Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

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Note of explanation

As an Alternative Provision working with local authorities, we must provide RSHE to all learners under section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

In teaching we're required by our funding agreements to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State, as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

Red Balloon of the Air (RBAir) has membership of the PSHE Association and has paid careful regard to the guidance set out in:

- Relationships and sex education (RSHE) and health education - GOV.UK

We also have regard to legal duties set out in:

- Sections 404 to 407 of the Education Act 1996;
- Part 6, chapter 1 of the Equality Act 2010;
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

The RSHE Policy forms part of the approach to PSHE at RBAir and is integrated across other areas of the curriculum and other related policies.

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to communicate the rationale, structure and manner of RSHE at RBAir. The aim at RBAir is to provide our learners with the information, confidence and support they need to be able to develop healthy, safe and respectful relationships in all aspects of their lives. The provision at RBAir for RSHE is largely delivered online, and therefore particular attention is given to online safety and practice which promotes the creation of a safe environment for learners working remotely.

1.2 We aim to provide our learners with effective RSHE education to provide them with the essential knowledge that will enable them to make safe and well-informed decisions throughout adolescence and keep themselves and others safe in their future lives.

1.3 RSHE is delivered in a safe, respectful and therapeutic environment that recognises learners' individual needs and experiences.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all RBAir learners up to the end of Key Stage 4, and Post-16 learners who have opted to follow our post-16 PSHE course.

2.2 This policy applies to all staff involved in the delivery of RSHE, including teaching staff and support staff.

3. Definitions, rationale and ethos

3.1 Relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) is compulsory for all learners receiving secondary education as set out in *The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019* made under sections 34 and 35 of the *Children and Social Work Act 2017*. This policy is underpinned and informed by the Department for Education RSHE Guidance 2026 and meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards.

3.2 Aspects of RSHE are woven through the day-to-day operation of RBAir and are aligned with our core values of unconditional positive regard, mutual respect, inclusion and collaboration. They are incorporated through the curriculum, both in content included in subject schemes of work and through other planned learning opportunities.

3.3 For the purpose of this policy, we define 'relationships education' as teaching learners how to build confidence and self-esteem, and to empower them to develop self-respect and respect for others. This may enable them to form and maintain safe and healthy relationships (family, friends, intimate), recognise unhealthy relationship behaviours, understand consent, manage risks, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity.

3.4 For the purpose of this policy, we define 'sex education' as teaching learners respect for themselves and do not encourage or normalise early sexual experimentation. Rather, the aim is to give our young people the knowledge and confidence to develop safe, fulfilling and healthy sexual relationships when they reach the age of consent. RSHE at RBAir is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

3.5 We believe RSHE is important for our learners because young people have the right to high quality and effective RSHE teaching which will promote their confidence in making informed decisions, understand and voice their rights and responsibilities in safe and meaningful relationships, know when, how and where to seek support, and encourage them to explore issues which are deeply relevant to their future lives.

3.6 We ensure RSHE is inclusive and meets the needs of all learners, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) ensuring that all session content is age and/or developmentally appropriate, is inclusive of LGBTQ+ learners' needs, and is developed with learner and parent/carer voices taken fully into consideration.

3.7 RSHE fosters equality by ensuring that teaching and teaching resources validates and includes information, visual resources, and scenarios representing a range of gender, sexual orientation, SEND, cultures, races and faiths.

The intended outcomes of our programme are that learners will:

- **know and understand** the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships across all contexts;
- **understand they have a right** to be treated with respect, to bodily autonomy, to privacy, and to access support;
- **understand they have a responsibility** to treat others with kindness and respect, to respect consent and boundaries, and to challenge prejudice and harmful stereotypes;
- **develop the skills of** communication, assertiveness, critical thinking, recognising and managing risk, and seeking help;
- **develop the attributes of** resilience, self-worth, self-respect, empathy and integrity.

This policy was produced by the Head of Department for PSHE, in consultation with the Head of Centre, the Assistant Head, and staff teaching PSHE.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Trustees

Red Balloon Education Trust (RBET) Trustees are responsible for ensuring that:

- all learners make progress in achieving the expected educational outcomes;
- teaching is accessible to all learners with SEND;
- curriculum content and teaching materials are aligned with statutory guidance;
- clear information is provided for parents/carers on the subject content, teaching materials, and any external providers.

4.2 Head of Centre

The Head of Centre is responsible for:

- ensuring this policy is implemented effectively;
- managing requests from parents/carers to withdraw learners from sex education;
- ensuring staff receive appropriate training and support;
- monitoring the quality of RSHE provision;

- liaising with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) regarding safeguarding matters arising from RSHE.

4.3 PSHE/RSHE Lead

The RSHE programme is led by the Head of Department for PSHE and they are responsible for:

- coordinating the planning and delivery of RSHE across the RBAir provision;
- working closely with colleagues in related curriculum areas to ensure the subjects complement and do not duplicate content covered in other subject areas;
- ensuring resources are age-appropriate, accurate and inclusive;
- coordinating external providers where appropriate, including providing or sourcing training for staff;
- supporting staff with training and resources;
- monitoring and evaluating the RSHE programme.

4.4 Teaching staff

Teaching staff are responsible for:

- delivering RSHE in accordance with this policy and the scheme of work;
- creating a safe and supportive learning environment;
- facilitating participative and interactive education which aims to support and not to alarm learners;
- responding appropriately to learners' questions and disclosures;
- following safeguarding procedures where concerns arise.

4.5 All staff

All staff are responsible for:

- modelling positive behaviour and avoiding language that might perpetuate harmful stereotypes;
- being conscious of everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes, and taking action to build a culture where prejudice is identified and tackled;
- supporting RBAir's ethos of unconditional positive regard, mutual respect, inclusion and collaboration.

4.6 Professional development

All staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety) at induction. The training is regularly updated, and all staff receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, including online safety, at least annually (Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) (2026).

Teaching staff delivering the PSHE/RSHE programme receive RSHE-specific training on:

- the statutory requirements and curriculum content;
- age-appropriate delivery methods;
- handling sensitive topics and difficult questions;
- supporting learners with SEND;
- recognising and responding to disclosures;
- creating inclusive learning environments;
- addressing sexual harassment and sexual violence, including understanding that most sexual violence is committed against women and girls, and it often has a gendered component, while avoiding language which stigmatises boys or suggests that boys or men are always perpetrators or that girls or women are always victims.

5. Curriculum design

5.1 Guiding principles

Our RSHE curriculum is developed with the following key principles in mind:

a. **Engagement with learners**
An inclusive and well-sequenced RSHE curriculum is informed by meaningful engagement with learners to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and engaging.

b. **Engagement and transparency with parents/carers**
We engage with parents/carers on the content of RSHE and are transparent with regard to all materials used in RSHE. All materials are available to parents/carers.

c. **Positivity**
We focus on building positive attitudes and skills, promoting healthy norms about relationships, including sexual relationships where appropriate, and about health, including mental health. We avoid language which might normalise harmful behaviour among young people.

d. **Careful sequencing**
We cover all statutory topics organised into a spiral curriculum, allowing for developmental progression by revisiting themes year on year, building on, and extending, prior learning.

5.2 Integration within PSHE

Our RSHE programme is an integral part of our PSHE education provision. It is delivered through dedicated PSHE sessions and is reinforced across the curriculum, including in Science.

5.3 Curriculum content

Our RSHE curriculum covers the statutory content as set out in the DfE guidance (September 2026). Given that RBAir is a secondary provision, we teach:

Relationships education

The programme covers:

- **Families** (including different types of committed relationships, marriage and civil partnership, forced marriage, changing families)
- **Respectful relationships** (including characteristics of positive relationships, consent, boundaries, self-esteem, bullying, stereotypes, power dynamics)
- **Online safety and awareness** (including online risks, privacy, social media characteristics, deepfakes, pornography, AI chatbots)
- **Being safe** (including consent, resisting pressure, recognising unsafe relationships, personal safety, sexual harassment and violence, harmful sexual behaviour, domestic abuse, exploitation, FGM, virginity testing, strangulation)

Sex education

As an Alternative Provision where learners might join at different times in the year, the programme for Sex Education is tailored to meet the developmental needs of the learner. The teacher will determine, along with the learner and their parents/carers, what might be appropriately delivered as part of a comprehensive PSHE programme. At RBAir the following topics are classified as 'Sex Education' for the purpose of the statutory right to withdraw:

- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health (including that sex can be enjoyable and positive)
- Age of consent
- Sexual consent
- Contraceptive choices
- Pregnancy options
- STIs including HIV
- Safer sex and the impact of alcohol and drugs on sexual behaviour
- How to seek support
- Recognising and countering misinformation

Health and wellbeing

The programme for Health and Wellbeing dovetails with the overall PSHE offer and contains:

- Mental wellbeing
- Wellbeing online

- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Drugs/alcohol/tobacco/vaping
- Health protection and prevention
- Personal safety
- Basic first aid
- Mental health first aid

The statutory requirements regarding 'Developing Bodies' includes:

- Puberty
- Menstrual health and key facts about the menstrual cycle
- Reproductive health and pregnancy, which refers to fertility and where appropriate in terms of age and developmental stage, miscarriage

Learners will also be taught the legal position relating to these topics:

- Consent
- Marriage
- FGM
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Online behaviour
- Pornography
- Sexual exploitation
- Sharing images
- Abortion (factual, not promoting)
- Equality and protected characteristics

5.4 Curriculum planning and delivery

The RSHE programme is planned and delivered through:

- a structured scheme of work aligned with the statutory guidance and learners' needs;
- timetabled PSHE sessions delivered weekly to Key Stage 3, 4 and Post-16 learners;
- cross-curricular links and reinforcement;
- therapeutic approaches that recognise our learners' individual needs.

We ensure RSHE is matched to the needs of our learners by:

- using consistent session structure and in-session evaluations to monitor learners' understanding and engagement;
- differentiating and adapting content and delivery methods;
- providing additional support for learners needing bespoke adaptations;
- responding to emerging issues and concerns.

5.5 Inclusion and differentiation

We ensure an inclusive RSHE programme by:

- teaching about all protected characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender reassignment;
- including same-sex parents/carers along with other family arrangements when discussing families;
- ensuring equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships;
- integrating LGBTQ+ content to other elements of the programme;
- using diverse and representative resources;
- avoiding stereotypes and challenging prejudice;
- creating a safe space for all learners to learn, with session guidelines developed in collaboration with learners.

We ensure an age-appropriate delivery of RSHE by:

- following the statutory curriculum guidance for secondary schools;
- building on prior learning from primary school;
- sequencing content developmentally;
- using appropriate language and resources;
- being sensitive to learners' maturity and experiences;
- ensuring learners are taught in specific age groups.

Sessions are differentiated by:

- providing resources at different reading levels;
- using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic approaches;
- offering small group or one-to-one in person sessions where needed;
- adapting content for learners with SEND.

5.6 Cross-curricular links

Learning about RSHE in PSHE education sessions links to and complements learning in Science (puberty, reproduction, STIs), Online Community (exploration of issues and themes related to LGBTQ+, SEND, being part of a community, development of interpersonal skills and building relationships).

5.7 Assessment

RSHE is assessed through:

- low stakes 'in session' formative evaluations;
- self-assessment and reflection activities;
- learner voice feedback.

6. Safe and effective practice

6.1 Creating a safe learning environment

RBAir ensures a safe learning environment by:

- revisiting and agreeing to our guidelines at the beginning of each session;
- using distancing techniques (e.g. case studies, scenarios, third-person language);
- providing opportunities for discreet questions using separate Teams chats;
- creating a culture of mutual respect and non-judgement;
- being clear about confidentiality and its limits;
- ensuring learners know how to access support;
- providing consistent staffing where possible, so that learners build trusting relationships with the adults delivering RSHE;
- clear signposting in the Centre and online to a range of support services;
- employing trauma-informed approaches that recognise many of our learners may have experienced adverse childhood experiences. We provide:
    - advance notice of sensitive topics
    - options to step out if needed with appropriate support
    - recognition that learners' responses may be influenced by their experiences.

6.2 Managing difficult questions and sensitive issues

Staff are trained to handle difficult questions appropriately and professionally.

RBAir's approach includes:

- acknowledging that all questions are valid without staff expressing shock or disapproval;
- using the 'parking lot' technique i.e. parking a question and coming back to it when appropriate, for questions that:
    - require research or preparation
    - are too personal or inappropriate for whole-group discussion
    - need to be addressed individually;
- referring to session guidelines when questions breach agreed boundaries;
- responding factually and age-appropriately using correct terminology;
- knowing when to refer: staff are clear about when questions indicate a safeguarding concern and follow our safeguarding procedures immediately;
- preparing for anticipated questions by reviewing session content in advance and having responses ready for likely queries;
- never promising absolute confidentiality - learners are always informed that if they share something that indicates they or another child is at risk, this must be passed on to the DSL.

Please refer to the Safe and effective practice interactive posters and guidance on Handling complex issues and creating a safe learning environment, for further information.

7. Openness and engagement with parents/carers and other stakeholders

We recognise that parents/carers are key partners in their children's RSHE and we maintain open, transparent communication with them.

We communicate through:

Information sharing

- Our RSHE Policy is available on RBAir's website and on request.
- Written communications about RSHE curriculum content are included in the Parent/Carer Newsletter.
- Staff give advance notice of when sensitive topics will be covered.
- Clear information about the right to withdraw from sex education (but not relationships or health education) is available to parents and carers.
- At the start of a unit, parents/carers will be informed by email, and materials are made available for them to view and appraise.

Ongoing dialogue

- Regular opportunities for parents/carers to discuss RSHE provision are offered.
- RBAir responds to questions or concerns in a timely manner.
- There are several feedback mechanisms (annual parent/carer surveys, parent/carer consultation evenings, individual meetings).
- RBAir signposts to resources that can support conversations at home.

Building partnerships

In order to build partnerships, RBAir:

- encourages parents/carers to reinforce learning at home;
- provides suggestions for age-appropriate conversations;
- respects diverse family backgrounds and values while maintaining our statutory obligations.

RBAir's Annual Learner Survey is used to review and tailor our RSHE programme to match the different needs of learners.

8. Managing parental/carer concerns and requests to withdraw learners from sex education

We handle parental/carer concerns and withdrawal requests sensitively and in line with statutory guidance.

Managing parental/carer concerns

When concerns are raised we:

- listen carefully to understand the specific concern;
- explain our statutory obligations and the rationale for our curriculum;
- share specific curriculum content and resources;
- discuss how we create a safe learning environment;
- explore whether there are specific aspects causing concern;
- work to find solutions where possible while maintaining our statutory duties.

Right to withdraw

- Parents/carers have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from **sex education** (but not relationships or health education).
- Requests must be made in writing to the Head of Centre.
- RBAir will discuss the request with parents/carers to understand their concerns and clarify what can and cannot be withdrawn from.
- RBAir will discuss the request with the learner (where age appropriate) to understand their views.
- RBAir will document the discussion and decision.
- RBAir will provide alternative arrangements for learners withdrawn from sex education.
- Learners can choose to receive sex education in the three terms before they turn 16, regardless of parent/carer wishes.
- In exceptional circumstances, such as safeguarding concerns or where a learner is particularly vulnerable, the Head of Centre may need to consider whether withdrawal is in the learner's best interests.
- Where there are concerns, the Head of Centre will consult with the DSL before making a decision.
- RBAir will work collaboratively with parents/carers to reach an agreement that prioritises the child's welfare and safety.
- All discussions and decisions will be clearly documented and communicated to parents/carers in writing.
- Where there are no exceptional circumstances, the Head of Centre will grant the withdrawal request.

What cannot be withdrawn from

- Relationships education
- Health education (statutory for all learners)
- RSHE content in the National Curriculum Science (statutory)

9. Safeguarding

It is important to note that delivery of RSHE is largely online and requires additional vigilance and effective practice to ensure that learners feel safe and supported when working remotely.

The RSHE policy supports RBAir's approach to safeguarding and links to / is informed by other policies and statutory and non-statutory guidance for schools. These include policies for:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Behaviour for Learning
- RBET Anti-bullying Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- RBET Online Safety Policy
- SEND
- PSHE
- RBET Equality Information Policy
- Curriculum Policy

Information about the DSL, Head of Centre and all Deputy DSLs, are widely displayed in the Centre and staff teaching online understand our safeguarding procedures and the process for reporting concerns.

Any visitors or external agencies will be given safeguarding instructions and are directed to the displayed posters showing a QR code for reporting.

Sensitive discussions and outcomes in sessions may lead to increased safeguarding reports. All staff follow the guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026).

- All staff should know what to do if they have concerns that a learner is being neglected or abused.
- Staff should handle personal information with due care and maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality, only involving those who need to be involved, such as the DSL (or a Deputy DSL).
- Staff should never promise a learner that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse.
- Learners should understand how confidentiality will be handled in a session and what might happen if they choose to make a report.
- Learners should understand where they can report any concerns.

10. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

We are committed to continuously improving our RSHE provision through regular monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring activities include the following:

- **Session observations** by senior leaders and subject leads to assess teaching quality and learner engagement.
- **Written session feedback** recorded on termly planning documents, with links to session slides.
- **Learner voice activities** such as informal conversations with learners.
- **Staff feedback** through:
    - staff meetings and professional development sessions;
    - teacher evaluations of sessions and resources;
    - identification of training needs.
- **Parent/carer feedback** via individual conversations / parents' evenings.
- **Review of resources and curriculum materials** to ensure they remain current, inclusive, and age appropriate.

10.1 Evaluation criteria

RBAir uses the following evaluation criteria:

- Learner confidence, knowledge and understanding (assessed through formative and summative assessment).
- Learner confidence in discussing RSHE topics.
- Quality of teaching and learning.
- Appropriateness and effectiveness of resources.
- Inclusivity and accessibility of provision.
- Safeguarding effectiveness.
- Parental/carer engagement and satisfaction.

10.2 Assessing learning in RSHE

Assessment in RSHE is primarily formative and focuses on confidence and understanding rather than grading.

Our assessment approaches include:

Formative assessment

- Observation of learner participation in discussions and activities
- Questioning to check understanding
- Self-assessment and reflection activities
- Peer discussion and feedback

Recording progress

- Teachers maintain records of learners' engagement and understanding
- Key learning points are documented
- Individual concerns or needs are noted for follow up
- Progress in knowledge, skills and attitudes is tracked over time

What we assess

- **Knowledge:** Understanding of key concepts (e.g. healthy relationships, puberty, consent)
- **Skills:** Communication, decision-making, recognising risk, seeking help
- **Attitudes:** Respect for self and others, challenging stereotypes, empathy

What we don't do

- We do not grade or mark RSHE work in a way that could embarrass learners.
- We do not require learners to share personal information.
- We do not use assessment in ways that could breach confidentiality.

Using assessment to improve provision

- Assessment information informs future planning.
- Gaps in understanding are addressed through additional teaching.
- Individual needs are identified and supported.
- Curriculum content is adjusted based on learner needs and questions.

11. Policy review

- An annual review each September will incorporate new statutory guidance to commence the new academic year.