

# Bedales Senior Relationships & Sex Education (RSE) Policy

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Author	Bedales Senior Head of Wellbeing & PSHE
Contributors	Bedales Senior Deputy Head (Pastoral), Bedales Senior Assistant Head (Pastoral)
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# Bedales Senior Relationships & Sex Education (RSE) Policy

## I. Introduction

Bedales aims to provide students with the information required to develop healthy nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. Students will be equipped to explore and understand their feelings, attitudes and values and those of others, and to address legal, moral and social questions relevant to forming healthy, enjoyable and fulfilling relationships.

The RSE statutory guidance (2019) requires the Wellbeing & PSHE/RSE curriculum to include **Physical health and Mental wellbeing**.

The aim of teaching students about physical health and mental wellbeing is to give them the information that they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing. It should enable them to recognise what is normal and what is an issue in themselves and others and, when issues arise, know how to seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources. Physical health and mental wellbeing are interlinked, and it is important that students understand that good physical health contributes to good mental wellbeing, and vice versa. It is important to promote students' self-control and ability to self-regulate, and strategies for doing so. This will enable them to become confident in their ability to achieve well and persevere even when they encounter setbacks or when their goals are distant, and to respond calmly and rationally to setbacks and challenges. Bedales recognises that it should engender an atmosphere that encourages openness. This will mean that students feel they can check their understanding and seek any necessary help and advice as they gain knowledge about how to promote good health and wellbeing.

I.1 Bedales School understands Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) to be a learning process about physical, moral and emotional development. It focuses on the importance of family life, relationships, respect, love and care, and is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health and safety in conjunction with physical, emotional, mental health and wellbeing.

I.2 This policy should be read alongside *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)* and the following which are available on the School website:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Child on Child Sexual Behaviour Policy
- Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Policy
- Child-on-Child Sexual Behaviour Policy - Guidance, Risk Assessment and Procedures

The Bedales Life Skills & PSHE Department Handbook and Policy is available to view on the School website: [Bedales Senior School Policies | Bedales School](#)

1.3 This policy applies to Bedales Senior from Block 3 (Year 9) to Sixth form (Years 12 & 13).

1.4 Copies of the above policies are held at the Head's Office for consultation by parents. You may also email the Head's PA ([headspa@bedales.org.uk](mailto:headspa@bedales.org.uk)) to request hard copies which can be made available in large print or another accessible format if required.

1.5 RSE will be taught sensitively and inclusively respecting the backgrounds and beliefs of students and parents, with mental wellbeing being central to these subjects.

1.6 This policy sets out both the rights of parents to withdraw their child from sex education (but not relationships education) and the process the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Assistant Head (Pastoral) will follow when considering a request from a parent. Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

## 2. Statutory and regulatory framework

2.1 This policy complies with the following:

- Department for Education (DfE) Statutory guidance: Relationships, Relationships and Sex Education, and Health Education (2019);
- DfE statutory guidance - Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024);
- DfE statutory guidance - Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (January 2015); and
- Equality Act 2010

2.2 Under the provisions of the Equality Act, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against students because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation (collectively known as the protected characteristics). Bedales will make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage, comply with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice when planning the RSE curriculum and will fully integrate discussion of LGBTQIA issues into all relevant parts of the broader RSE curriculum in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner.

## 3. Scope and responsibilities

3.1 The RSE Statutory guidance is taught within the Life Skills & PSHE curriculum and is delivered by the Head of Wellbeing & PSHE and the wellbeing team who all have significant pastoral experience

3.2 This policy is reviewed and approved annually by the Bedales Senior Leadership Team. The Governors' Education Committee review this policy on an annual basis.

3.3 The Head, working with the Head of Wellbeing & PSHE and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and Assistant Head (Pastoral), is responsible for ensuring RSE is taught consistently across Bedales Senior, and for managing requests to withdraw from non-statutory components of RSE.

## 4. Policy development

4.1 Bedales Senior is committed to working closely with parents/guardians to deliver high quality meaningful RSE.

4.2 Bedales Senior will seek to work in partnership with parents to enable parents to feel confident about the RSE program, and that it will be delivered sensitively and inclusively respecting backgrounds and beliefs.

## 5. Aims and Context

The overall aims of the School's RSE curriculum are to:

- Provide accurate information about, and understanding of, RSE issues
- Create an atmosphere where questions and discussion on RSE matters take place without embarrassment
- Develop respect for each other as individuals, and encourage people to understand one another
- Develop the confidence for students to communicate and reflect on their feelings about RSE
- Understand the importance of respect, trust, love and intimacy in relationships
- Appreciate the value of family life, marriage and the implications of parenthood
- Understand about different types of families
- Develop positive attitudes, values, integrity, self-respect and self-esteem
- Develop positive characteristics, grit, resilience, upstanding, self-awareness, self-management and regulation
- Develop and maintain strategies of self-care to manage their lifelong mental and emotional health and wellbeing
- Explore other people's attitudes and values
- Challenge and reduce discrimination based on race, disability, sexual orientation, gender, religion and protected characteristics as per the Equality Act 2010
- Address sexist, sexual, homophobic and transphobic bullying
- Gain knowledge and understanding about puberty and the changes that will take place
- Gain knowledge and understanding about reproduction and sexuality
- Counteract myths: correct misunderstanding they may have gained from the media and peers
- Be aware of the law on sexual behaviour, consent and abuse
- Seek information and advice when they need help

## 6. Parental concerns and right of withdrawal of students

### Right to withdraw

Bedales Senior recognises that parents have the final decision about their child's sex education. Parents have the right to withdraw their child from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE, up to three terms before their child turns 16, in line with government guidance.

6.1 The right to withdraw relates only to sex education and does not extend to the teaching of biological aspects of human growth and reproduction as provided as part of the science curriculum (whether part of iGCSE Biology or included as part of the curriculum for younger students).

6.2 If parents wish to exercise their right to withdraw their child from sex education they must contact the Head in writing, or via email to the Head at: [head@bedales.org.uk](mailto:head@bedales.org.uk)

6.3 The Head will discuss the request with the Head of Life Skills & PSHE, parents and, as appropriate, with the child to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. During this discussion the Head will explain the benefits of receiving RSE and any detrimental effects that withdrawal may have on the child.

6.4 Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, Bedales Senior will respect the parents request to withdraw their child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, Bedales Senior will make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

6.5 The process is the same for students with SEND. There may be exceptional circumstances where the Head may wish to take a student's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making the decision.

6.6 Where students are withdrawn from sex education, alternative arrangements will usually be made for private study in the library.

6.7 Parents do not have the right to withdraw their child from relationships education.

## 7. The Core elements of RSE

### *Knowledge and understanding*

- Learning and understanding physical development at appropriate stages
- Understanding human sexuality, sexual health, emotions and relationships
- Learning about contraception and a range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception and support services
- Learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity and the benefits to be gained from such delays
- The avoidance of unplanned pregnancy
- Learning about consent and the Law

### *Attitudes and values*

- Learning the importance of values and individual conscience and moral considerations
- Learning the value of family life, marriage and stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children
- Learning the value of respect, love and care
- Exploring, considering and understanding moral dilemmas
- Developing critical thinking as part of decision making

### *Personal and social skills*

- Learning to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively
- Developing self-respect and empathy for others
- Learning to make choices based on an understanding of difference and with an absence of prejudice
- Developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made
- Managing conflict
- Learning how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse

## **8. Morals and Values Framework**

The RSE curriculum is delivered through Life Skills and PSHE lessons. In addition, certain biological aspects are delivered through science lessons and other aspects of RSE arise in Philosophy and Religious Studies (PRE) lessons, and Global Awareness. Bedales believe that RSE should focus on the development of character and attitudes not just the acquisition of knowledge.

**The RSE curriculum is spiral and thematic within the Life Skills and PSHE curriculum.**

Our approach to RSE will be conducted within a clear morals and values framework based on the following principles:

- The value of stable, communicative and loving relationships
- Respect, understanding and empathy towards others who may have different backgrounds, cultures, sexuality, feelings and views
- The development of relationships, including sexual relationships, based on mutual consent and respect
- The right not to be abused by other people or be taken advantage of
- The right of people to follow their own sexuality and identity
- Age and circumstance appropriate RSE
- Access to help from trusted adults and medical/counselling services

## **9. Student Relationships and the Law**

It is not the intention to put the emphasis on the disciplinary aspect of this part of school life. It is our intention to encourage students to form positive relationships and friendships, which are relaxed, natural, mutually respectful and with regard to the UK age of consent (16).

However, it is important that students understand that Bedales has a responsibility to parents and to safeguard the students themselves.

If students have a romantic relationship, they should be aware that:

- I Displays of intimacy in public are unacceptable, as these are unhelpful to the working atmosphere and community life of a school.

- 2 Until students reach the age of 16; relationships between students who are more than one Block year apart may put the younger student under pressure and is therefore not considered appropriate.
- 3 Sexual intimacy and activity whilst at school must be regarded by Bedales as a serious breach of discipline, and could in certain cases, lead to expulsion.

The above also applies if a student has a relationship with someone who is not a member of the Bedales community.

It is not our wish to emphasise disciplinary consequences, however, we must safeguard all students in our care. Bedales wishes to be supportive in guiding students in this matter.

## 10. Provision

### 10.1 Sexuality:

Some of our students will define themselves as LGBTQIA. Students may also have LGBTQIA parents/guardians, other family members and/or friends. Our approach to RSE will include sensitive, honest consideration of sexuality. Our pastoral, medical and counselling support will take account of the needs of LGBTQIA students. We shall also actively tackle LGBTQIA bullying, victimisation and phobia.

### 10.2 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND):

We shall take account of the fact that some students may have learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties or physical disabilities that result in particular RSE needs. Teaching and resources will be differentiated as appropriate to address the needs of these children in order for them to have full access and inclusiveness in the content of RSE.

### 10.3 Contraceptive advice:

Students will be taught, in the context of sexual intimacy and safer sex, that intercourse should always involve using a condom to help protect against unwanted pregnancy and contraction of STIs. Questions about forms of contraception will be answered accurately and honestly. If students need further personal advice about contraceptive use, counselling and medical support will be sought from appropriate agencies and personnel.

## 11. RSE Curriculum content

The RSE curriculum is delivered in a developmental manner so that issues are explored in greater depth as students mature. The following topics are addressed:

### BLOCK 3 (Year 9)

Emotional and physical changes – Understanding puberty, body changes and emotional development.

Healthy relationships - Friendships, families, understanding boundaries.

Consent – What consent means in relationships and the importance of respecting personal boundaries.

Digital Citizenship – Safe use of technology, online relationships, understanding consent in a digital space.

Respect for Diversity – different family structures, cultural perspectives on relationships and sexuality.

#### BLOCK 4 (Year 10)

**Sexual Health and Wellbeing:** In-depth knowledge of sexual health, contraception, and STI prevention.

**Sexual and Emotional Consent:** Exploring consent further, including scenarios and discussions on coercion and manipulation.

**Healthy, Unhealthy, and Abusive Relationships:** Identifying the signs of unhealthy and abusive relationships, types of abuse and understanding how to seek help.

**Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** Understanding and respecting different sexual orientations and gender identities.

**Sexuality, Society, and Media Influence:** The impact of media and societal expectations on relationships and sexual behaviour including sexting and sending, receiving and generating nude images.

#### BLOCK 5 (Year 11)

**Sex on Trial** – Consent, respectful relationships, emotional and physical pleasure, contraception refresher and Female Genital Mutilation.

**The Festival** – Personal preparation, Upstander vs Bystander, effects of drugs and alcohol of decision making, spiking, risk management.

**Health** – Mental Health – supporting a friend, boundaries, fertility and parenthood

**Online Vs IRL (In Real Life)** – Media literacy, Respectful relationships online, Risk Management online, how and where to seek help, Sextortion and grooming.

#### 6.1 (Year 12)

**Launch** – A refresher and levelling up to ensure all students have been given the same message on a range of topics including; Leadership skills, Online behaviours, Sex, Consent, Wanted/Unwanted behaviours in social contexts, Sexual health.

**World of Work** – Linking in with the careers programme, then a focus on Wanted/Unwanted behaviours in the Workplace, Rights (Protected Characteristics), Developing positive relationships in the workplace, Workplace relationships (Power dynamics)



Feel Good Fete – Students select a social issue and synthesise it with a hobby or interest they have to develop a presentation artifact. Students are guided towards credible research materials.

The 6.2 (Year 13) curriculum is delivered via the 'Inspirational Speakers' programme which evolves each year. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Relationships; consent, safe sex, HIV and protection and treatment
- Relationship abuse; coercion, rape, sexual assault
- Mental Health; suicide, treatment, strategies for wellbeing
- Managing stress and anxiety
- Body Image and eating disorders
- Drugs; addiction and mental health

## 12. Methodology and Resources

A wide range of teaching methods is utilised, that enables students to actively participate in their own learning and personal development. This includes the use of academic research, quizzes, case studies, role-play, film and documentaries, small group discussion and use of appropriate guest speakers. Teaching is conducted in a safe environment through the use of respectful partnership agreements and dialogue so that students are not expected to discuss their own personal issues in class. Teaching resources are selected on the basis of their appropriateness to students.

### 12.1 Responding to Student Questions

Bedales believes that students should have opportunities to have their genuine questions and curiosity answered in an approachable and matter-of-fact manner. However, occasionally a student may ask a particularly explicit or embarrassing question in class. If a question is too explicit or inappropriate to answer in class at that moment, it will be acknowledged and responded to later with the student who asked it. The teacher will establish clear parameters of what is appropriate and inappropriate in class by discussing ground rules with students and by taking an approach that ensures students are mature and sensible.

## 13. Medical Provision

### Under 16s' entitlement to confidential health advice and treatment

The Health Centre and School Medical Officer (GP) follow guidelines which allow them to give advice and treatment to young people under 16 years old without the knowledge or consent of the parents/guardians if that is in the young person's best interests. They will, however, encourage the young person to talk to their parents/guardians. Only in cases where there is a safeguarding risk in the boarding environment or suspected abuse and serious risk of harm would the health professional follow the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures and breach the young person's confidentiality. The young person would be kept fully informed at all stages of the procedure. When the Health Centre sees students on a one-to-one basis, they will follow these professional guidelines. RSE lessons

will inform students of their entitlement to seek confidential help, including contraceptive and sexual health advice and treatment, and they will be taught about how they can access local services for this both inside and outside school.

#### **14. Safeguarding and Child Protection**

If a teacher is concerned that a student is at risk of abuse, they must follow the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures. Students are made aware of the disciplinary consequences of engaging in sexual activity whilst at school.

**However, there may be occasions when a teacher learns that a student under 16 is having or contemplating having sexual intercourse whilst not at school. In this case the teacher should:**

- Make sure the student is aware of the need to seek contraceptive and sexual health advice and knows how to get this.
- Encourage the student to talk to a parent/guardian.
- Decide whether there are child protection issues: underage sex or a suspected pregnancy are not, in themselves, child protection issues unless the student is under 13 years of age, and there is suspected coercion or abuse.

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NB: All School Policies are available to staff and can be found here:

[Whole School Policies Home](#)