

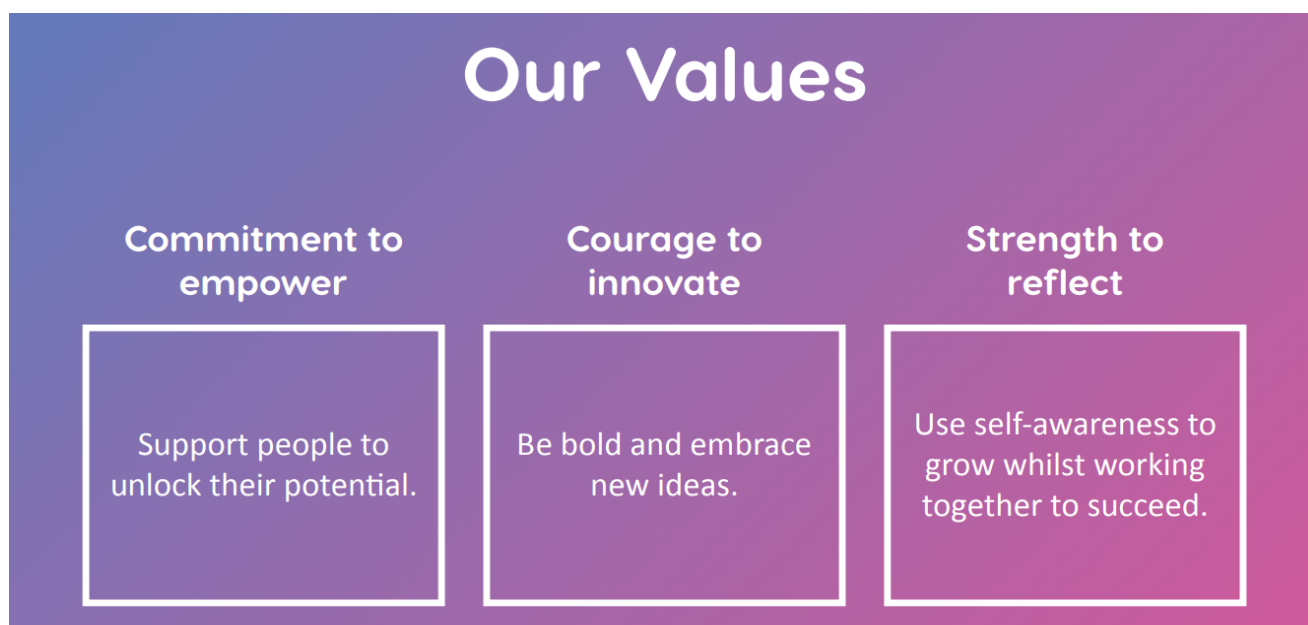
Relationships & Sex Education (RSE) Policy

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1 Introduction



Doucecroft school is a school for pupils with autism and associated special educational needs. The school population is predominantly male. The school is committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of all its pupils and this is at the forefront of its work. The RSE Policy is one of a range of policies and procedures which promote safeguarding including Safeguarding & Child Protection, E-Safety and Intimate Care.

As part of one of our values, Commitment to Empower, our vision for PSHE is to understand and support autistic pupils so that they can access opportunities and fulfil their potential. Forming meaningful and healthy relationships contributes to our pupils to achieve that potential.

Relationships and sex education is a lifelong process of acquiring information and forming attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacies. All schools are required to provide a programme of sex education for pupils of secondary age, which should form part of this process. It is recognised at Doucecroft that all pupils develop both physically and emotionally at different rates, and that sex education is an important aspect of their educational entitlement. Pupils have a right to all the knowledge about sex that they can comprehend and that is appropriate to their stage of personal and psycho-sexual development.

Throughout their school life, pupils are encouraged to learn how to make choices and decisions, to develop autonomy and take on responsibilities wherever possible. Learning about their own sexual development and an awareness of their relationships with others re-emphasises and reinforces these skills.

The RSE Policy and programme aims to provide pupils with the skills to conduct the relationships they may have with others with dignity and assertiveness and to avoid being exploited. Our mission is to work together to put the needs of autistic people at the centre of everything we do.

2 Statutory Requirements

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 are made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and provide that pupils receiving primary education must be taught Relationships Education, pupils receiving secondary education must be taught Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and that all primary and secondary pupils must be

taught Health Education. The new subjects of Relationships Education and RSE must be taught in all maintained schools, academies and independent schools.

Health Education is compulsory in all schools except independent schools. Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) continue to be compulsory in independent schools.

In teaching RSE, we must have regard to [guidance](#) issued by the Secretary of State as outlined in section 403 of the [Education Act 1996](#). At Doucecroft, we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

3 Outcomes

- To prepare pupils for puberty and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene.
- To teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies.
- To help pupils form and maintain positive relationships with others.
- To encourage responsible behaviour for themselves and towards others.
- To provide pupils with a range of strategies which reduce the risk of exploitation, misunderstanding and abuse.
- To provide knowledge and information to which all pupils are entitled in a sensitive manner and where appropriate to their stage of development.

4 Policy Development

This policy has been developed recognising the particular needs of autistic children. Consideration has been given to the individual needs of pupils with ASC within the planning of the programme and within the teaching strategies used to ensure no pupil is denied access to sex education. Working closely with parents is essential in this important aspect of the pupil's curriculum. The school welcomes the involvement of parents and carers in discussing the pupil's sex education programme and in sharing the responsibilities to help the pupil assimilate the concept and skills involved.

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils (as appropriate) and parents. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

- Review – A working group pulled together all relevant information including relevant guidance.
- Staff consultation – All education staff were given the opportunity to complete an RSE questionnaire and look at the policy and make recommendations.
- Parent consultation – Parents were given an opportunity to complete an RSE questionnaire and comment on the draft version of this policy.
- Pupil consultation – Pupils (where appropriate) were given the opportunity to complete an RSE questionnaire; it helped us recognise pupils' knowledge and needs about RSE.
- Ratification – Once amendments were made, the policy was shared with Trustees and ratified.

All pupils are offered a programme of sex education and personal development which is commensurate with their age, cognitive ability and development level. It is recognised that, in order to be effective, information needs to be presented in a clear and unambiguous way and that repetition and reinforcement will be necessary. The language used must be understood by the pupil and supported wherever possible with visual materials. Pupils with autism may well experience difficulty within the areas of abstract thought and use of imagination. To help avoid confusion, some resources will necessarily be explicit, such as educational videos, resources packs and 3D anatomically correct models.

5 Definition of Relationships Education

Relationship Education includes the key building blocks of healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online.

6 Definition of RSE

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity.

RSE involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values.

RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

The school ensures that the Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies also undertake training in inter-agency working and other matters as appropriate.

7 The Curriculum

7.1 Delivery of RSE

We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, considering the age, needs and feelings of pupils. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner, so they are fully informed and don't see answers online.

RSE is taught within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. It enables the teaching of fundamental British Values and gives pupils the tools to deal with spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum. Lessons will either be delivered in small groups or individually, supported by the PSHE Lead and Therapy team.

Primary

Relationships education focuses on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships including:

- Families and people who care for me.
- Caring friendships.
- Respectful relationships.
- Online relationships.
- Being safe.
- Developing bodies

Sex education is not compulsory for primary age learners, key stages 1&2. If necessary, in order to meet the needs of pupils, sex education will be covered in primary. This will be undertaken in consultation with parents.

Primary sex education will include:

- About growth and the other ways the body can change and develop, particularly during adolescence. This topic should include the human lifecycle, and puberty should be discussed as a stage in this process.
- The correct names of body parts, including the penis, vulva, vagina, testicles, scrotum, nipples. Pupils should understand that all of these parts of the body are private and have skills to understand and express their own boundaries around these body parts.
- The facts about the menstrual cycle, including physical and emotional changes, whilst the average age of the onset of menstruation is twelve, periods can start at eight, so covering this topic before girls' periods start will help them understand what to expect and avoid distress.

Secondary

RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds including:

- Families.
- Respectful relationships including friendships.
- Online and media.
- Being safe.
- Developing bodies
- Intimate and sexual relationships including sexual health.

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBTQ parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures) along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them, for example looked after children or young carers.

At secondary, teaching will build on the knowledge acquired at primary and develop further pupils' understanding of health, with an increased focus on risk areas such as drugs and alcohol, as well as introducing knowledge about intimate relationships and sex.

They will learn about the main changes that take place between males and females, and the implication for emotional and physical health.

There will be teaching about the facts of puberty and the changing adolescent body, including brain development. Information about menstrual and gynaecological health will include: What is an average period; period problems such as premenstrual syndrome; heavy menstrual bleeding; endometriosis; polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS); and when to seek help from healthcare professionals. They will also learn about facts of reproductive health, including fertility and menopause, and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women.

Teaching about mental wellbeing is central to these subjects, especially as a priority for parents is their children's happiness. The subject content will give them the knowledge and capability to take care of themselves and receive support if problems arise. (DfE 2025, p4)

Sex education is compulsory for secondary age learners, key stages 3&4.

Key aspects of the law relating to sex which should be taught include the age of consent, what consent is and is not, the definitions and recognition of rape, sexual assault and harassment, and choices permitted by the law around pregnancy. (DfE, 2019, p26).

7.2 The Framework

At Doucecroft, we categorise pupils by Pathways. Pathway 1 are pupils with differences in their sensory processing, often typified by needing high levels of support and having limited verbal communication. We support these pupils with the Equals Informal and Semi Formal Curriculum using elements of the Early Years and PSHE Association Planning Frameworks. Pathway 2 learners follow the PSHE Association Planning Framework for pupils with SEND.

The framework is organised into **six** sections:

1. **Self-Awareness** (Me, who I am, my likes, dislikes, strengths and interests).
2. **Self-Care, Support and Safety** Looking after myself and keeping safe; aspects of Relationships and Sex Education).
3. **Managing Feelings** (Understanding feelings, and that how I feel and how others feel affects choices and behaviour; aspects of Relationships and Sex Education).
4. **Changing and Growing** (How I and others are changing, new opportunities and responsibilities; aspects of Relationships and Sex Education).
5. **Healthy Lifestyles** (Being and keeping healthy, physically and mentally).
6. **The World I Live In** (Living confidently in the wider world).

The framework identifies leaving outcomes for each topic in progressive stages, starting with the first stage 'Encountering' through to the final stage 'Enhancement'.

Encountering	Foundation	Core	Development	Enrichment	Enhancement
effective engagement in the learning process	underpinning learning	fundamental learning elements	increasing understanding of learning	deepening of application of learning	applying learning in different contexts

Where appropriate, pupils will work within the framework written for their key stage. The stage that a pupil will work towards will depend on their prior knowledge and understanding of the topic. Teachers may need to adapt the curriculum as and when necessary, according to the individual needs of their pupils. For instance, the understanding of puberty should be discussed upon onset and this will be dependent on individual development and require bespoke support.

Sex education is taught by teaching staff. Each pupil's programme is carefully structured and organised to ensure continuity and consistency and to maximise the effectiveness of the teaching and learning. Lessons will take place in small groups according to the maturity, communication and developmental levels of the pupils, but the opportunity for individual work will be created as appropriate.

It is not anticipated that people from outside Doucecroft School will be involved in the actual teaching of sex and relationships education, but it is recognised that, where relevant, visitors to the school need to be made aware of the school's policy regarding associated issues, such as:

- Language/terminology (body parts, addressing pupils etc).
- Treating pupils with respect and dignity.
- Giving opportunities for further independence and choice.
- Guidance upon personal contact and touching enforcement of concepts such as 'private'.
- Expectations of appropriate behaviour (appropriateness of sitting on laps, hugging, kissing etc).

8 Engagement with Parents and Other Stakeholders

Working closely with parents and carers is essential at all stages. Parents are welcome to meet the staff who will be involved in the teaching to discuss the programme, see the resources and advise of any religion or cultural views which will need to be taken into consideration. By working together with parents, it is anticipated that sex education will become a valuable and essential aspect of the young person's curriculum.

Feedback from parents (and staff and pupils) received both informally and at annual reviews will help towards assessing how effective the aims, content, methods and resources have been in promoting the child's learning.

Parents Right to Withdraw

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. In secondary, this is at the discretion of the Headteacher, who can refuse a request in exceptional circumstances, for example because of safeguarding concerns or a pupil's specific vulnerability. We will document the discussions and process to ensure a record is kept.

In primary schools, headteachers must automatically grant a request to withdraw a pupil from sex education, other than content that is taught as part of the science curriculum.

From three terms before the pupil turns 16, a pupil can choose to opt back into sex education even if their parent has requested withdrawal. For example, if a pupil turns 16 during the autumn term, the pupil can opt

back into sex education at any time after the start of the previous autumn term. Schools should ensure that pupils know they have this option.

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their pupils from relationships and health education, nor can they be withdrawn from topics taught as part of the science curriculum, including science topics related to puberty or sexual reproduction.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing and addressed to the Headteacher (Appendix 7). The Headteacher will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action.

9 Assessment & Monitoring

Pupils' development in RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems. Pupils' learning is assessed and recorded on Evidence for Learning.

The delivery of RSE is monitored termly by the PSHE Lead and Senior Leadership Team through planning, learning conversations, observations and assessment.

10 Roles & Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees will approve the RSE Policy and review its effectiveness within the school.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from the non-statutory/non-science sex education components of the RSE programme.

The PSHE Lead

The PSHE lead is responsible for monitoring the delivery and assessment of RSE education across the school, to ensure that appropriate resources are sourced and to provide support and training to staff teams as and when required. The PSHE lead is answerable to the Headteacher.

Teachers/Team Leaders/Key Staff

Teachers, Team Leaders and key staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way.
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE.
- Monitoring progress.
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils.
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory/non-science components of RSE.

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSE are encouraged to discuss this with the Headteacher.

Therapy Team

The Therapy Team are responsible for supporting the class teams in the planning, resourcing and delivery of the RSE curriculum.

Pupils

Pupils will be supported appropriately to enable them to engage fully in RSE and when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

11 Safeguarding

At Doucecroft, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be made aware of the planning and teaching of RSE. Our safeguarding policy can be found on our website under the 'School Information' tab.

If there are any disclosures during the lesson (or at any time) as a result of the teaching content, the school's safeguarding reporting protocol will be followed.

We have many complex individual pupils and some with backgrounds, levels of understanding, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and other factors that make them vulnerable. Therefore, we hold a **safeguarding list** for pupils that have been identified as needing express permission from those holding parental responsibility prior to taking part in elements of the RSE curriculum deemed sensitive. The PSHE/RSE Coordinator is responsible for letting parents know and in some cases, receiving permissions prior to lessons that may cause distress.

Parents also have a shared responsibility to identify areas within the curriculum that they feel are unsuitable.

12 Training

Staff are trained on the delivery of RSE as part of their induction and continued professional development. All staff teaching PSHE are expected to follow 'Best practice principles for teaching PSHE education' (Appendix 8) and 'Establishing a safe teaching and learning environment for PSHE education lessons' (Appendix 9).

13 Appendix 1: Curriculum Map

At Doucecroft our curriculum is taught over a 3-year rolling cycle. However, puberty is taught every year.

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Autumn 1 Self-Awareness	KS1/2: 1) Things we are good at 2) Kind and unkind behaviours KS3/4: 1) Personal strengths 2) Skills for learning	KS1/2: 1) Playing and working together 2) People who are special to us KS3/4: 1) Prejudice and discrimination	KS1/2: 1) Getting on with others KS3/4: 1) Managing pressure
Autumn 2 Self-Care, Support and Safety	KS1/2: 1) Taking care of ourselves 2) Keeping safe KS3/4: 1) Feeling unwell 2) Feeling frightened and worried	KS1/2: 1) Trust 2) Keeping safe online KS3/4: 1) Accidents and risk 2) Keeping safe online	KS1/2: 1) Public and private KS3/4: 1) Emergency situations 2) Public and private 3) Gambling
Spring 1 Managing Feelings	KS1/2: 1) Identifying and expressing feelings	KS1/2: 1) Identifying and expressing feelings 2) Managing strong feelings	KS1/2: 1) Identifying and expressing feelings 2) Managing strong feelings

	2) Managing strong feelings KS3/4: 1) Self-esteem and unkind comments	KS3/4: 1) Strong feelings 2) Romantic feelings and sexual attraction	KS3/4: 1) Expectations of relationships/abuse
Spring 2 Changing and Growing	KS1/2: 1) Baby to adult 2) Changes at puberty KS3/4: 1) Puberty 2) Positive/unhealthy relationships	KS1/2: 1) Dealing with touch KS3/4: 1) Friendships 2) Intimate relationships, consent and contraception	KS1/2: 1) Different types of relationships KS3/4: 1) Long-term relationships/parenthood
Summer 1 Healthy Lifestyles	KS1/2: 1) Healthy eating KS3/4: 1) Elements of a healthy lifestyle 2) Mental wellbeing	KS1/2: 1) Taking care of physical health KS3/4: 1) Physical activity 2) Healthy eating 3) Body image	KS1/2: 1) Keeping well KS3/4: 1) Medicinal drugs 2) Drugs, alcohol & tobacco
Summer 2 The World I Live In	KS1/2: 1) Respecting differences between people 2) Jobs people do KS3/4: 1) Human diversity 2) Rights and responsibilities	KS1/2: 1) Rules and laws 2) Taking care of the environment KS3/4: 1) Managing online information 2) Taking care of the environment	KS1/2: 1) Belonging to a community 2) Money KS3/4: 1) Preparing for adulthood 2) Managing finances

14 Appendix 2: By the End of KS2 Pupils Should Know

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Families and people who care about me	- That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability. - The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives. - That others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care. - That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up.

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
	• That marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong. • How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed.
Caring friendships	• How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends. • The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties. • That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded. • That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right. • How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed.
Respectful relationships	• The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or background), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs. • Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships. • The conventions of courtesy and manners. • The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness. • That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority. • About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help. • What a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive. • The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults.
Online relationships	• That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not. • That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous. • The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them. • How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met. • How information and data is shared and used online.
Being safe	• What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context). • About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe. • That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact. • How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know.

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
	• How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult. • How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard. • How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so. • Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources.

15 Appendix 3: By the End of KS4 Pupils Show Know

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Families	• That there are different types of committed, stable relationships. • How these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children. • What marriage is, including their legal status e.g., that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony. • Marriage and forced marriage -The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 comes into force on Monday 27 February 2023. Under existing law, people can enter a marriage or civil partnership at age 18, or 16 to 17 with parental or judicial consent. The Act raises the minimum marriage and civil partnership age to 18, removing all consent requirements. • Why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into. • The characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships. • The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting. • How to: determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy: judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships); and, how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.
Respectful relationships, including friendships	• The characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online) including trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. This includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship. • Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships. • How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). • That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs. • About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help. • That some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control. • What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable. • The legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal.

TOPIC	PUPILS SHOULD KNOW
Online and media	• Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online. • About online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online. • Not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them. • What to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online. • The impact of viewing harmful content. • That specifically sexually explicit material e.g. pornography presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners. • That sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail. • How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online.
Being safe	• The concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships. • How people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn (in all contexts, including online).
Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	• How to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship. • 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. • The facts about reproductive health, including fertility and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women. • That there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others. • That they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex. • The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available. • The facts around pregnancy including miscarriage. • That there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help). • How the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing. • About the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment. • How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour. • How to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

16 Appendix 4: Guidance of Specific Matters

Masturbation in ASC

The most common concerns associated with masturbation in people with disabilities include:

- The person is considered to be unable to masturbate properly.
- The person does not know how to masturbate.
- The person is masturbating for long periods.
- The person is masturbating inappropriately, such as in public areas.
- The person is using inappropriate objects or means to help them masturbate.
- The person becomes frustrated or aggressive during or after masturbating.
- The person masturbates to the point of self-injury.

The severity of autistic features, the level of intellectual disability and the presence of verbal language are highly related to the nature of sexual behaviours.

A lack of alternative outlets for sexual urges and a tendency for self-stimulatory behaviour can result in frequent masturbation.

Anal masturbation: Sensations induced by the presence of many tactile sensors in the anus and area surrounding it (Agnew, 2000). This is an important consideration for people with ASC who are often very sensory stimulated (Wiggins et al., 2009). Anal masturbation may be an attempt to relieve intense itching from a medical condition and then becomes a motivation for persistent anal masturbation.

Inappropriate Masturbation in ASC

Possible reasons for inappropriate masturbation autistic young people:

- Lack of structured routine and time made available for masturbation.
- Lack of education.
- Lack of opportunity for privacy and/or use of bedrooms.
- It may be discouraged during the day.
- There may be no locks on bedroom doors to provide privacy.
- Staff, carers, parents, siblings and other residents may not respect the privacy of another person's bedroom.
- The person may not have access to the sexual areas of their body due to the wearing of incontinence pads or restrictive clothing.
- Private spaces in day services are not made available.
- The use of medication may cause sexual side effects.
- A lack of opportunity for individualised sensory stimulation.
- Hormone levels can influence sensitivity to tactile stimulation.

Contraceptive Advice to Pupils

Questions about contraception will be answered accurately and honestly within the pupils' level of understanding. If a pupil needs further personal advice about contraception, the school will seek to access appropriate support and counselling wherever possible. Doucecroft adheres to the principle that the individual pupil, having received full and comprehensive information, should be encouraged to make his or her own decisions regarding contraception, as far as possible.

Sexual Abuse

It is recognised that children and adults with learning difficulties remain vulnerable members of society, and that incidents of exploitation and abuse do occur. This accentuates the need for pupils to receive information about sex and personal matters, (to help pupils become aware of their own sexuality and to develop

strategies to protect themselves from being placed on potentially abusive or threatening situations) rather than providing reasons for avoiding sex education.

Should a member of staff become concerned about a pupil or a pupil makes a disclosure, this will be progressed through the school's Child Protection procedure. Mencap has adapted the NSPCC guide, 'The Underwear Rule', to provide children with information to help keep them safe.

HIV/AIDS

Pupils' needs to be prepared for as much independence as possible. The sex education syllabus covers, where appropriate, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS. Staff will endeavour to make pupils aware of such diseases, whilst seeking to alleviate anxiety, and counteract any prejudices encountered. An emphasis will be placed upon the precautionary measures that may be taken to reduce the risk of infection.

17 Appendix 5: Sexual Behaviour in the Context of ASC

Sexual behaviour:

- May be the only source of pleasure, excitement or gratification available to the person.
- Can serve to reduce 'anxiety'.
- May have the same value as any other behaviour the person exhibits.
- Can allow the young person to feel security in routine.
- Stimulates the sensory organs.

There are several explanations for why sexual behaviours of concern may occur:

- Inappropriate sexual conduct becomes the only alternative to seeking relationships.
- A young person tries to copy an observed adult sexual behaviour.
- Attempts to make connections with peers using sexual information and behaviours.
- Experiences of sexual abuse.
- Some medications can affect libido, sexual interest or drive. Others can make arousal and ejaculation difficult which may increase tendency towards compulsive masturbation and other sexual behaviours.

18 Appendix 6: Strategies for Sexual Behaviours of Concern in ASC

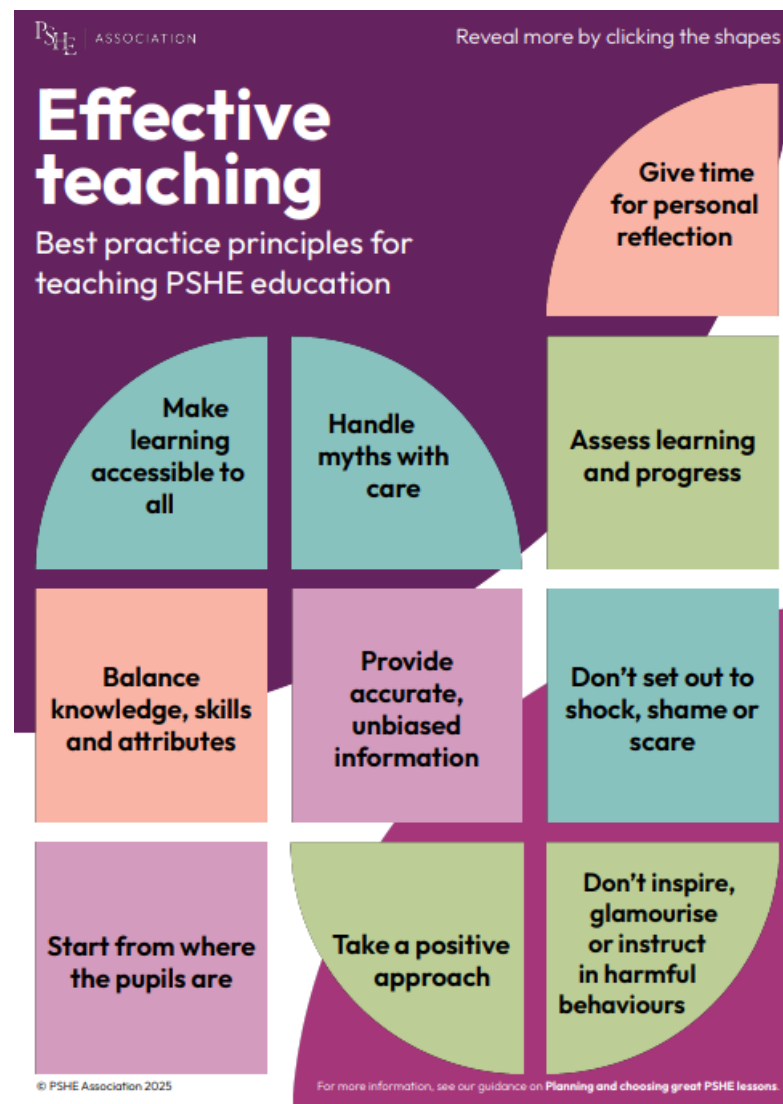
- Identify and reduce environmental causes of anxiety.
- Ensure the pupil has the communication tools to indicate their needs, seek attention and express emotions.
- Establish and maintain routine and predictability for the pupil.
- Make available a number of sensory specific activities based on individual assessment of preferences.
- Provide opportunities to establish everyday relationships with others.
- Obtain a medical review for persistent anal touching/scratching/picking.
- Allow time in the pupil's day for masturbation in private.
- Allow private time when bathing, if safe to do so.
- Allow private time without clothing in bed, the bedroom or bathroom.
- 'Shape' behaviour according to the environment, e.g., help to redirect the pupil to the toilet/their bedroom if they are found to be masturbating in a 'public' area.
- Use appropriate interventions such as social stories and social scripts.

19 Appendix 7: Parent Form – Withdrawal from Sex Education within RSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS			
Name of child		Class	
Name of parent		Date	
Reason for withdrawing from sex education within relationships and sex education			
Any other information you would like the school to consider?			
Parent signature			

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL	
Agreed actions from discussion with parents	
Headteacher signature	

20 Appendix 8: Effective Teaching: Best Practice Principles for Teaching PSHE Education



21 Appendix 9: A Safe Classroom: Establishing a Safe Teaching and Learning Environment for PSHE Education Lessons

PSHE ASSOCIATION

A safe classroom

Establishing a safe teaching and learning environment for PSHE education lessons

Ground rules are the first essential element of establishing a safe learning environment. To be most effective, negotiate them together to create a shared sense of ownership, whilst ensuring safe discussion principles are covered. For more information, see our guidance on **Handling complex issues safely in the PSHE classroom**.

Encourage questions from pupils, including anonymously, so they don't leave the lesson with uncertainty. When responding to questions, value the question, be conscious of the message you give through your body language and expression, give a factually correct, age-appropriate answer if you can, or buy time to respond/consult colleagues if unsure of how to answer.

Teach with the assumption that at least one pupil in the room is personally affected by the topic. Where there are known vulnerabilities, consider some of the following strategies: discussing the content of the lesson with specific pupils in advance, providing an exit pass or option to not attend, informing pastoral colleagues or parents/carers.

Lessons should be relevant, accessible and inclusive for all. They should reflect the backgrounds, circumstances and lived experiences of all young people, through safely distanced activities. Language, images and examples used should reflect the diversity of society, promote inclusion and, where appropriate, challenge stereotypes.

Use distancing techniques to help pupils take part in the lesson regardless of personal experiences. Distancing strategies such as using case studies, stories, scenarios and characters help pupils explore an issue objectively without it being about them and their own behaviour.

Whatever the topic, always make pupils aware of different sources of support, information and advice, at home, in school, locally and online. Tell them not just where, but when, why and how they might access support, as well as what will happen next.

Be aware of your school's safeguarding, child protection, PSHE education and Relationships and Sex Education policies. Disclosures should never be encouraged in a classroom setting, but should a pupil make a disclosure, inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead following your school's protocols. Be clear with pupils that you cannot promise confidentiality and about when you might need to pass information on. Ensure they know how and where they can make a disclosure if they choose to.

For more information, see our guidance on **Handling complex issues safely in the PSHE classroom**: <https://pshethe-association.org.uk/guidance/ks1-5/handling-complex-issues-safely-classroom>

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