ST BENEDICT'S SCHOOL
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Relationship and Sex Education Policy

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"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full."
John 10:10

1. Purpose of this policy

This policy sets out how St Benedict's School provides Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) to secondary students in a way that is age-appropriate, inclusive, safeguarding-focused, and consistent with the school's Catholic and Benedictine ethos.

This policy is the school's separate written statement on the provision of RSE, as required by the Independent School Standards.

It explains:

- the aims of RSE at St Benedict's
- the statutory and regulatory framework for RSE
- what is taught, when, and how
- how RSE is delivered safely and effectively
- how the school supports students with additional needs, including students with SEND
- how safeguarding is embedded throughout the programme
- the role of staff, leaders, governors, students and families
- parental consultation, access to materials, and the right to request withdrawal from sex education elements of RSE

2. Ethos and principles

At St Benedict's, we want students to grow into thoughtful, compassionate and morally responsible young people who are well prepared for adult life. We want them to develop the knowledge, understanding and confidence to form healthy relationships, make safe and informed decisions, and act with dignity and respect towards themselves and others.

RSE at St Benedict's is rooted in the school's Catholic and Benedictine ethos. Teaching reflects the dignity of the human person, the importance of moral responsibility, and the value of kindness, honesty, integrity, self-respect and care for others. At the same time, teaching is factual, balanced, age-appropriate and compliant with the law.

The school may explain Catholic teaching on relationships, sexual ethics and marriage. It will do so in a way that does not undermine respect for other people and does not encourage unlawful discrimination. Students are taught clearly that all people must be treated with equal dignity and respect, and that harassment, prejudice, discrimination, coercion and abuse are never acceptable.

3. Statutory and regulatory framework

This policy has regard to:

- the Independent School Standards guidance, April 2026
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- the statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education, as referenced in the ISS guidance
- the Equality Act 2010, as referenced in the ISS guidance and KCSIE

This policy is intended to meet the requirements that:

- every registered pupil receiving secondary education is provided with relationships and sex education, except where they are excused from sex education in accordance with the regulations
- proprietors must have regard to the relevant statutory guidance when making provision for RSE
- schools must make and keep up to date a separate written statement of policy for RSE
- schools must consult parents before making or revising that policy
- schools must publish the policy on their website and provide a copy free of charge to anyone who asks for one
- PSHE and RSE must encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010
- teaching must not undermine fundamental British values and must not discriminate unlawfully
- safeguarding arrangements must have regard to KCSIE

4. Aims of RSE

The aims of RSE at St Benedict's are to help students:

- develop self-knowledge, self-respect, self-esteem and confidence
- understand the characteristics of healthy, respectful and stable relationships
- recognise and respond to unhealthy, coercive, exploitative, abusive or violent behaviour
- understand the law relating to relationships, sex, consent, abuse, image sharing and safeguarding
- keep themselves and others safe, including online
- communicate clearly, set boundaries, seek help and make informed decisions
- understand puberty, sexual health, fertility, contraception and pregnancy in an age-appropriate way
- respect other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010
- understand the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society

5. Definition and scope

For the purposes of this policy, RSE includes:

- **Relationships education**: learning about families, friendships, respectful relationships, online relationships and staying safe
- **Sex education**: learning about intimate relationships, sexual activity, consent, fertility, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and related choices
- **Health education content taught through the wider PSHE programme**: learning about mental wellbeing, physical health, puberty, menstruation, healthy lifestyles and risk

This policy covers the secondary phase. It should be read alongside the school's wider PSHE policy, child protection and safeguarding policy, behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, online safety policy and SEND policy.

6. Curriculum content

RSE is taught through a planned, age-appropriate and carefully sequenced programme. Teaching revisits and deepens key ideas over time so that students build knowledge, understanding and confidence as they mature.

6.1 Relationships education

Students are taught about:

- different types of family life and caring relationships
- friendship, trust, loyalty, kindness and respect
- healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships
- boundaries, privacy and personal space
- consent and communication
- peer pressure, coercion and manipulation
- online relationships and digital boundaries
- sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour
- domestic abuse, including teenage relationship abuse
- where and how to seek help

6.2 Sex education

Students are taught, in an age-appropriate way, about:

- intimate and sexual relationships
- sexual consent and the law
- fertility and reproduction

- contraception
- sexually transmitted infections
- pregnancy and pregnancy choices
- sexual health services and support
- the law relating to sexual offences, exploitation and image sharing
- the influence of pornography and harmful online sexual content

Teaching does not encourage early sexual activity. It aims to equip students to make informed, safe, lawful and responsible decisions, and to recognise pressure, coercion, exploitation or abuse.

6.3 Safeguarding-related RSE content

RSE includes teaching about:

- grooming
- child sexual exploitation
- child criminal exploitation where relevant to relationships, coercion and abuse
- sexual abuse and sexual assault
- harmful sexual behaviour
- online sexual harassment and abuse
- sharing nudes and semi-nudes, including AI-generated sexual imagery
- pornography and the ways it can distort expectations, attitudes and behaviour
- domestic abuse
- forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- stalking, rape and sexual offences

Students are taught to recognise unsafe situations, understand that abuse is never the victim's fault, and seek help promptly from trusted adults or support services.

6.4 Equality, diversity and respect

RSE teaches respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity

- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Students are taught:

- that all people are to be treated with dignity and respect
- that harassment, discrimination and prejudice are never acceptable
- that stereotypes and language which demean others are to be challenged including misogyny and the manosphere risks
- that people may hold different beliefs, including religious beliefs, and that respectful discussion is expected

The school may explain Catholic teaching on marriage and sexual ethics. It will do so in a way that is balanced, lawful and respectful of others.

6.5 Online safety within RSE

Online safety is embedded throughout the RSE programme. Students are taught about:

- respectful online behaviour
- online sexual harassment and coercion
- image sharing and consent
- the risks associated with pornography
- how harmful content, algorithms and online communities can influence beliefs and behaviour
- how to report harmful content or contact

6.6 Withdrawal from sex education

Parents have the right to request that their child be wholly or partly excused from the sex education elements of RSHE.

Parents cannot withdraw their child from:

- relationships education
- teaching that forms part of the science curriculum
- safeguarding content necessary to keep students safe

Withdrawal requests should be made in writing to the Head. The school will:

- discuss the request with parents
- explain the implications of withdrawal

- consider the student's circumstances and welfare
- provide purposeful, age-appropriate alternative learning for students who are withdrawn
- In exceptional circumstances the Head can refuse a request for withdrawal, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or pupil's vulnerability suggests that withdrawal should not be permitted.

From three terms before a student turns sixteen, the student may choose to receive sex education even if previously withdrawn, in line with statutory guidance as referenced in the ISS guidance.

All discussions and decisions about withdrawal will be documented.