



Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

Approved by: Staffing, Learning & Leadership
Committee

Date: 14 January 2026

Last reviewed by: Simon Adams – January 2026

Next review due by: January 2027

**This Policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Equality, Diversity
& Inclusion Policy; Personal, Social, Health & Economic Policy; and SEND
Policy**

Introduction and Aims

Pupils at Downlands Community School are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. Our aim is to ensure that in this environment, children and young people know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is compulsory in all secondary schools in England. At Downlands this is open to annual review. RSHE, more than any other curriculum subject, has to remain flexible to respond to an ever changing world, which continually throws up new risks and opportunities for our pupils.

The topics covered within the RSHE curriculum are wide-ranging and at times there may be understandable and legitimate areas of contention. This policy is designed to outline the purpose and content of RSHE, whilst ensuring that all of the compulsory subject content is age and developmentally appropriate. We aim to teach RSHE sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of pupils and parents while always with the aim of providing pupils with the knowledge they need of the law and the legal implications of their actions.

At key stage 3 we aim to put in place the key building blocks of healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online. In Key Stage 4, teaching will build on the knowledge acquired in the younger years and develop further pupils' understanding with an increased focus on risk areas such as intimate relationships and sex.

Our belief at Downlands is that mental wellbeing is central to a pupil's success and will enable them to build positive relationships. We know that children and young people are increasingly experiencing challenges, and that young people are at particular risk of feeling lonely, anxious, pressurised and stressed. The RSHE curriculum will give them the knowledge and capability to take care of themselves and receive support if

problems arise. RSHE is taught in a wider context of helping to foster pupils' wellbeing and develop resilience and character that we know are fundamental to young people being happy, successful and productive members of society. Central to this is pupils' ability to believe that they can achieve goals, both academic and personal; to stick to tasks that will help them achieve those goals, even when the reward may be distant or uncertain; and to recover from knocks and challenging periods in their lives. We play an important role in Character Education at Downlands by promoting the ROCKS (resilience, optimism, community, kindness and self-awareness).

Under the provisions of the Equality Act, Downlands will not unlawfully discriminate on the grounds of age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation and the delivery of RSHE will reflect this. At Downlands our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy (SEND) sets out how we make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage and when planning and delivering the RSHE curriculum, we take account of the SEND Code of Practice, RSHE Policy and Personal Development Curriculum (PDC) Department Curriculum Development and Review Plan.

The RSHE policy and curriculum has been produced in line with statutory guidance from the Department for Education, with input from our expert staff and in consultation with parents. We are clear that parents and carers are the prime educators for children on many of these matters. At Downlands we aim to work in collaboration with parents and carers, building on what pupils learn at home. This policy and the RSHE curriculum reflects our School's context and the diversity of modern Britain as well as recognising that the role of educating every pupil is a partnership between home and school. We aim to always deliver content in a sensitive, objective and balanced manner to enable pupils to comprehend the diversity of social attitudes and behaviour in modern-day society. This will empower them to consider their own attitudes and actions and make informed, reasoned and responsible decisions while they are at school, at home and in adult life.

The RSHE policy and curriculum will be reviewed on an annual basis with consultation with parents where appropriate.

RSHE Curriculum Overview

The RSHE curriculum is part of the whole school PDC curriculum, which is planned and designed to be age appropriate, under the following broad themes:

- Relationships
- Health and Wellbeing
- Living in the Wider World
- My Future Self
- Online / Digital (cyber safety, etc...)

See PDC Programmes of Study and Schemes of Work (online) for a more detailed breakdown.

Right to Withdraw

Parents have the right to request that their pupil be withdrawn from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of the statutory RSHE. Parents must state their request in writing to the Head. Parents will then be invited into School to discuss the request to ensure that their wishes are fully understood. We will clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum alongside the benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on their son or daughter, e.g. the emotional and social effects of being excluded as well as the likelihood of the pupil hearing his/her peers' version of what was learned in the class rather than what was delivered by the expert teacher. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the school will respect the parents' request to withdraw their pupil. Requests from parents must be made annually for consideration. However, three terms before a pupil turns 16 years old s/he is legally able to make his/her own decision as to whether s/he receives sex education. The School will make arrangements to provide the pupil with sex education during one of those terms and a parental request of withdrawal will not be granted. There is no statutory right to withdraw from relationship education.

Quality Assurance

The quality of RSHE education at Downlands is monitored through our Quality Assurance cycle. This consists of regular pupil voice and learning walk by the Head of Teaching and Learning (HOTL) of PDC and the Senior Leadership Team, as well as regular book scrutiny by HOTL.

Training

The HOTL for PDC is responsible for the organisation and delivery of staff training. This is delivered through staff inset, sharing of good practice and distribution of literature and resources. This is supported by county advisors and informed by suggested best practice as recognised by the Personal, Social Health and Economic (PSHE) Association, of which the school is a member.

Documents that inform the school's RSHE policy include:

- Education Act (1996)
- Learning and Skills Act (2000)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Supplementary Guidance SRE for the 21st Century (2014)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – Statutory Safeguarding Guidance (2021)
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)