.
15. That pornography presents some activities as normal which many people do not and will never engage in, some of which can be emotionally and/or physically harmful.
16. How to seek support for their own worrying or abusive behaviour or for worrying or abusive behaviour they have experienced from others, including information on where to report abuse, and where to seek medical attention when required, for example after an assault.

[Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health](#)

1. That sex, for people who feel ready and are over the age of consent, can and should be enjoyable and positive.
2. The law about the age of consent, that they have a choice about whether to have sex, that many young people wait until they are older, and that people of all ages can enjoy intimate and romantic relationships without sex.
3. Sexual consent and their capacity to give, withhold or remove consent at any time, even if initially given, as well as the considerations that people might take into account prior to sexual activity, e.g. the law, faith and family values. That kindness and care for others require more than just consent.
4. That all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing.
5. That some sexual behaviours can be harmful.

6. The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available, including male and female condoms, and signposting towards medically accurate online information about sexual and reproductive health to support contraceptive decision-making.
7. That there are choices in relation to pregnancy. Pupils should be given medically and legally accurate and impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help.
8. How the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, are transmitted. How risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use). The use and availability of the HIV prevention drugs Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and how and where to access them. The importance of, and facts about, regular testing and the role of stigma.
9. The prevalence of STIs, the short- and long-term impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment.
10. How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead people to take risks in their sexual behaviour.
11. How and where to seek support for concerns around sexual relationships including sexual violence or harms.
12. How to counter misinformation, including signposting towards medically accurate information and further advice, and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

Appendix B – Withdrawal Request Form